

Chapter 836

I silently observed Camelia and couldn't help but feel a twinge of sadness. The girl who used to be so beguiling had now become just like any other ordinary girl.

Who do I blame for her complete transformation? Time is ruthless, but so is Marcus.

Just then, Camelia's baby was awakened by the noise in the hospital and started bawling his head off. When Marcus glared at her, she hurriedly apologized and left the room with the baby to coax him back to sleep.

Marcus's actions left me befuddled. I knew he could be cold and distant, but that was reserved only for strangers and acquaintances. I never expected him to treat his family the same way.

I always thought there was a gentler side to him once one got to know him, but after what I witnessed, I started to doubt his character.

Is it Camelia? Has she done something wrong? Camelia used to lead a blessed, carefree life until Marcus bewitched her with his lies. She fell in love with him, married him, and even had a baby with him. But all she got in exchange for her love was Marcus's contempt.

"Scarlett!" Marcus shouted to get my attention when he saw me spacing out. As his gaze landed on me, I felt a shiver down my spine.

“What’s wrong? What’s on your mind?”

“Nothing. I’m going to check on Camelia!” I quickly replied and made my way out of the room.

Camelia couldn’t find an empty chair in the crowded hospital hallway and sat on the floor instead. As her baby continued to cry, she had no choice but to breastfeed him right there and then, much to the chagrin of the onlookers.

The once beautiful girl who was admired by all had now become a mother despised by passers-by.

It pained me to see her in that plight, so I lent her my coat to give her some privacy. She looked at me with mixed emotions before finally saying, “Thank you.” Such simple words, but they conveyed so much sincerity and gratitude.

“No, don’t mention it. I’ve experienced this before with Summer. Every time she cried, I could only coax her by breastfeeding her. As a first-time mother, I can sympathize with you.”

She wasn’t expecting me to respond as such and was a little taken aback by it. She sat there deep in contemplation and finally gave a bitter smile. “I used to think that my situation would get better once I had my baby. Now that he’s here, it feels like I’ve simultaneously lost and gained everything.”

She's right. Becoming a mother is full of sacrifice, but we eventually realize that all the sacrifice is worthwhile.

"Don't worry. You'll see that this is all worth it." I reassured.

She looked at me in confusion, not knowing what I meant by my words.

Not wanting to elaborate further, I changed the subject. "You came in such a hurry I don't think you've packed enough for yourself. I'll head home and pack some warm clothes for you."

She hummed in response and stared at me for a long while before mustering up the courage to ask, "You and him, are you..."

"Friends. We're just friends," I replied without any hesitation. "I have my own family, so please don't see me as your rival. All I want is the best for the both of you."

Camelia tried to hold back tears as she bit her lips. "Thank you, Scarlett!"

"You don't need to thank me. I owe him."

On my way home, I couldn't help but think about how obsessed men could be when it came to love. Just because they've had a change of heart, they

could throw their wives aside without any care of the consequences. Men can be so heartless.

After packing more warm clothes and daily necessities from the villa, I ordered some nutritious food from a restaurant to bring back to the hospital. Camelia could definitely use some sustenance, especially since she was still breastfeeding.

Back at the hospital, I made my way back to the ward with my hands full of bags. When I got there, I was stunned to hear the heart-wrenching cries of Camelia and her baby while Marcus admonished them.

Thankfully, Marcus was staying in a private ward so their quarrel wouldn't have disturbed other patients. From the sounds of it, it didn't seem like Layla was inside with them.

"Fine! I will neither get in your way nor bother you again. I want nothing from you! I'm leaving!" Camelia cried out in pain. Upon seeing me at the door, her face contorted with rage. "Look at how things turned out! Are you happy now?" she yelled.

With that, she walked out of the room with tears still streaming down her face. The situation in the room wasn't any better. Marcus was fuming while their baby continued to cry in his stroller.

Soothing the baby was my top priority as I dropped all my things and made my way to the stroller.

After picking the baby up, I tried to coax him the way I used to do with Summer.

Chapter 837

After what seemed like forever, the little boy finally stopped crying. He looked at me with big teary eyes, clueless about his surroundings.

Layla finally came back to the ward after having excused herself when Marcus and Camelia started arguing.

“Mrs. White is probably downstairs. Could you bring her baby and these things down to her? I don’t think she’s had anything to eat. Please tell her that no matter what, she has to care for herself. If not for her, then do it for her baby,” I said to Layla as I handed the baby over to her.

