

Chapter 841

Since I was still alive and kicking, I had to cherish everything I had.

“It’s getting late. You should rest early. What do you want to eat tomorrow? I’ll make it for you. Since Summer doesn’t have school tomorrow, we can all get together.” Cameron couldn’t conceal the delight on her face.

I smiled faintly and replied, “I’m not a picky eater. Anything’s fine for me.” I was being honest. Although I wasn’t a big eater, I was never picky with my food. I basically ate everything that could be eaten.

She nodded. “Alright, then. I’ll make all my signature dishes!” After making sure I had everything I needed, she left so that I could rest earlier.

Feeling a little sleepy, I nodded in response.

She walked to the door, but before she could leave, she abruptly looked back at me with a serious expression as though a thought struck her. “Did you and Ashton quarrel?”

Her question was like a bolt from the blue and I froze for a second before smiling. “No. I just missed Summer too much, so I called Emery as soon as I got off the plane and haven’t had the chance to tell Ashton about my return.”

At a time like this, Ashton would usually accompany me, but since I came here alone, it would inevitably evoke their suspicion.

She nodded subtly in response to my explanation but didn't ask anything else.

After a busy day, I was tired down to the bones. Once Cameron left the villa, I washed up and climbed into bed. Sensing my presence, Summer groggily nestled herself into my arms, offering me the warmth I didn't realize I had been craving for.

Children possessed healing powers that specifically worked on their mothers. This statement held true. As long as Summer was beside me, all of the despair from before, no matter how overwhelming, would dissolve into nothing.

I seemed to be able to understand the meticulous care and tentative love Cameron had for me. If it wasn't for our complicated history, would we have turned out as a loving family instead?

The next day, the gloomy weather in K City was no more.

The sun's rays finally broke through the clouds and filtered into the bedroom, making the morning especially warm.

Having some difficulty breathing, I woke up to the sight of Summer sprawled on my chest like a baby. I watched as her mouth opened and closed in tandem with her breathing, finding it incredibly cute. Thanks to her, there was a damp patch of drool on my shirt.

From her rosy and chubby cheeks, I realized that she seemed to have put on some weight recently. As I observed her features, I found that she bore a strong resemblance to Jared.

Knock, knock! Someone was knocking on the door, so I shifted Summer onto the bed.

Then, I rolled out of bed and opened the door to see that it was Emery. She was sporting dark circles beneath her eyes as she bemoaned, “Can I crash in your room? Xavier will be the death of me. Why do creatures like children exist in the world, huh? I’m going crazy! I couldn’t get a wink of sleep because of him and I’m so tired!”

She ranted pitifully while making her way to the bed before flopping down like a puppet whose strings had been cut. Then, she hugged Summer and started snoring loudly, seemingly really exhausted.

The bed was huge and could easily accommodate three people, but I checked the time and found that it was already eight. I felt well-rested, so I doubted that I could fall asleep again. After washing up in the bathroom, I went to the wardrobe and searched for some clothes to wear.

Just like what Cameron said, the clothes she selected were simple yet elegant. But things that were simple and elegant often came with a hefty price tag because plain didn't necessarily equate to cheap.

As I walked toward the stairs, I heard voices and laughter coming from the living room. It seemed like there were guests present, which came as a surprise to me because it was still very early in the morning.

Upon reaching the top of the spiral staircase, I peered down at the people seated in the living room. Without needing to take a closer look, I could immediately recognize the person who had his back to me. After a mental calculation, I realized that we hadn't seen each other for quite some time.

After the argument we had, I thought that perhaps it would be a long time before we meet again. After all, with the number of hurtful things I said, his anger probably wouldn't subside so soon.

Suddenly, a voice sounded in my mind. Scarlett, you clearly knew that he'd come back to get you no matter what you did, that's why you brazenly said all those hurtful words to him. You blatantly hurt his feelings because you knew that he would never leave you, isn't that right? Have you ever thought that you could be the one at fault?

While I was lost in my thoughts, these words pierced through my consciousness. Stunned by that revelation, I suddenly realized that whenever Ashton and I argued, I never seemed to have reflected on myself. In fact, I would hurt him even deeper the next time.

