

Chapter 891

I had no idea how long Ashton had been in the chamber. His entire body was stiff, while his forehead was icy cold to the touch. The man had lost consciousness.

“Ashton, I’m here! Wake up! Please wake up.” I removed my coat before wrapping it around his body. Then, I cuddled up with him, trying to warm his body.

The man didn’t give any response. Not wasting any time, I helped him up and carried him on my back before we moved toward the exit.

Meanwhile, I inform Boris, “Boris, I found Ashton in the refrigerating chamber, but he is unconscious. Come fast!”

Bang! Just then, the door of the refrigerating chamber was being slammed shut. The next moment, I noticed the temperature in the chamber dropped drastically.

At that instant, we were surrounded by biting cold air that blew directly onto us.

While carrying Ashton, I tried in vain to get into contact with Boris. It turned out that the signal of the earbud was cut off.

Ashton's body temperature was becoming lower by the minute while his body grew unpliant. Hugging him tighter in my arms, I called out, "Ashton, I'm Scarlett! I'm here! Don't sleep, or I will get mad. Wake up, Ashton! Wake up!"

Being eaten up by fear, there was little rationality left in me. All I could do was to keep talking to Ashton though he could give me no response. Soon, I was overwhelmed by panic as the chillness penetrated my body.

I snuggled close to Ashton. The damp areas in the chamber and even the water vapor started to freeze.

I could feel my body grew stiff, let alone Ashton's. I kept rubbing his hands, trying to warm them. As I continued talking to him, my tears started rolling down my cheeks and froze in no time, which caused numbness and a tingling sensation.

There was nothing but silence outside the chamber. I was on the verge of a breakdown as Ashton started to lose vital signs. Feeling helpless, I clung to the Ashton, shivering and crying.

Since I had been through the trauma of being locked inside a freezer, I started suffering an acute stress reaction. Being overwhelmed by fear of the cold, my body convulsed. Just then, I vaguely heard Ashton's voice saying, "Let her go. I'll sign it."

It was the first time he ever spoke since I entered the chamber. I opened my eyes and tried to turn to look at him, yet it was hard to move my body.

Right then, the door of the refrigerating chamber was being flung open. The person who appeared was none other than Armond. In his burgundy red suit, the man plastered a faint smile.

It was within my expectation that Armond was the one behind Ashton's kidnapping. Still, I couldn't bring myself to believe that he would be so cruel to us.

"Hand me the contract," he ordered his subordinate. Then, he turned to face Ashton. "Please sign it, Mr. Fuller."

I regarded him in disbelief. "How could you do this to us?"

Gazing at me, Armond curled his lips into his usual gentle smile. "Actually, Scarlett, it's all thanks to you. If you hadn't come here, Mr. Fuller would rather die instead of signing this contract."

He then placed the contract in front of Ashton and said smilingly, "Mr. Fuller, you indeed love Ms. Stovall a lot. You could stand the blistering cold for more than ten hours, but you gave in when Ms. Stovall was locked in the chamber with you. Oh, what a grand love you have for her!"

“You b*stard!” I couldn’t help but curse. In my arms, Ashton’s body was stiff, and he could hardly open his eyes. If I weren’t here, he wouldn’t remain conscious until now.

Disregarding my hostility, Armond put the pen in Ashton’s hand and then forced the latter to sign the contract. I cast my eyes at Ashton and then at Armond. The next moment, I pulled out the knife that Boris gave me for self-defense purposes and grabbed Armond’s collar, pressing it hard against his throat. “Let us go, or we’ll die together!”

Narrowing his eyes, Armond glanced at the seemingly lifeless Ashton as he spoke, “Do you really think the two of you could get out of this place?”

I suppressed my fear while pressing the knife harder. “Let your men take Ashton out of the chamber! Now!”

Seeing me holding Armond on knifepoint, his subordinates dared not to move. Just then, the sound of footsteps rang out, and in came a group of men. I was relieved to see that it was Boris and the others.

Armond’s subordinates tried to stop Boris. However, the latter fired his gun into the air and warned, “Don’t move!” His resounding voice and the sound of the gunshot deterred Armond’s subordinates.

