

Chapter 831

Even though they always used their actions, and this time, their life, to prove that they loved me, I still felt profoundly insecure deep down. I wasn't sure if this was due to my deep-seated low self-esteem, or that this happened to every other woman.

I ended up spending the whole night watching over Marcus. Layla had come in intermittently and asked that I get some sleep myself, but after I repeatedly rejected her suggestion, she decided to just leave me alone.

The next day, the morning sunlight shone through the window and lit up the room as though bestowing upon it a new life. Marcus finally woke up and when he saw that I was unharmed, he smiled in relief. "Thank goodness that you're okay."

At that point, all my suppressed emotions had escaped into the form of unstoppable tears and I started to sob uncontrollably. I held onto his hand and tried to speak in between my sobs. "Please... never do this again! I-If something happens to you, how am I going to explain this to Camelia? You have a wife and a kid! You can't do something so silly again!"

He smiled weakly and stroked my hair gently as he said, "Don't be silly, I can't have stopped my instinctive reflex even if I tried to. Besides, I actually feel honored being able to keep someone I wanted to protect safe."

It took me a while to collect myself. After which, a doctor came by to check on Marcus. I was glad when the doctor informed me that he would recover fully with enough rest.

As soon as my heightened sense of wariness subsided, I was overcome with a new wave of tiredness. After all, I did stay up all night and had had very little rest.

Looking at my bloodshot eyes, Layla said, “Ms. Stovall, now that Mr. White has awakened, you should really get some rest yourself. I’ll continue to monitor his health. Please stop worrying.”

I nodded, finally feeling a heavy weight lifted off my shoulder. After leaving the ward, I headed to the hospital lobby, ready to take a cab home.

When I got to the hospital lobby, a familiar black Bentley was parked just outside the curb. Joseph rolled down the driver seat window and said, “Mrs. Fuller, I’ll give you a ride home.”

I was puzzled. Did he just happen to be here or...

I wasn’t sure if Ashton was in the car and appeared hesitant. As though reading my mind, Joseph added, “Mr. Fuller has left for some work stuff.”

I rubbed my nose awkwardly and got into the car.

As Joseph started the car, I hesitated for a brief moment before asking, "Have you been in the hospital this whole time?"

He tilted his head in my direction. "Not just me. Mr. Fuller has been here as well. He had been scrolling through his phone all night standing by."

I paused before biting my lips. "I..."

"He understands your concern for Mr. White. But the fact that you didn't return to your ward or the villa all night did sting him. If I were you, I'd probably give him a call to check in with him even for just a minute. At least it shows that you care."

Joseph's words had once again stabbed right onto my sore spot like a dagger.

Saying no more, I stared out the window and was lost in my thoughts.

Joseph dropped me back at the villa before heading out again.

After the whole site incident and me staying up all night, the pain in my lower belly hadn't subsided. Back in my bedroom, I tried to take a nap, but the cramp took a turn for the worse, forbidding me to sleep well.

I finally got up and searched around the room for some painkillers. Failing to find any, I resorted to ordering some from an online delivery service.

After finally taking some medicine to control the cramps, I already lost all desire to sleep. I checked my watch and realized it was already six o'clock in the evening. Ashton should be back soon.

Giving up trying to sleep, I went into the kitchen and found some ingredients in the fridge for me to cook a meal for Ashton as my way of saying sorry.

Now that it was September, the weather had started to cool down. It was almost seven o'clock when I finished scuttling about in the kitchen. However, there was still no sight of Ashton.

Looking over at Armond's well-lit house, I decided to give Nora a call. She was quick to answer her phone. "Hey babe, have you eaten?"

I took another look at my neighbor's house. "Not yet. Are you at Armond's?"

"I am. Are you next door?"

“Yup.”

Just then, Nora called for me from her backyard. I put down my phone and walked toward my own backyard to meet with Nora who was dressed in thick pajamas. “How are you doing?”

I nodded. “Let’s just say that I’m happy to be alive.” I didn’t think she knew about what happened at Lavelian Village.

Nora rested her upper body on the railing before she said weakly, “It’s been a few days since I last saw you. I’ve been so tired for the past few days. And I’ve basically been lying down all day today.”

I paused for a brief moment. “Is it that time of the month for you?”

It was her turn to pause. “How did you know?”