The chatter stopped abruptly, snapping me back to my senses. Everyone in the living room had turned their attention to me. Right then, Cameron brought out some fruits from the kitchen and saw me. “You’re awake. Mr. Fuller has been here for quite some time already. Come down quick and have your breakfast. I heard that the aquarium in the North District has opened for business. Summer has been wanting to go there for a long time. Both of you should take her there later. That little girl has been going on and on about it.”

I descended the stairs but didn’t look at Ashton once. After giving an indifferent response, I went to the kitchen. A scrumptious breakfast prepared by the housekeeper was spread out on the table. Because everyone had varying daily routines, whoever woke up first would get to eat. Emery mentioned this to me once, but besides Cameron and Zachary, the rest of us couldn’t seem to wake up early. Hence, it didn’t really matter.

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Cameron brought some breakfast to the living room, then came back to the dining table and glanced at me. “The Stovalls called this morning and invited us for dinner. Everyone knows that you’re back and they’re all asking for a gathering.”

I stuffed a pastry into my mouth and spoke in a garbled voice, “Mm, I need to pay Uncle Louis a visit anyway.”

When she saw the way I was wolfing down the food, she placed a glass of milk in front of me and said in fond exasperation, "Slow down. What's the rush? No one's going to take your food. Now, be honest with me. What's going on between you and Ashton?"

I took a sip of milk and feigned cluelessness. "What do you mean what's going on?"

She clucked her tongue and chided, "Do you take us for blind fools? If there's nothing wrong, why did you ignore him completely and come in here on your own? You two weren't like this before!"

I pursed my lips and countered, "Oh? How were we before?"

She sighed. "It's normal for couples to quarrel, but Mr. Fuller treats you well in every way possible and we can all see that. Don't do anything foolish. Live a peaceful life with him and stop kicking up a fuss!"

I put my glass down and nodded. After wiping my mouth, I declared, "I'm done eating."

She released another soft sigh, wanting to persuade me but had no idea how to even begin.

I went to the living room and saw Ashton playing a game of chess with Zachary. Hence, I decided to go upstairs to wake Summer. Before I could, however, I was unexpectedly stopped by Zachary. “Letty, I heard Mr. Fuller said that you’re quite skilled at chess. Come here and help me out. I’ve already lost several games.”

I stood next to them and studied the chessboard. Zachary was White, while Ashton was Black. Zachary’s queen had already been taken and he only had one miserable knight left. Even his two bishops were captured. Right then, Ashton’s chess pieces were positioned so that Zachary was caught at a crossroads.

It was clear who the winner was, but Zachary’s ego wouldn’t allow him to admit defeat. Hence, he called me over to diffuse the awkward situation. Seeing as there was no way to turn things around, I shifted my gaze to Ashton but didn’t speak.

After a few days of not seeing him, his face was slightly haggard, but he still looked as handsome as ever.

Sensing my gaze on him, he raised his brows at me but didn't speak either. Instead, he looked at Zachary and stated, "It's your turn, Mr. Moore."

Zachary was at a dead-end. Regardless of what move he makes, he was doomed to lose. Thus, he simply stood up and glanced at me. "Letty, help me continue the game. I'm going to go see what your mother's prepared for breakfast."

With that, he turned and left, rendering me speechless. It was obvious that he was asking me to clean up his mess.

I sat down, but instead of moving a chess piece, I propped my chin on a hand and asked, "Why did you come here?"

A small frown appeared between his brows as he answered my question with a question. "Why didn't you tell me that you were coming back to K City?"

I looked down at the chessboard and moved one of his chess pieces away before glancing at him with a helpless expression. "You're an extremely busy man. I didn't want to disturb you."

He pursed his lips, his gaze landing on the chess piece I just moved away. Sighing softly, he compromised and removed another chess piece, clearly retreating voluntarily.

“What happened that night was a misunderstanding. Joe was there too. You can ask him if you don’t believe me.”

Is this his idea of an explanation?