Boris then asked his men to bring Ashton out. After that, pointing his gun at Armond, he called out, “Mr. Murphy, I’m sorry about this. Ms. Stovall, come over!”

Upon that, I let go of Armond before making my way out. Being held at gunpoint, Armond and his men dared not to move. When I finally got out of the chamber, Boris asked one of his subordinates to take off his suit for me.

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“Miss, you should leave this instant! Let me handle this!” He urged as he turned to me.

“How could you use such lowly methods to obtain your goals? It seems that I am too young to understand your cruelty,” I replied as I gazed at the bodies in the freezer room.

“Win or lose; we are all driven by our greed for wealth. Scarlett, it’s only just a matter of our views!” Armond laughed coldly.

“Can we leave safely?” I asked Boris and closed the freezer door shut.

“Don’t worry about it. Armond does not have most of his henchman with him right now! Let’s go!” Boris gave me a curt nod.

“Boris, have you called the police?” I paused as we approached the factory’s exit.

He shook his head as he asked, "Do you want to lodge a report?"

"He continued his operations despite being banned. It is a clear violation of the law. It would be more beneficial to get the police's intervention. Additionally, we should contact Moranta's reporters and show them the evidence of Armond's wrongdoings. This will cause a great stir within the Murphys," I replied.

"Alright!" Boris nodded in agreement.

Although I was clueless about Ashton's duration in the freezer room, he began to sweat profusely after entering the car. At the sight of him sweating, Boris urged the driver to speed up the vehicle.

Along the car ride, I pulled Ashton into my embrace. His muscles and body felt as stiff as a board. "He must have been in the freezer for a long time. His muscles and nerves might be damaged," Boris said as he looked at me with a worried gaze.

"Let's wait for the doctor's diagnosis before jumping to conclusions!" I interjected before he could continue any further.

After Ashton was sent to the hospital, Boris and I waited outside the ER. As the minutes crawled by, I had a sudden realization about Holden's absence. "Boris, where is Mr. Holden?" I enquired worriedly.

“Right now, he is not in a good position to leave the house. After all, he had just taken over the Taylor family. If he makes an appearance, there would be countless enemies waiting to pounce on this opportunity. He must avoid a confrontation with his enemies,” Boris explained with a frown.

I nodded as a sign of acknowledgement.

Holden’s absence was understandable. After all, he had to protect and defend his domain. During my toughest moments, he was willing to take me in. This generous act was already a sign of kindness from him.

Meanwhile, Ashton was forced to remain in the ER for a long time. The duration of his absence left me stricken with anxiety as I waited impatiently.

The next day, I could feel my worry grow as the ER doors remained shut. Repeatedly, I peered inside in hopes of catching a glimpse and paced agitatedly along the corridors.

Boris glanced at me with a worried look. It seemed like he yearned to comfort me. However, he remained silent.

At the same time, Holden had arrived at the hospital. “Do you plan to scare Ashton with your horrible features when he comes out?” Holden remarked when he caught sight of our disheveled features.

I chose not to reply to his cruel comment. After all, I was used to his constant insults.

“Mr. Holden, Mr. Fuller is still undergoing recovery. You should refrain from making such inappropriate jokes,” Boris warned him.

“Let me handle the situation here. You should head back and take a rest!” Holden advised, “If you continue to wear yourself out, I’m afraid that you’ll turn even uglier! With such horrendous looks, no one would want to marry you even if you wished to remarry!”

Despite his words, I remained in a crouching position outside the doors. I’m not in the mood to listen to him!

Bang! The ER doors burst open as a doctor emerged from the room.

Immediately, I rose to my feet. Due to my low blood pressure, I stumbled and nearly fell to the ground. Fortunately, Holden managed to stop my fall as he helped me regain my balance. “Are you trying to injure yourself?” He asked sarcastically.

“Doctor, how is my husband?” I brushed Holden away with an irritated scowl and shifted my attention to the doctor.

“The patient is no longer in a critical condition. However, his muscles and nerves suffered from varying degrees of frostbite. In the future, these injuries may cause severe side effects. In the worst-case scenario, your family members and the patient should be prepared as the patient may be partially paralyzed,” the doctor explained.