Layla was stunned momentarily but eventually did as instructed.

I was left alone with Marcus in the ward. I was never good at preaching to others, but at that moment, I knew I had to get some things off my chest. If I didn't, both Marcus and I would regret it in the future.

“I met Camelia on the plane six years ago. Six years is a long time, but I still remember our first interaction very vividly. I had accidentally bumped into her, and when I apologized to her, I was blown away by how beautiful she looked. She was initially very angry but forgave me after my apology.” After a pause, I continued, “As fate would have it, we sat right next to each other on the plane. The flight was over ten hours, and we chatted up a storm during that time. It was my first time in M Country, and she was worried I might get lost, so she left me her number as an emergency contact.”

Marcus looked at me quizzically, wondering what my point was in bringing up the past.

“That day, I was on my way to meet Ashton. Bumping into Camelia was an accident, but her beauty and grace wowed me so much I still can't forget it after so long.”

I stared at Marcus and sighed. “Do you know how I felt when I met Camelia again today? In just a span of six years, she had gone from being a dazzling beauty to an unconfident, disheveled woman. I can't imagine the amount of pain her parents would be in if they saw her today. Why have you reduced their precious daughter to this state?”

He frowned and replied curtly, "I can only give her what I can, and I have."

"And by that, do you mean your wealth? You think giving her money would suffice?"

His naivety was so appalling it made me laugh. "Marcus, can you tell how different I've become in six years?"

"You've become more composed."

I nodded. "The five years I spent in R Province away from Ashton was the best time of my life. I had Summer, and I had hope. Even though I didn't have a lot of money, life was still comfortable. After Ashton brought me back to K City, everything was good. Unlike you, he tried his best to give me everything he can, and even what he can't." I looked up at Marcus to make sure I still had his attention. "I left K City not because I didn't love him or that he didn't give enough, but because I couldn't get over the past. That doesn't mean we still can't have a future. I thought life had played a cruel joke on me, but after meeting Camelia, I realized how fortunate I had been. Ashton and I have had many misunderstandings, but you and Camelia are different. You intentionally put her through all this pain and suffering and turn a blind eye to it." I stared him down as I continued, "Marcus, you've married her and even had a kid with her. No matter how selfish you are, you still have to find some space in your heart for your wife and child. You know it better than anyone else that we are only friends, and that will never

change. But Camelia is your wife and the mother of your child. If you don't love and treasure her, this would all come and bite you back in the future."

He pursed his lips, not saying a word, though I could tell he was in deep contemplation. I had said all that I wanted to say, and I only hoped it would help knock some sense into him.

I made my way downstairs and finally found Layla and Camelia in the waiting area. Camelia still looked as unkempt and haggard as before as she wolfed down the food I had bought for her.

She felt someone staring at her and looked up in surprise, only to lock eyes with me. After wiping her mouth with her sleeve, she greeted me with an embarrassed smile.

I smiled back at her with a nod, trying to fight the overwhelming array of emotions I felt toward her.

I stood beside her and waited for her to finish eating her food. The baby in Layla's arms was still blissfully unaware of the storm that had just passed as he looked at us with his big doe eyes.

Chapter 838

Layla was a chatterbox to begin with. Seeing as no one was willing to speak, she took the liberty of starting a conversation. “Women nowadays are so skinny that they don’t produce enough milk unlike women from back then. In fact, we women from the previous generation produce so much that I often woke up to drenched clothes and a damp bed. It really couldn’t be helped. I had to milk myself at night just to get some relief. Unfortunately, we didn’t have refrigerators at that time so I had nowhere to store them. They would go bad after a few days and I always thought to myself, all of my hard-earned milk, gone just like that. What a waste!”

Camelia ate the last bite of her food and smiled bitterly as she glanced at her baby. “Yeah. Hard-earned milk, it is.”

After eating, she cleaned up the table and took out the trash before taking over her son from Layla’s arms to breastfeed him. Perhaps the baby boy was really starving because he immediately latched onto her breast and kept sucking.

Camelia had only just finished her meal. Hence, she didn’t have much breast milk to offer him. When her son didn’t get his fill, he bit down harder, causing Camelia’s features to contort with pain. Still, she endured it.

Layla went upstairs to check on Marcus while I sat across from Camelia. I knew she had something to say to me and vice versa.