I pressed my lips together and moved my last pawn across the chessboard, saying blandly, “That won’t be necessary. You’re a prominent and powerful man. Having several women at the same time is completely understandable.”

His frown deepened and he took my pawn in one move.

I got up, unwilling to continue. “Enjoy your game, Mr. Fuller. I’ll be excusing myself now.”

His hand shot out to pull me back down. Massaging his nose bridge, he put the white pawn he had captured on the chessboard again and placed his black rook diagonal to it. Then, he trained his eyes on me and asked, “Shall we?”

I cocked a brow at him, but nodded and captured his rook with my pawn. He touched his forehead, slightly exasperated, but there was nothing he could do.

Zachary walked over just then. Glancing at the chessboard, he clucked his tongue and remarked, “It was clearly a dead-end just now. How did it become a draw? My dear, you have some amazing chess skills, huh!”

My mouth tightened because I was well aware that Ashton had deliberately allowed this to happen.

Ashton arched his eyebrows at me in a teasing manner. "Shall we continue?"

I looked at his remaining chess pieces, then at mine. Although I was at a disadvantage, I nodded curtly and agreed, "Sure."

With that, he made his move and lifted a brow at me. "Your turn."

Cameron came over and placed a plate of fruits on the table. Emery, who was sleeping in my room, made her way downstairs right then. When she saw us playing chess, she scuttled over to join in the hype. I greeted her briefly before making my move, seizing the opening he had deliberately given me.

Catching the intentional slip on Ashton's part, Zachary shook his head in exasperation before walking away while grumbling, "What kind of chess game is this? If everyone were to play like this, the chess world would be a disaster."

Emery shoved a piece of fruit into her mouth and curled her lip at him. "What do you know, Zach? Can't you see that this isn't chess, but a married couple settling their differences? And you call yourself a love expert? Hah, I think you're just a-"

Zachary glared daggers at his sister, effectively shutting her up before she could say the last word.

Chapter 843

On the chessboard, Ashton was down to his last few pieces. Gazing at me, he asked in a gentle tone, “What are your plans for this afternoon?”

“I don’t have any plans,” I replied. Then, I attacked his knight.

He didn’t seem to mind and openly surrendered to me.

Emery walked away, probably tired of witnessing Ashton’s obvious submission. Meanwhile, Cameron stood by the side and rebuked, “Didn’t I tell you both to visit the aquarium in the North District today? Summer has been going on about it for a long time.”

“That’s a good idea. The weather today is suitable for an outing,” Ashton answered with a nod.

I refused flatly, “I can’t. I’m busy.”

Both Cameron and Ashton looked at me, and the former asked quizzically, “Busy with what?”

My eyes stayed focused on the board and I only lifted my gaze after taking Ashton’s king. “Didn’t I tell you I’ll be visiting Uncle Louis today? I haven’t seen Hannah for a long time too. I wanna see her baby.”

Cameron was momentarily taken aback, but she managed to squeeze out a smile. “But Mr. Fuller is here. It’s a good time to take Summer out to play.”

“Oh.” I paused, then countered, “But I’ve already called my brother and made dinner plans with him tonight.”

Trying hard to patch things up between Ashton and me, Cameron proposed, “Well, that’s great too. You can all go together. Summer has never seen Hannah’s baby. Since Summer likes babies, I think it’s a good idea to-”

“Let Summer stay at home and play with Xavier. He’s a baby too and she likes him. It might be troublesome to bring her along. It’s better if I go alone.” I stood up and was about to go upstairs.

Right then, Summer bounded down the stairs barefooted and ran toward me. “Mommy, Uncle John is calling!”

Speak of the devil...

As soon as I answered the call, his voice drifted across the phone. “You’re back in K City?”

“I see you’re well-informed,” I replied.

He clucked his tongue in a playful manner. “Of course. Let’s have dinner together tonight. I haven’t seen you in such a long time. I miss you.”

I hummed in response. “Sure. I was coincidentally planning to see Hannah and the baby, then visit Uncle Louis.”

John fell silent for a while before clarifying, “I meant just us.”