The tragic news hit me like a lightning strike. It wasn't until Ashton was wheeled out of the ER when I snapped out of my daze.

In the ward, Ashton remained unconscious. "Boris, you should head back and get some rest. I can remain here to keep him company. Besides, there are still many issues left unsolved, so you should take care of yourself," I addressed Boris.

"Mr. Moore and Mr. Lowe should be already on their way here. Don't worry, Mr. Fuller will be fine!" Boris replied in an attempt to reassure me.

I nodded tiredly in response. My exhaustion kept me from mustering a proper reply.

After Boris's departure, Holden entered the ward and leaned against the door frame. He had a foolish expression painted across his face. "Why don't you spit it out? It'd be a waste if you remained silent after coming all the way here!" I said coldly.

Holden raised his eyebrows in response. "I swear you're the weirdest person I know... One moment ago, you'd say something dumb, and the next thing you know, you blew people away. How can you tell that I have something to say right now?" he asked sarcastically.

"Well, you can choose to keep it to yourself!" I said with a frown.

“How boring! Anyway, you’re as cruel as always. Armond is currently under investigation. The factory that Ashton was held hostage had been shut down before. Now that it’s being explored again, they discovered traces of carcinogen produced from the factory. The Moranta police force has launched an investigation into all of the industries under the Murphys. Murphy Corporation has lost millions after a single day of delay in its operations. Additionally, he is also blamed for the designated kidnappings and illegal smuggling. Such problems would be enough to keep him busy for a few days. Scarlett, I must say that I am impressed. Your single move was enough to cripple him entirely. You were the one that contacted the reporters, right?” Holden questioned.

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I did not deny his words.

He left after talking about the topic for a little longer.

After he left, I remained by Ashton’s side. It was a relief to see that his pale complexion had regained some color.

As Ashton had not regained consciousness, I could only keep him company. All of a sudden, the loud ringtone of my phone echoed insistently from my purse. I glanced down at my screen to notice that Sasha’s mother had called.

“Mrs. Brooks, what happened?” I asked her patiently after picking up the call.

Immediately, I was greeted by the anguished wails of Sasha’s mother echoing across the phone. “Mrs. Fuller, I know that it’s wrong for me to beg for your help in such a shameless manner. I should not have contacted you in the first place! However, I’m utterly cornered. I have no idea what to do anymore. Renee’s chemotherapy has just begun, and the cost of the procedure has taken away all of our savings. The poor child has been tormented in such horrible ways, and the doctor allowed us to change hospitals. Will you help us? We must have committed terrible sins in our past lives. As a result, our punishment has been delivered to this poor child. Renee is only four years old! I...” her ramblings was cut off into loud sobs of despair.

What should I do?

Although most of us would get to grow old, some were destined to face tragedy the moment they were born. It seems like a person’s life really is dependent on their fate!

I mulled over my thoughts as the sounds of her sobs filled my ears. When I did not offer a response, she must have confused my silence as a form of rejection. “Mrs. Fuller, you must think of us as greedy beasts. In the past, you’ve helped us countless times. I should not be coming to beg for your help. Thank you!” she sniffled in despair.

“Continue the treatment!” I replied dully, “I’ll transfer the money into your account. Make sure to be with the child along the journey. I believe everything will get better soon!”

That’s right; things will get better in the future!

“Mrs. Fuller, thank you so much. Thank you! I will try my best to repay your gratitude!” Mrs. Brookes exclaimed. She was overwhelmed with joy at that moment.

Without another word, I hung up the call and transferred the money. Maybe the issue with Sasha would remain unsolved forever. Yet, I could not turn a blind eye to the fate of an innocent child. Although I was uncertain about the future, I would not stand by idly whilst I had the power to help others.

The sight of Ashton on the bed made me sigh. Let’s just hope that good karma will come back to me.

Three days had passed when Ashton finally regained consciousness. When he awoke, he seemed muddled and confused. “Are you alright? Are you hurt?” Ashton asked blearily as he clutched my hand tightly.

“I’m fine. I was totally unharmed!” I smiled and enveloped him in a warm hug

After he ran a careful gaze over my body and determined that I was unscathed, Ashton let out a huge sigh of relief. “Don’t put yourself in danger for my sake next time. I want you to live a long and happy life!”