I shrugged. “Because it’s my time of the month as well.”

Nora let out a long sigh before she said, “This is so unfair! Armond has been out all day and right now, all I want to do is to take my frustrations out at him!”

Chapter 832

I smiled, amused at how predictable women can be.

“Is Ashton not back yet?” Nora asked after noticing how quiet and empty the villa was.

“Yeah, I think he’s been pretty busy these days.”

I had tried calling Ashton earlier, but there was no answer. After a few attempts, I gave up on it.

Just then, the yard was illuminated by a car’s headlights. Nora turned to smile at me. “Could that be Mr. Fuller?”

I shrugged, secretly hoping for her to be right. Alas, my hopes were dashed when the car parked at Armond’s house.

Nora’s eyes lit up when she realized it was Armond who had just come home. “Our poor punching bag is back! That’s my cue to leave. Bye!”

With Nora gone, I headed back into the villa. The food I prepared had gone cold by now, so I decided to call Ashton again.

This time, the call finally went through. “Ashton, where are you? Are you on your way home? I’ve made dinner for us. Will you be home to eat?”

This was my first-time cooking at home, and I had planned it so we could have a heart-to-heart talk over dinner. I had gotten sick of arguing with Ashton, so I knew compromises had to be made for our relationship to be more sustainable. It was all about knowing when to give and take.

The silence on the other end of the call gave me butterflies in my stomach. I was worried about him being upset about Marcus and not giving me a chance to explain.

“Ms. Stovall, it’s Rebecca. Ash is currently in the shower. I don’t think he’ll be home tonight, so you don’t have to keep dinner for him.”

My heart sank when I heard Rebecca’s voice. She had answered Ashton’s phone before, but that was in the past when I had braced myself for the possibility of Ashton leaving me for her. This time, however, my heart was not ready for it.

Over the years, I had grown certain that what Ashton felt toward Rebecca was nothing more than a sense of responsibility. But now that I knew he was at her place, it instantly destroyed the trust I had in him and shattered the self-confidence I had painstakingly built.

When I did not reply, Rebecca's tone got even more condescending. "Ms. Stovall, I'll let Ashton know that you want him home. But please have your dinner first. I'm afraid it'd be late by the time he makes it back, and you know food doesn't taste as good when it's cold."

Not wanting to be snubbed by her anymore, I promptly ended the call. I stared at the dinner I had prepared, feeling like an absolute fool.

Love and trust? That's all bullsh*t now.

Even as I tried to keep my anger at bay, I couldn't get the dripping sarcasm from Rebecca's voice out of my head. I had so much faith in myself that I wouldn't be bothered by their relationship, yet here I was, steeped in pain and unable to sleep.

I lay in bed and tried to calm myself down, but all it did was make me even more frustrated as unpleasant memories came flooding back. At that moment, none of the good times I had with Ashton in the past could make up for the pain he caused in the present.

It looked to be yet another sleepless night as I tossed and turned in bed, fraught with worry and pain. Then, to make matters worse, my stomach started to hurt. I was suffering from emotional and physical pain at the same time. Life can be so cruel at times.

Perhaps it was too early for bed, or the emotional rollercoaster I was on kept me awake. Either way, falling asleep no longer seemed possible.

I decided reading might help calm me down, so I headed to the study to finish reading “Three Makes A Family.”

I was making good progress on the book when there was the sound of a car engine, followed by the yard being illuminated by headlights. Ashton’s back already?

The thought of him being home distracted me so much that I couldn’t carry on reading any more. With a sigh, I put the book away and headed downstairs.

Ashton sat at the dining table in the kitchen, still dressed smartly in his all-black suit.

I had left the dishes on the table without having eaten a single morsel. The food would undoubtedly be cold by now, but Ashton seemed unbothered by it as he started eating.

I watched on in silence as the anger and hurt from earlier slowly came back. It had been two hours since my call with Rebecca, which meant that whatever shenanigans they were up to would have been done and dusted.

“The food has turned cold, don’t eat it anymore. I wouldn’t want you to fall sick from it, Mr. Fuller,” I said coldly.

Ashton was a little surprised when he saw me standing outside the kitchen. “Did I wake you up?”

His tone was full of warmth and concern, but I felt like he was only putting on a pretense.