I pursed my lips, slightly stunned. "Why?"

When he didn't respond, I speculated, "Did you and Hannah fight?"

"Can't dinner just be the two of us?" From his grumpy tone, my guess was probably right.

I sighed softly and concurred, "Fine. You pick the place and time, then."

He agreed and hung up after that.

Summer wrapped her short arms around me and I noticed that she was still in her pajamas. Hence, I told her to go upstairs and change, but she wanted me to help her. Seeing as she wasn't a baby anymore, I turned her down. To my chagrin, she ran to Ashton, hugged him, and started acting all cute.

Mentally throwing my hands up in defeat, I went back to my room and prepared to unpack my things since I probably had to stay here for the next few days.

After Independence Day, I would need to go back to A City and continue working on the Lavelian Village project. I didn't bring much of my own belongings back with me and the large suitcase was actually for all the cute toys I bought for Summer.

Summer was probably awakened by my ringtone and immediately went to look for me because I noticed that the bed was still unmade. After tidying up the bed slightly, I arranged my skincare products on the dressing table.

Hearing some movement near the bedroom door, I assumed that it was Summer and lectured, "Summer, you need to make it a habit to make the bed and change your clothes after waking up, okay?"

Even though there were maids at home, she needed to learn how to do these things on her own because not being able to do something and not wanting to do it were two different things.

When I didn't hear her response, I frowned and glanced behind me to see Ashton's towering figure.

His obsidian eyes were steady as he stared at me in silence. I stiffened and avoided his gaze, not intending to speak.

"How's Mr. White's injury?" he asked as his gaze darkened.

"He's fine," I replied succinctly.

He sat on my bed and kept the conversation going. "When are you planning to go back to A City?"

“After Independence Day.”

This one-sided conversation was awkward, but Ashton seemed unfazed as he continued speaking.

Already in a sullen mood, I stood up and made my way to the door, but he snagged my arm. “Must we continue fighting like this?”

I looked at him with a frown. “When did I fight with you, Mr. Fuller?”

His expression turned slightly glacial at that. “Scarlett, I want us to be able to sit down and talk things out, not give each other the cold shoulder and behave unreasonably.”

I met his gaze and huffed out a mirthless laugh. “You’re right, Mr. Fuller. I’ve always been an unreasonable person. If you can’t stand it, don’t come here. No one asked you to anyway.”

Humans were funny beings. Obviously, I could have had a civil conversation with him, but I just had to hurt him.

Ashton’s face clouded over and he nodded with a cold smile. “Fine. Have it your way, then. I’ll stop bothering you.”

Chapter 844

He was clearly speaking out of anger, but before I could react, he spun on his heels and went downstairs.

Drawing in a deep breath, I suppressed the inexplicable emotions in my heart and suddenly felt that I was indeed behaving unreasonably.

I sat in front of the dressing table and took a moment to calm myself. Just then, Emery came upstairs with Xavier in her arms and looked at me with a baffled expression. “What did you guys argue about this time? Do the two of you get off on fighting and hurting each other?”

I shrugged and looked back at her. “If I told you no, would you believe me? I just lost control of my emotions.”

Sighing helplessly, she said, “Ashton is actually a good man. In fact, it’s close to impossible to find a man like him nowadays. His company is facing such a huge crisis now and he’s already overworking himself, but when he found out about your return, he still came here to admit his mistake and yield to you. Scarlett, I have no complaints about you in other aspects, but you’ve always been irrational when it comes to love. I think a large part of

the reason is because you know that whatever you do, Ashton will always find his way back to you. This has become some sort of vicious cycle, one that you take pleasure in and even constantly induce. Have you ever considered the possibility that one day, Ashton's patience might run out and it'd really be the end for the two of you?"

I was stunned and my mind buzzed as though her words had hit a nerve in me.