“Don’t say that...” I sniffled. Tears threatened to spill from my eyes when I heard what he said.

For the first time, Ashton revealed his vulnerability to my gaze. Gently, he clutched me in his arms as I hugged him. I hoped that my touch would be able to convey my feelings and bring him comfort.

Over the years, we had learned how to rely on each other. Although our future may be filled with countless obstacles and difficulties, I was determined that we will no longer separate.

Naturally, we would not be present during the investigation of Murphy Corporation. The partnership between Fuller Corporation and the Taylors had officially commenced. Once again, I met Holden at the joint signing event. He had even booked a luxurious cruise ship to celebrate the event’s success. At the same time, it displayed the Taylor family’s immense wealth and power.

Although the October weather in Moranta was not particularly chilly, Ashton insisted on draping his blazer over my off-shoulder dress. Coincidentally, I spotted Holden on the deck. He had a wine glass in his grasp as he stared out into the vast sea. At that moment, he seemed to be deep in thought.

I remained behind Holden as I observed him quietly. Likewise, I turned my gaze to the sea and the night sky. The sky was illuminated with dozens of twinkling stars. Holden turned around, and a flash of surprise crossed his features when he caught sight of my figure. He must have felt my presence.

He lifted his wine glass in my direction with a cocky raise of his brow. "I'm surprised that you have the time to be outside here. Why isn't Mr. Fuller with you?"

"He has his own matters to attend to," I replied with a faint smile and made my way to his side.

He nodded and turned his gaze back to the ocean. Against the beautiful scenery, Holden did not seem as obnoxious as I remembered. "Have you ever looked up at a luxury cruise ship from a raft?" he asked.

"Nope," I denied with a shake of my head, "A raft is incapable of moving in the ocean. An enormous cruise ship is unable to access lakes or rivers too. Thus, it is impossible for them to meet, let alone gaze at a cruise ship from a tiny raft."

"There is always a probability that it might happen." Holden gave me a side look as a faint smile tugged on the corners of his lips.

"Maybe..." I shrugged my shoulders.

"In the past, I've seen it before. At that moment, I decided that I would flip my fate and stand on a cruise ship in the future! Right now, I've managed to achieve my dream," Holden said with a beam as he gazed at the ocean.

“However, it wasn’t as enjoyable as you imagined, right?” I finished the remnants of wine in my glass and spoke.

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Upon hearing my comment, he burst into hearty laughter. “Are you kidding me? Why wouldn’t I be happy when I’ve reached the pinnacle of my life and achieved everything I used to dream of? The so-called superstitions about the rich being envious of the poor because of their love and friendships are false! Instead, the relationships amongst the rich should be envied. We can entice any women that we want! Isn’t that amazing?”

I merely shrugged and chose not to refute his statement. “So what were you sighing about?” I asked as the city line began to shrink from view.

“Of course I was only trying to find a conversational topic to talk about. I’ve heard that we are very similar. Thus, I couldn’t help but think of the shared topics of interest that we may have,” he smirked and turned to me.

“What are you talking about?” We don’t have any similarities at all!

“Ever since I was young, I’ve grown up alongside my mother. She struggled with her work, and I was constantly berated by others. People like to criticize the weak by thinking highly of themselves. Ever since that moment, I promised that I would repay their cruelty by a thousandfold and give them a taste of their own medicine if I ever managed to climb to a higher status. Right now, I’ve managed to achieve my dream!” Holden said as he leaned languidly against the railing.

“You shouldn’t group us together,” I replied with a frown, “My childhood was not as terrible as you’ve imagined. Thus, you don’t have to find a common ground between the two of us. After all, I have no wish to share any traits with you nor to comfort your so-called embarrassing or tragic childhood.”

“It’s alright. I do not want your sympathy. I merely wanted to find someone reasonable to express my emotions. Ah... I’m feeling much better now,” he said dismissively.

Ugh... how contradictory of him to say so! I shrugged and prepared to excuse myself. All of a sudden, a stunning woman made her way towards Holden. She had a wine glass in her hand as she gave him a sultry smile. Ah... Of course, a reception wouldn’t be complete without a beautiful escort.