I forced a smile as I walked toward the table. “You didn’t. But the food’s cold, so don’t eat it.” With that, I cleared all the dishes away without even waiting for his reply.

Chapter 833

The lack of hesitation on my part took Ashton by surprise. “Scarlett!” he exclaimed while looking at me.

“I’m sure you have eaten your fill outside. There’s no need to force yourself to finish these cold dishes.” I tried to be as calm as possible, but I couldn’t hide the hint of annoyance in my voice.

Ashton frowned at my reply, his anger simmering away. “Must you be so sarcastic?”

Even though his calm demeanor terrified me, I couldn’t help but chuckle, “Yes, I’ve always been sarcastic. Is this your first time noticing it?”

No relationship was perfect, and no couples have ever not exchanged hurtful words with each other. At one point or another, many people would have thought about hurting their partner because they were just so frustrated with them. I wouldn't be surprised if Ashton had such urges racing through his mind now.

Ashton was trying to suppress his anger and not argue with me. His tone was a lot gentler when he said, "Are you angry because I wasn't home to have dinner with you?"

I smiled faintly back at him. "Not at all. It was just a meal. I was bored and thought I'd try out some recipes. Marcus hasn't been feeling well these days, so I'd like to make him something nutritious."

Even though that was true, it wasn't the complete truth. But my anger got the better of me, and I wanted to use Marcus to rile him up.

Ashton's face immediately darkened with rage as he stared at me. "Sorry for being so delusional. How could I have forgotten that there's someone you care dearly for still lying in the hospital? Speaking of which, why are you back home and not with him tonight?"

His derisive attitude infuriated me even more. "Thank you for reminding me. I should head over to the hospital now," I replied coolly. I would rather be with Marcus in the hospital than stay home and argue with Ashton.

Besides, after this less than friendly interaction with him, a good night's sleep would be even more impossible.

Before I could walk away, Ashton angrily grabbed my wrist. "Scarlett, are you forgetting that you're someone's wife and mother? Running off in the middle of the night to see another man is not what a virtuous woman ought to do."

I tried to shake him off but to no avail. And in my moment of anger, I went on the offensive. "Which era are you from, Ashton? It's the twenty-first century, and you're still talking about the virtues of a mother and wife? You're the one having affairs, yet you expect me to uphold these virtues?"

Ashton scowled at me when I mentioned the affairs, clearly unhappy about it. "Scarlett, what on earth has Rebecca done to make you hate her so much?"

"Oh? Do you expect me to live in peace with her?" I laughed at the incredulity of his words. "Well, that's to be expected, I guess. Any man would want his wife and mistress to live happily together. Very well, I shall bring Ms. Larson here tomorrow. I'll even let her have the master bedroom so you can dote on her all you want."

After having said my piece, I pulled away from him and started to make my way upstairs. However, Ashton slid his arms around my waist and trapped me within his embrace.

His gaze was cold and menacing, and it sent shivers down my spine. “Have I become so worthless in your eyes? So worthless that you can push me to another woman without any care? Should I be grateful to you for wanting to give up your bedroom? Or should I praise you for being thoughtful?”

My stomach had been hurting from earlier, but now with him hugging me so tightly, the pain became even more unbearable. “Isn’t that everything you wanted, Ashton? Or do you not want me to stay here and be in your way? If that’s the case, I can move out.”

Ashton suddenly burst out laughing. His laughter was no different than usual, but the words that followed were harsh and ridiculous.

“Is that why you’ve been so rude toward me since I got home? You’re just looking for a reason to leave me so you can be with Marcus, aren’t you? Scarlett, please tell me what I have done to make you think so lowly of me, to think I can be at your beck and call. Does our marriage not mean anything to you?”

I had been trying to remain level-headed the entire time, but the fact that he kept harping on about Marcus pushed me over the edge. “Why are you so fixated on Marcus? Are you still not sure about my relationship with him? Do you not know why he got injured?” I retorted.

“Whatever relationship I have with Marcus can never be as intimate as what you have with Rebecca. Marriage is a sacred bond to me, Ashton, but you have single-handedly ruined everything good about it. You destroyed the sanctity of our marriage over and over again because of Rebecca.