But it seemed like no one wanted to go first.

Suddenly, her lips curved into a wry smile and she muttered, "You must be surprised to see me like this, huh?"

I pursed my lips and fumbled for words. In the end, I decided to avoid answering her question. "The White family is quite well-off. You don't have to force yourself to be like this. You could consider hiring a caregiver to take care of the baby. That way, you can still live your own life."

Indeed, Marcus had the funds to support a woman and a child.

In fact, their lives would be at least a hundred times more dignified than ordinary families. The lowborn led miserable lives mostly because they barely scraped by, let alone had the luxury to care about their dignities. However, Camelia was different. Marcus' assets allowed her to lead a more dignified and glamorous life than ordinary women.

She met my gaze with a calm expression. “I understand what you’re getting at, but if I do that, he might never fall in love with me and instead, pursue you with a clear conscience for the rest of his life.”

Huffing out a bitter laugh, she continued, “I haven’t touched a single cent of the money he gave me over the years. I didn’t even ask my parents for money. I’m just like a daughter from an ordinary family, working my a*s off for myself and my child. I keep thinking that the longer I keep this up, the more likely I’ll be able to earn his love.”

I knew where she was coming from. A man with a successful career and good looks had no shortage of women flocking to him, regardless of whether they were after his money or his love.

Camelia understood this better than I. She was fully aware that Marcus’ heart did not belong to her. But unlike other women, she didn’t reap the benefits of his wealth. Instead, she took a gamble; except for his love, she didn’t want anything else from him.

This way, even if Marcus wanted to use money to compensate her, the fact that he couldn’t bring himself to love her would render that effort invalid. As the defaulter in their marriage, he wouldn’t be able to use money to make up for the lack of love toward her as well as the child.

I nodded in understanding, but my heart clenched in my chest when I witnessed the tough life she chose.

After a momentary silence, I steered the topic away. "I booked a flight back to K City tonight. I might have to stay there for some time. If you need anything, you can look for my friend. I've sent her contact information to your phone. And if you find it inconvenient staying at the hospital with your son, you can go live in my house. Rest assured, no one will disturb you there."

She studied me for a while before expressing her gratitude. "Thank you." After a brief hesitation, she said, "We could've been really good friends."

Her statement was like a heavy blow to my chest and I didn't know how to react for a while. At last, I flashed her a small smile and said, "This isn't too bad either."

Life was full of ups and downs. No one could determine or predict what would happen next.

We chatted for a bit and when I returned to the ward, Marcus was already asleep with Layla watching over him. She greeted me curtly upon seeing me. Apart from giving her some instructions, we didn't talk about anything else.

After packing my stuff, I told Layla to pass the things I brought over to Camelia. With that done, I dragged my suitcase and hailed a taxi by the hospital entrance, leaving straight for the airport.

I was already in the taxi when Nora called, and she sounded peeved. “Didn’t I tell you that everyone is to gather for a meal on the eve of Harvest Festival? How could you leave without even saying goodbye?”

Feeling apologetic, I replied, “I booked the flight last minute and didn’t have time to tell you. We’ll do it next time, okay? It’s not like I won’t be coming to A City anymore. Let’s get together again during Independence Day!”

From the silence over the phone, I surmised that she must have been rendered speechless by me. After a while, she sighed in defeat and exclaimed, “You guys are really something, you know? It’s just a simple meal. It’s not like it’d take ages to end! What’s the frickin rush?”

I froze as my mind registered her words. “What do you mean by ‘you guys’?”

I could already imagine her rolling her eyes before clarifying, “I’m talking about you and Tessa, of course. You guys said you’d be there, but then ended up leaving so abruptly.”

Chapter 839

I hummed a response but didn’t probe further. Instead, my mind drifted to Danny and I said, “Nora, since I won’t be in A City for several days, I trust you to take care of that matter I mentioned to you before. By the way, there’s also Danny. I met him in an alley a while ago. He looked like a pitiful

mess, so I told him to come to me if he needs anything. I may need your help on that since I won't be around for the time being."

Even through the phone, I could feel her pouting as she answered, "Alright, alright. I got it. Honestly, you're too kind for your own good. People like Danny are already beyond saving. Why are you getting yourself involved with him? You'll only bring unnecessary trouble to yourself."

I chuckled softly and merely said, "Thanks for your help, anyway. I'll make it up to you!"