Holden seemed pleased to receive the woman’s attention. Instead of rejecting her advances, he wrapped a hand around her waist and pulled her closer. “Darling, I won’t be rejecting anyone who approached me.” He whispered in her ear and chuckled, his warm breath caressing her earlobes.

“It’s alright. We’ll get what we want anyway!” She smiled enchantingly in response.

I watched them leave with a slight frown across my face. In the world of adults, money and relationships seemed to be heavily intertwined. At the same time, it felt like the two topics were worlds apart too.

When I re-entered the banquet hall, Ashton had just finished his discussion. “It’s quite windy outside. Why did you head out?” he asked with a grin as he made his way towards me.

“I just wanted to enjoy the scenery!” I gave him a warm smile.

“Let’s go. I’ve prepared an interesting show.” Ashton flicked my nose mischievously.

“Is it going to be a surprise?” I raised my brows.

“Why don’t you see for yourself?” He gave no further explanation as he tugged me towards the VIP cabin located on the top floor.

He then led me into one of the cabins. As soon as I entered, I could hear the high-pitched gasps of a woman accompanied by the heavy pants of another man.

The corners of my mouth twitched as I looked at Ashton. “My, my, Mr. Taylor, you have very refined interests!” he said aloud.

The voices belonged to Holden and the woman he’d hugged earlier.

Nonetheless, Holden’s deep voice continued to echo through the room without a care about our presence. “Mr. Fuller, just a moment, please,” he said good-naturedly.

Just as Ashton was prepared to pull me away. Our path was blocked by pair of men dressed in black suits. Harshly, they hauled a man with an unkempt appearance into the room.

The man had bruises scattered across his swollen face as he was shoved to the floor. It looked as if he had just suffered a horrible beating. Upon closer look, I couldn’t help but scowl in recognition. It’s Shane!

There was still a cacophony of lewd noises echoing behind the screen as Shane looked around his surroundings with a wide gaze. Catching sight of Ashton, he scrambled forward and clung to Ashton desperately regardless of the noises. “Ashton, please! I admit that I made a mistake! Please don’t kill me! I’ll do anything as long as you spare my life!” Shane blabbered in panic.

“F*ck, I can’t even do anything here! Why is it so noisy?” Holden’s voice drifted through the screen before he emerged. He was dressed in his boxers and had just put on a shirt which he buttoned up as he spoke. A

cynical look painted his face when he caught sight of Shane. Without hesitation, his foot connected harshly against Shane's body, shoving him away. "I'm starting to get annoyed with the irritating noise."

Although Shane was in clear pain, he bit his tongue and remained silent out of fear. Quickly, he got into a kneeling position to confess his mistakes. There was a terrified look across his features.

The sight of Holden, who was barely dressed, made me scoff aloud. All of a sudden, my vision turned pitch black. Ashton had covered my eyes with his palm. "Don't look!" he said in a deep voice.

"Put on some clothes before coming out!" he ordered Holden in an authoritative tone.

"Why are you so concerned with my lack of clothing?" Holden replied with a click of his tongue, "What are you afraid of? It's not as if she hasn't seen my body before."

"Just go get changed!" Ashton insisted firmly.

"Or do you want me to get someone to assist you?" Ashton said curtly when Holden continued to refuse.

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With a raise of his hand, two men entered the room and stalked towards Holden. “Mr. Taylor, please excuse us,” they said as they escorted him behind the screen. Following that, a string of foul curses and screams could be heard.

“Ashton, what is wrong with you? Am I a nuisance to you when I’m undressed? Why do you have to force me to get dressed? Are you afraid that your woman might fall for me when she sees my body? Just admit it if you are jealous and insecure of my physique!”

I glanced worriedly at Ashton and noticed his troubled expression. His moody expression was impossible to read. Behind the screen, Holden continued to curse and grumble. I couldn’t help but admire his bravery as he spluttered in protest.

After a brief moment, Holden was finally fully dressed. As he emerged, his dark eyes were fixated furiously on Ashton. Holden’s spiteful gaze made it seem as if Ashton himself had changed his clothes with force.