When I didn't reply, she continued, "My relationship with Hunter isn't as passionate or wild as yours with Ashton, neither is it as complicated. Marriage to me is pretty simple. When we're in our own little home, we'd get mad and argue about unwashed socks, or if one of us isn't spending enough time with our children, or if one of us brought home our emotions. Perhaps these trivial matters will keep happening, but at the end of the day, we know that these are just small, insignificant squabbles in life, and after the fight is over, we'll leave it in the past. What's important is to give each other a kiss when we wake up in the morning, give each other a hug before leaving, and let go of all the stress and unhappiness upon coming home to say 'I missed you'. Yes, these are all little gestures that may seem troublesome to do in our everyday life. In fact, it's not compulsory, but everyone lives differently. Hunter and I want a warm and cozy life for ourselves as well as for our child so that we can vividly feel each other's love."

Here, she paused briefly. "I know the love you and Ashton share is more passionate and intense than many of the couples out there, but there's just something wrong with the way the two of you do it. You're both

overcomplicating love. Just think about it, is Rebecca really a substantial obstacle between the two of you? The same goes for Marcus. Is he really? No, both of them have their own lives, but occasionally appear in yours. Whether or not there's anything going on between Ashton and her, or you and Marcus, neither of you have ever witnessed anything truly notable. Scarlett, love is about compromise and acceptance; about putting yourselves in each other's shoes. You should be worrying about him and trying to understand him, not just taking what he gives you and asking for more. Ashton is changing bit by bit. He's understanding and tolerant toward you. He even stands by your decision not to start a family. He's already trying his best not to put pressure on you and let you do the things you love, but my dear, have you ever stopped to think what you've done for him over the years?"

What Emery said was like a hard slap to my face. During these ten years of marriage, I kept telling myself that my love for Ashton was real and that everything I did for him came from a genuine heart, but all these years, I never really tried to understand him. Since the death of our child to the day I found out that he was the reason my birth parents and I grew apart, I've been going in circles with only one goal in mind—to make his life a living hell.

Come to think of it, it seemed like I was exacting revenge on him in the name of love.

Emery sighed softly when I remained silent. "Scarlett, falling in love is easy. It's staying in love that's the hard part. Ashton grew up in a military family.

His greatest strength is his responsibility and loyalty. He made a vow to Rebecca's brother, so she has become his responsibility. And I'm sure you know better than me how fiercely loyal he is. Stop hurting each other in the heat of a moment, okay?"

I nodded, realizing that I may have been too impulsive and willful. I never seemed to consider things from Ashton's perspective or try to truly understand him.

"What happened to Fuller Corporation?" I had been in A City and didn't know much about the happenings in K City, so I had no idea how Ashton was doing these days.

Another soft sigh left her lips before she explained, "It's an old incident from before. Remember when a few children's bodies appeared on Fuller Corporation's construction site a few years ago? This incident was already taken care of several years ago, but somehow, it was brought to light again and the public is pointing fingers at Ashton, accusing him of using Louis' influence to illegally develop in K City. At present, the real estate that Fuller Corporation initially planned to develop has been put on hold. This current situation is quite serious."

My brows knitted together. "Why would someone dig up the past? Aren't all the real estate development documents reviewed before being approved? Why is Uncle Louis involved?"

Chapter 845

Emery shook her head slightly. “There’s no substantive evidence, but all signs point to Fuller Corporation. Also, all the companies abroad are now unable to continue operating.”

“Isn’t Joe in charge of everything overseas?”

She looked at me in surprise before frowning. “Have you been living under a rock for too long? An infectious virus broke out in Western Europe a month ago and it’s total chaos over there. Shopping malls were robbed and used for riots. It’s already a blessing to be able to survive there, so making money is definitely out of the question.”

I really had no idea about all this. I had been too busy with the Lavelian Village project recently and barely read any international news.

There was a knock on the door before Hunter poked his head in. He was carrying a briefcase and dressed in a grey suit with his hair combed neatly. After briefly greeting me, he glanced at Emery and said, “Honey, I have another class in the evening, so I’ll be back slightly later. I’ve booked the flight to J City and packed your suitcase. Go have a look later and see if I missed anything out.”

Smiling sweetly, Emery got up with Xavier in her arms. “I’m sure there won’t be a problem. I’ve always taken pride in my hubby’s capabilities. C’mon, I’ll send you off.”