I've foolishly waited for you for three years, and I will not continue to waste my time with you. Whether you feel responsible for Rebecca or you truly long for her, it's none of my business. If she wants to be Mrs. Fuller, I'd be more than willing to let her have that title. But please do not tarnish my reputation by making me out to be a slut, pairing me with Marcus or Armond. Marcus has his family, and I'm not a home-wrecker. So don't try to make everyone sound as despicable as you."

Chapter 834

Ashton's lips were quivering as he turned livid with rage. "What have you heard? What makes you think my feelings for you are worth nothing?"

"Why don't you ask your precious Rebecca?" After a brief pause, I chuckled. "You've never suspected her of anything because she's always acted so innocent in front of you. Did she tell you that she answered your phone and told me you were in the shower? That she was showing off to me how in love the two of you were? Of course she wouldn't have told you anything. After all, she needed to maintain the perfect image you have of her."

Ashton remained silent with his lips pursed, still staring intensely at me.

I sighed and calmed myself down. “In the future, Mr. Fuller, please reflect on your actions before you lecture others. Also, pick your subjects well if you want to talk about sincerity and love. To me, that is all too laughable. But I’m sure Ms. Larson wouldn’t mind.”

With that said, I broke away from Ashton and decided on a whim to leave the villa for the hospital.

Layla was caught by surprise when I walked into the ward just as Marcus had fallen asleep. “Ms. Stovall, what are you doing here so late at night? You should be at home resting!” she whispered.

Despite being exhausted, I still managed to smile back in response. “It’s no problem at all. How is he today?” I asked as my gaze fell on Marcus.

“Much better, even though he still can’t get out of bed. By the way, Mr. White’s phone has been ringing the entire day, but he wouldn’t let me answer it. I’m not sure if it was his family calling to check on him,” Layla said concernedly. Since I insisted on staying, she promptly left after packing up her things.

I sat beside Marcus before glancing at my phone. There weren’t any messages which only added to my disappointment as I sighed in resignation.

The next day, Layla came back early in the morning only to find Marcus still sleeping. Since there wasn't anything she could do, she decided to head back out to buy breakfast.

I, on the other hand, had had a pretty awful night. The extra bed in the ward wasn't the most comfortable, and it also happened to be my time of the month. All that meant that I have barely gotten any decent sleep, and I woke up even more exhausted than I had been the night before.

Marcus had just woken up when he spotted my less than flattering dark eye circles. "Have you been staying up late again?"

I shook my head and smiled. "No, I've just been worried about you. Get well soon, and I'll be fine again."

He winced a little as he tried to sit up in bed. "You can't be moving about now. Your wounds have only just been stitched up. If you moved around too much, you might risk reopening them and getting them infected," I chastised as I held him down by the shoulders.

Thankfully he heeded my advice and lay back in bed to rest until Layla came back. She had bought soup for him since that was all he could eat after his surgery. He only managed a few spoonfuls before the pain set in again. Setting the soup aside, he turned to me. "There's hospital staff and Layla here to take care of me. You don't have to worry. Why don't you go home and have a good rest? The weather's getting colder. You'll fall sick easily if you don't rest enough."

I nodded with a smile, knowing that he was just being concerned for my well-being.

After chatting for a while more, Marcus dozed off again.

Since he had fallen asleep, I decided to make a quick trip to the villa to pack more things for the coming days. With me staying at the hospital for a few more days and with the Harvest Festival coming up, I definitely needed to be more prepared.

Ashton was nowhere in sight when I got home. Even his clothes in the closet were gone, and there was no message to say where he would be staying.

I wasn't sure how I felt about it, but I couldn't brush away the bad, nagging feeling in the back of my head.

After having packed a few sets of warmer clothes and daily necessities, I returned to the hospital.

Harvest Festival was only three or four days away, but I doubted Marcus could recover in that short period of time. Unfortunately, that meant I wouldn't be able to make it back to K City for the celebrations.

I had taken time off work, so for the next few days, I dedicated all my time to Marcus. I would either be chatting with him or accompanying him to his

physical therapy sessions. All in all, it was a far easier job than having to work on the Lavelian Village project, which was now in Linda's good hands.

On the fourth day, Marcus's condition had improved enough to walk a bit more. He was in such a good mood that he even wanted to attempt peeling an apple on his own.