However, Ashton did not spare him another glance. Instead, he turned to address Shane. “Why don’t you explain yourself!”

Right at that moment, the woman stepped out from behind the screen. She was already fully dressed and exuded an enchanting aura. Languidly, she leaned against the screen and looked at Holden. "Mr. Taylor, did you forget about me the moment you got dressed? Don't forget about our agreement!" she said.

Her sharp gaze swept towards Shane as she spoke. Immediately, Shane's hands balled into furious fists as he seethed in anger.

It was blatantly obvious that the woman was involved with Shane.

"Although I've agreed with your deal, your boyfriend has invoked the wrath of someone he shouldn't provoke! Additionally, he nearly caused the death of Mr. Fuller! You should ask Mr. Fuller if he's willing to overlook the grave sins committed by your boyfriend!" Holden spoke airily as he took a seat.

Having heard his words, I frowned. The woman who hooked up with Holden was Shane's girlfriend? Earlier, the woman was flirting shamelessly with Holden...

That alone was unacceptable, at least to me. Furthermore, Shane was still present the entire time. This was a great insult to him!

The woman's face turned beet red upon Holden's statement. However, she remained extraordinarily calm. She must have gotten used to dealing with such shady situations.

"Mr. Taylor, it seems like you are acting recklessly on purpose!" she turned towards Holden and remarked with a smile.

Holden merely shrugged nonchalantly. "I'm not going against my word. After all, I promised to leave your man alone. However, Mr. Fuller made no such promise. Now that you've kept me company, why don't you offer your services to Mr. Fuller?"

Although she was ridiculed by his comment, she did not lash out. Instead, she turned to Ashton with a charming look that gleamed in her eyes. "Mr. Fuller, I..." the woman began sweetly.

"I have no wish to mingle with trash like you! You'd better keep your distance!" Ashton warned darkly before she could say more.

"Your lust is insatiable!" Ashton then turned to Holden and condemned him with a solemn expression.

"Well, let's just say that I don't like turning people down," Holden replied as he scratched his nose in an unbothered manner.

Ashton scoffed at Holden's unbothered attitude. "Take this opportunity and leave while I'm still in a good mood! If you don't, I'll feed you to the sharks!" he ordered her mercilessly.

The woman flinched in shock and terror. After a lingering glance at Shane, she fled from the room with her tail tucked between her legs.

"Mr. Fuller, you should change your horrible attitude towards women. In the future, your wife might run away with someone else if you keep it up," Holden teased after the woman's departure.

Ashton shot him a stern look before he opened his mouth. "Go ahead and ask!"

Following that, Ashton pulled me aside and waited for Holden to interrogate Shane.

Holden pursed his lips; there was a glint of annoyance that flickered in his eyes when he looked at Shane. "Go to the kitchen and bring it back! It will serve as a wonderful surprise," he instructed the henchmen.

I was clueless about his intentions. "Why don't you admit your mistakes?" Holden asked in a tone that was deceptively kind, "Don't force me to play the role of a villain."

Shane lifted his head as he looked around the room. "Mr. Taylor, what do you want me to say? What do you want me to confess? I swear that I'll blurt

it out immediately. I'll say anything that you want to know!" he asked Holden quizzically.

"Haha!" Holden burst out laughing. A trace of mockery crossed his handsome face. "You want to act clueless? Fine by me. This means that I get to have my fun."

The henchmen that Holden had ordered earlier returned with an object in their hands. "Let's give Mr. Shane a little punishment!" Holden said and leaned against the chair.

I couldn't help but stare at him in utter disbelief.

Quickly, Ashton pulled me into his embrace. "Don't look!" he repeated. Once again, my vision was obstructed as Shane's crazed screaming pierced the air.

"If you like, you can continue to act like a fool. I'm fine with that! After all, I have all the time and energy to play along with your antics! Take your time!" Holden called out over his screams.

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I pushed Ashton's hand away and was greeted with the sight of Shane sprawled across the floor. It was clear that he was in significant pain as he convulsed on the ground. "I'll speak, I'll speak! Take those things out!" he shrieked in pain.

Holden looked towards the two henchmen, and they quickly stripped Shane's pants. The sudden removal of his clothes left him trembling as he was partially naked.