The two of them acted lovey-dovey and went downstairs. When my bedroom was quiet once again, I sat in front of the vanity mirror and replayed Emery's words in my mind.

When I came downstairs, Ashton was already gone.

Catching me glancing around, Cameron smiled helplessly. "He's gone. He waited such a long time for you. He's busy too, you know?"

I bowed my head, unsure of what to say. After some thought, I looked at Cameron and asked, "Mom, where's Dad?" I had unconsciously blurted out those words.

All I could think of was what Emery said earlier, so I didn't realize that I had just officially acknowledged them as my parents.

Suddenly, I noticed the surprise and joy on Cameron's face as she gazed at me with red-rimmed eyes. Because she was struggling to keep her tears at bay, a few prominent wrinkles had formed on the corners of her eyes. She parted her lips a few times to speak, but perhaps she was too emotional, she only ended up saying, "My dear, did you just..."

She trailed off, as if afraid to ask, and there was also a trace of disbelief sprawled on her face. In the end, she could no longer hold back her tears. She raised her hand and frantically wiped them away, but more tears poured down.

Tears welled in my eyes all of a sudden, and I couldn't help but recall Emery's advice. Indeed, I wasn't the only one suffering in silence.

Even though I was the victim, when a mother hurt her own child, yes, the child felt pain, but the mother's pain was one that ran deep into the soul.

I looked at her and repeated my question with a smile. "Mom, where's Dad?"

Cameron replicated my smile with a tear-streaked face and pointed somewhere behind me. "He's there." Then, she raised her voice slightly. "Zachary, did you hear what our daughter said just now? She's looking for you!"

With that, she bowed her head and wiped her tears, but she couldn't seem to keep the smile from her face.

I looked over my shoulder and was stunned to see Zachary holding the newspaper while looking at me with a small smile and reddened eyes. When he saw me looking at him, he asked in a slightly shaky voice, "What is it?"

I could somewhat relate to how they were feeling at the moment. The first time Summer called me mommy, I held her in my arms for a very long time, overwhelmed with indescribable happiness.

I replied, "I want to know about the situation at Ashton's company."

Zachary smiled and motioned for me to take a seat.

He took a moment to rein in his emotions while Cameron cheerfully poured us a glass of lemonade and glanced at me. “Letty, what would you like to eat later? I’ll cook for you.”

“I’m fine with anything.” I smiled.

She was in good spirits as she walked into the kitchen with a subtle bounce to her steps.

Zachary watched her retreating figure and had a helpless look on his face. “She’s probably jumping with joy on the inside after hearing you call her mom.”

I chuckled softly and waited for him to continue.

“The situation at Fuller Corporation is slightly complicated. The public and the government are putting pressure on the company at the same time. For now, we have no way to intervene, especially Louis because if he does, the situation may only worsen. But luckily, Ashton is a capable person and I believe that he can handle it well. Don’t worry too much about it. For a listed company like Fuller Corporation, it’s basically impossible for its competitors to overthrow it. Besides, the Murphys are the only ones in K City who can go up against Fuller Corporation. They’re not like the others who dabble in market competition, so what’s happening now is only a small matter and won’t cause too big of an effect.”

After he broke down the situation for me, I instinctively breathed a sigh of relief. Fuller Corporation had grown stronger over the years, not to mention it had hit many snags along the way too. Based on Ashton's capabilities, he should be able to resolve it.

Seeing my expression, Zachary smiled faintly. "You're obviously worried about him, yet you pretended not to care. Why didn't you ask him yourself when he was here earlier? But it's Fuller Corporation after all. It's no surprise that it's constantly targeted. Even the strongest trees can fall. Although it doesn't seem to be a huge problem, one mistake on Ashton's part and all his efforts would go down the drain. He's been having a lot on his plate recently. As his wife, you should check in on him more at a time like this and be a pillar of support for him."

I nodded, bearing in mind the advice Emery gave me. I was no longer able to deny that I was indeed being a tad too stubborn all this while.