She sighed again. "I know."

After we ended the call, the taxi coincidentally arrived at the airport. I got off and took my suitcase before heading toward the boarding gates. When I was collecting my ticket, I inadvertently spotted a friend.

Well, maybe not a friend... she's more like an acquaintance.

After collecting her ticket, Tessa scanned her surroundings, as if hiding from someone. Then, she walked toward the international boarding gate.

She's going abroad? Where?

I wasn't close with her to begin with, so I didn't intend to approach her and pry for information. As the distance between us increased, I headed to the terminal to wait for my flight.

At some point in time, I had unwittingly developed a habit of reading a book before boarding a plane and all the way to my destination. But I was happy about it since it was a good habit.

The flight lasted for four hours. By the time I arrived in K City, it was already quite late. I fished out my phone and checked my WhatsApp. Even though I didn't receive any messages from Ashton, I didn't feel that sad about it.

It was eight o'clock in the evening and I wondered if Summer was still awake. After giving it some thought, I dismissed the idea of calling her and took a cab to a hotel, planning to see Summer the next morning instead.

When I reached the hotel, I approached the front desk to settle the check-in procedures. To my dismay, the lady working the desk was quite slow at her job. She spoke on the phone while handling my check-in information, and would occasionally throw apologetic glances at me.

I wasn't exactly in a hurry, so I would smile in response without rushing her.

After she put down the phone, she sent me another apologetic look and stated, "I'm sorry, Miss. Our hotel is fully booked. We can't check you in anymore."

I was dumbfounded. "But it's only eight."

She smiled and patiently explained, "Well, Independence Day is coming soon, so our hotel is mostly receiving tourists groups lately. Individual guests usually have to arrive earlier to book a room, so I'm really sorry!"

It hit me just then. There would be an Independence Day Parade. Not to mention, K City had a large population. Adding on the momentous occasion that was just around the corner, most hotels would basically be overcrowded.

Thinking that most of the hotels were in the same situation, I hesitated for a while before calling Emery. Fortunately, she answered after the first ring. "You finally called me! For a moment there, I thought you'd disappeared!"

I chuckled and went straight to the point. “I have a situation right now and might need your help.”

“Tell me. What is it? I’ll do everything in my power to help you!” she responded earnestly.

A laugh escaped my lips at her flair for drama and I elaborated, “I’m in K City now. All the hotels are fully booked, so I might have to stay at your house for a few days.”

“What the f*ck?” she cursed without restraint. “Scarlett, I treat you as one of my own, but here you are, treating me like a d*mn outsider! You really are something, huh? Anyway, where are you now? I’ll come and pick you up. We have so many rooms at the Moore Residence, you could’ve come straight here and picked one. But you just had to go to a hotel. Seriously?”

I cut to the chase and simply sent her my location.

Luckily, traffic wasn’t heavy and she reached not long after.

Her red Lexus sportscar pulled to a stop in front of the hotel entrance, garnering a lot of attention. She rolled down her window and peered at me. “Get in, hot stuff!”

Tickled pink by her rowdy behavior, I giggled before motioning at my suitcase. “Will it fit into your car?”

She pursed her lips and swore loudly, “Well, f*ck! Why is your suitcase so big? Are you moving a corpse?”

After a short pause, she suggested, “I’ll get Hunter to come over to pick it up later. Let’s go home first.” Then, she politely gave the hotel doorman some instructions and even thanked him with a large tip.

In the car, she scrutinized me with a frown on her face. “Where have you been? Why did you leave without saying a word? Do you and Ashton both have the habit of doing this?”

I rolled my eyes at her and changed the subject. “Everyone’s been doing fine, I presume?”

“My brother and sister-in-law seemed to have aged a whole decade. If it wasn’t for Summer, I think they would’ve agreed to die together to atone for their sins. Cut them some slack, hmm? Life is like that, so let bygones be bygones. How long are you going to keep this up? Are you really going to push everyone away and live in solitude for the rest of your life?” I pressed my lips together and kept silent.

When the car rolled to a stop at the entrance of the Moore Residence, I was stunned for a split second but got down from the car without thinking too much. Before I could get my bearings, Summer threw herself into my arms.

Chapter 840

She hugged me and peppered me with kisses, all the while telling me how much she missed me.