"Speak!" Holden ordered with a stoic expression.

"It was Abe; he ordered me to trail after Mr. Fuller. The goal was to transfer Moranta's foreign trading rights under Mr. Fuller to Abe. On the day of the accident, I was the one who sabotaged Mr. Fuller's car. It was a mistake on my behalf! I should not have acted that way! Yet, I had no choice! Abe would have killed me if I did not obey his commands!" Shane cried out; his body trembled as he spoke. He must not have expected Holden to act in such a perverse manner.

"So, the few hundred thousand that you've lost in the casino belonged to Abe?" Holden asked as his eyes narrowed.

Shane nodded fearfully; he was shaking like a leaf.

“When the incident occurred, did the police find out who the corpse belonged to?” I asked after a brief moment of hesitation.

Holden frowned; he must have thought that my question was out of the topic. However, Shane jolted in shock as he looked at me with a widened gaze. “It was Abe. He was murdered by Armond’s henchmen. After his death, he was even covered in sulfuric acid,” Shane murmured tentatively.

With a scowl, I turned towards Ashton. Shane’s words were full of contradictions and uncertainties. He shouldn’t be trusted so easily!

Ashton pondered for a brief moment as he clutched a glass of water in his hand. “Have you located Abe’s coordinates?” Ashton asked Holden.

“He vanished after the accident,” Holden shook his head.

How is this possible? Why would Armond murder Abe? The possibility of Abe’s murder seemed impossible. Aren’t they in an alliance? Why would they turn on each other?

Once again, I asked Shane to reclarify the truth. “Are you sure that the corpse belongs to Abe?”

Shane nodded his head in earnest. “That night, Abe was the one who blocked your path. After he dragged Mr. Fuller out of the car, the killer in the other car killed Abe without any remorse. If you don’t believe me, you can inspect his corpse. They shot Abe in the chest and even stabbed him

to ensure a proper death. After they had confirmed his death, they poured sulfuric acid across his corpse. I witnessed all of these myself! I swear that I'm not lying!"

The room fell silent upon his proclamation. "You've performed well today. I'll be generous enough to spare your life. However, you'd better maintain your loyalty. If you try to pull a trick to deceive me, I'll end your life!" Holden ordered coldly.

With a single glance at his henchmen, they quickly escorted Shane out of the room. This left the three of us alone in the room.

I couldn't help but question curiously as they remained silent. "Why did Armond kill Abe? I know that they have had a complicated relationship ever since what happened in Venria. But even if Abe had acted out of line, Armond could not have killed him in such an indifferent manner. Furthermore, we are living in a society ruled by strict laws. Even if Armond had countless men working under his command, it is impossible for him to get away with this murder due to the scrutiny of the police force. How could he blatantly kill Abe?"

"You should handle the matters at the police station. I will send someone to settle the company's affairs in Moranta," Ashton addressed Holden.

"Hold on a second, Mr. Fuller. It looks like you're going to leave the mess for me to clean up whilst you return to your country?" Holden frowned.

“If you want the Taylor family to be destroyed, I am more than willing to stay!” Ashton said coldly, “Armond is already plotting his next move. He wants more than just the control over Moranta’s foreign trading rights!”

“What are you implying?” Holden turned and asked him with a solemn gaze.

Ashton shot him a knowing look before clutching my arm as he pulled me along. “Let’s go; we should hurry back.”

Although I still felt confused at their exchange, I trailed after Ashton obediently.

As we walked out of the room and past the cruise cabin, I caught sight of a fight that had broken out between a couple. Upon closer look, I realized that the couple was none other than Shane and the woman.

“I must have been blind to fall for such a disgusting woman like you! Do you think that Holden is better than me? He’s nothing but a brat!” Shane cursed at her. In just a split second, his palm landed on the woman’s cheeks a few times heavily.

She must have endured countless slaps under his wrath as her face had been beaten to the point that it looked swollen. Her elegance and alluring aura had been reduced to a disheveled appearance.

Despite so, the woman seemed to be no stranger to his violence. After he landed a few more blows, she remained as motionless as a puppet and bore the brunt of his relentless abuse.