I knew he hadn't been able to move his arm in the past few days due to broken ribs. Now that he had regained control of it, he was understandably on cloud nine at being able to tackle an easy, menial task.

Just then, his phone started ringing again. Marcus hardly glanced at it before moving it out of sight.

He had been getting countless calls from the same number and had been ignoring them all. I felt nosy and decided to peek at it, only to see it was Camelia's number.

I looked at him quizzically. "She must be so worried about you. You should at least tell her you're fine and recovering well."

Chapter 835

He stopped peeling the apple and looked up at me with pursed lips. “Is it because of her?”

His words baffled me for a moment, but I soon got back to my senses. “Marcus, are you mad? It’s not because of anyone. It’s just not going to work between us. Camelia is a good girl. Please don’t let her down.”

Marcus ignored my words as he looked down and continued peeling his apple. I knew it would be useless to go on. It was impossible to talk sense into someone who refused to be receptive to it.

That night, Summer called and sounded very excited over the phone. “Mommy! Granny said the Harvest Festival is almost here and that it’s a day for the family to reunite! Are you done with work? Will you be home soon?”

I had initially wanted to tell Summer that I couldn’t go back because of Marcus. But after hearing how excited she was about the festival, I couldn’t bring myself to disappoint her. Now that I had promised her to be home soon, I couldn’t go back on my word.

Marcus knew I felt bad about it and smiled at me. “Go be with Summer, and don’t worry about me. I will be fine with Layla here.”

I knew he would be in good hands with Layla, but leaving him alone during Harvest Festival didn't sit right with me.

Besides, when Harvest Festival came around, Layla would be home for her family reunion too. It would be so lonely for him to stay in the hospital.

Maybe I could let Camelia come to A City?

Once that thought flashed through my mind, I decided to put it into action. One way or another, I was going to get Camelia to come.

I decided to call Camelia while I was out buying things. It took a few tries before she finally answered.

"Scarlett, what do you want?" she snapped. "Are you calling to show off how much you're enjoying your time with Marcus?"

"No, Camelia. I called to let you know that Marcus got injured in Lavelian Village and is currently recovering in the hospital. He wouldn't be able to make it back to K City to celebrate the Harvest Festival with you. If it's possible, could you come to A City to keep him company? He doesn't show it, but I know he's afraid of being alone. It'd be nice to have you here and help him feel closer to home.

There was a moment of silence on the other end of the call. "Scarlett, why are you helping me?" Camelia finally asked.

“Don’t overthink it. I’m only doing this because I owe him too much. I genuinely want the best for him. I want him to find someone who loves him and who can give him a sense of belonging. I can’t do any of that for him, but you can.”

Camelia was silent again as she thought about it. “I hope the words you uttered are truly what you felt.”

I hung up the call without saying much more, and my thoughts started to wander.

The call to Camelia made me realize that it had been three days since my last communication with Ashton. He had never been one to take the initiative to call or text, so his radio silence wasn’t much of a surprise either.

Marcus wasn’t happy when Camelia showed up unannounced the next day. She had clearly not wasted any time in getting to A City after my call with her. However, I could barely recognize her when I saw her, a petite girl wheeling around an enormous suitcase while carrying a baby in her arms.

The Camelia standing in front of me was a stark contrast to the Camelia I used to know. In the past, she was the most beautiful and best-dressed girl in any room. But now, she had switched out her high heels for flats and tied her once luscious curls up in a messy bun. She had even ditched her dresses for oversized clothes to make breastfeeding easier.

How did a girl who had everything going for her end up looking like this?

I was in complete disbelief as I stared on.

“Marcus, how are you now? Why didn’t you answer my calls and let us know how you were doing?” Camelia asked frantically as she hurriedly set her luggage aside. She looked relieved when she could finally take a seat and stretch her arms and shoulder.

Marcus ignored Camelia and cast a steely gaze at me. “You told her to come?”

“Yes. Harvest Festival is almost here. Don’t you want to spend it with them?”

He remained silent as he looked at the baby in Camelia’s arms. “Why don’t you head over to the hotel to rest? It’s too noisy in the hospital. Toby wouldn’t be able to sleep well here,” he said bluntly.

Camelia shook her head resolutely. “It’s no problem. Toby’s very well-behaved. He’s even more well-behaved when he’s around you!”

Marcus held his tongue as his brows furrowed even more.