Hugging her small frame, all of the day's fatigue seemed to have melted away. Cameron and Zachary walked over right then, along with another man who looked to be over fifty. After not seeing each other for a few months, they seemed to have aged significantly beyond their years.

I looked at them but didn't know what to say, so I settled for a smile.

Cameron smiled with motherly affection and piped up, "It's so good to finally see you. Come, let's go home!"

Having said that, she tugged me toward the villa. Emery had probably notified them in advance, so they ordered the housemaids to prepare a new table of food.

Summer was brimming with excitement. It was well past her bedtime, but she remained in my arms without any trace of sleepiness. Cameron had to gently remind her several times before she finally dragged her feet back to her room.

After a short while, however, she padded out of her room again to climb on my lap, asking softly, "Mommy, can I sleep with you tonight? I wanna hug

you to sleep. It's been so long since we slept together, Mommy. I miss you!"

Any mother who had been away from her child for too long wouldn't be able to refuse her child's requests, and I was no exception.

Hence, I nodded with a helpless smile.

After having something to eat, Hunter came home with my suitcase and brought it upstairs before carrying his baby boy over. Because he was in a hurry earlier, he didn't get to see his son before leaving.

Before I knew it, I was reaching out to take the four-month-old baby from Emery's arms. He was so tiny and chubby that merely looking at him seemed to fill my heart with joy. All women probably had a soft spot for children and would inevitably develop a sense of adoration for them.

Summer leaned against me to peer at the baby and said innocently, "Mommy, you should give me a little brother like Xavier too. Granny said that when I get older, I can help you take care of him. That way, you won't be too tired."

Surprised by her words, I glanced at her with a smile. "Summer, I'm happy with just you."

Emery eyed me and queried, “Are you and Ashton really not going to have a child?”

I nodded wordlessly, signifying the end of this topic.

We sat together as the night deepened. Summer had fallen asleep against me. Emery and Hunter carried their child upstairs to sleep, while Zachary went to his study, saying he had some matters to handle.

Cameron noticed the exhaustion lining my features and advised, “It’s getting late. Staying up late isn’t good for women, especially at your age. Go back to your room and have a good rest. Summer misses you a lot after not seeing you for so long. You should take her with you and sleep with her tonight.”

I nodded and carried Summer upstairs. The Moore Residence was an enormous three-story villa with an extravagant interior design. Not just any wealthy family had the luxury of living in this five-hundred-square-meter residence located in the city center.

“This room was prepared by your father ever since he found out about your existence. Rebecca stayed here before. He was worried you would mind, so he got people to change everything, but he was afraid his tastes wouldn’t suit yours, so he insisted on asking Ashton about your preferences. Some time ago, he brought Summer to R Province and looked for John. Then, he visited the place you lived in when you were young to see what kind of design you liked.”

Cameron led me into a large bedroom that had at least a hundred square meters and was comparable to an ordinary family's entire house. The interior design was mainly elegant and simple. Indeed, it was my favorite style.

After I placed Summer on the bed, Cameron explained, "Some of the clothes in the wardrobe were chosen by your father, and some by me. I noticed that you usually dress plainly, so I picked the clothes based on your style. I'm not sure whether you'll like them, but that's okay. If you don't, we can switch them out for something you prefer. The bags and jewelry were brought back by your father in recent years. They're all boutique items from famous fashion shows. I know Ashton treats you very well and you've seen your fair share of luxury items, so you may not be impressed by these things, but as your parents, it's the least we can do. We just want to give you the best. We've made many unforgivable mistakes these past few years and we wish to make it up to you. I know you resent us for what happened to your child, so we won't force you to accept us. We'd be happy as long as you're willing to come home and visit us."

As Cameron spoke, tears rolled down her cheeks. Hearing her voice that was thick with emotion, I placed my hands on her shoulders and reassured her. "Everything will be better in the future."

I didn't know what the future held, but the hardest thing to understand in the world was kinship. Concurrently, kinship was what helped us find our way home when we were lost. Although I didn't share a familial bond with them, we were still related by blood. In the decades to come, perhaps I would learn to understand the concept of family.

She gazed at me and smiled in relief. Certain things didn't need to be said out loud to be understood. Sometimes, a look or a gesture could convey what a thousand words couldn't.

In fact, I had already thought things through when I was in the morgue. Nothing came for free in this world. We had to work hard for whatever we wanted, otherwise, regret would be the only thing remaining at our moment of death.