I couldn't help but frown when I saw his display of cruelty. Hurriedly, I stepped forward to put a halt to Shane's actions. "If I were you, I would have left this place in embarrassment. Did you really think that your useless information was enough to save your measly life after you nearly caused Ashton's death? If it weren't for her help, you would have ended up as a corpse in the ocean. Why don't you utilize your own skills and capabilities instead of relying on a woman like a leech?"

Chapter 897

My unannounced appearance stunned Shane. Just when he was on the verge of losing his cool, he saw Ashton behind me and he got on his knees immediately. "Mrs. Fuller, you're right. I'm at fault. I will never do it again!"

I doubted him. After all, a leopard would never change its spots. I watched his girlfriend's face closely. Somehow, I pitied her. I couldn't believe she would fall for a guy like him.

"Break up with him. He does not deserve you," I said to her.

I knew that no matter what I said, it would be useless. Despite that, I had to say something. That woman looked at me, puzzled. There was no longer any trace of the alluring expression that she wore earlier. Rather, she looked miserable and pale. “Thanks,” she muttered after a while.

I shook my head nonchalantly. “No, I just can’t bear to see this jerk raised his hand on you.”

Ashton pursed his lips. “Let’s go.” I stood up and followed him. After a distance away, I took another glance at her. Then, with a heavy sigh, I made my way down the stairs.

“Not everyone walks the same path. Everyone is different. You can’t control it,” he said with a warm smile as he held my hand.

I turned to him. “Are you trying to say that I shouldn’t be a busybody?” I said, with a little pout.

He responded with a gentle grin before he rubbed his nose and said, “You are overthinking it.”

I huffed, and we stayed silent until the cruise ship docked. I was surprised to see a familiar face when we disembarked. “Joseph, when did you arrive?”

“Today.”

I considered him a friend. Naturally, I missed him after such a long time. As soon as we got into the car, we had a good catch-up.

On our way to the hotel, Ashton had a horrible cough. I asked worriedly, "Are you feeling unwell?" He was finally discharged from the hospital, but the doctor advised that he needed to rest. However, he just couldn't turn down Holden's invitation because it was an important event.

"I'm fine. Don't worry." I watched him silently as he leaned back in his seat and shut his eyes to rest.

Upon our arrival at the hotel, I was suddenly feeling so exhausted that I crashed on the bed while the two men chatted in the living room. What was supposed to be a nap became a deep slumber.

Ashton came and woke me up after he showered. As he stood by the bed, I could smell the scent of soap on him. "Go wash up. You can go back to sleep after that," he said tenderly.

I stood up and rested my head in the hollow of his shoulder. "Sorry, I was too sleepy. These past few days are just mentally exhausting. I definitely need a good rest when we get home."

He stroked my hair idly. "Shall I help you wash up? You can continue your sleep, then."

A sly grin crept onto his face. I knew he was up to no good, so I immediately made my way to the bathroom.

The moment I stepped in, I furrowed my brows at a bottle of Vitamin A next to the sink. It was odd to see supplements around him lately, yet I tried to think positive. This is perfectly normal. Everyone takes care of themselves more as they get older.

After I got out of the shower, I showed him the bottle and asked, "Have you been taking this lately?"

He reached out and took a glance at it before nodding.

"Why Vitamin A? Are you feeling any discomfort in your body as you get older? Why are you taking all these supplements?" I asked inquisitively.

He closed the book in his hands, laid it carefully on the side table, and fixed his blazing gaze on me. "My dear wife, are you despising me now?"

I was flabbergasted for a moment. Then I shook my head and chuckled. "Of course not. You are Prince Charming. You look classy and young as ever."

He raised a brow, then pulled me down onto the bed. He took the towel that I wrapped around the top of my head and wiped my hair gently from behind. "Stay away from Holden." His voice was soft.

“Why?” I was surprised by his sudden change of topic.

He pursed his lips. “Is he hot?” Although he was being nonchalant, I could sense a hint of jealousy.

With a small smile, I turned my head to him. “I’ve watched a variety show a few days ago. One of the female singers said that she was not interested in the twenty-five-year-old guys because they are boring. I guess Holden is around that age, no?”

His expression darkened. “Don’t watch that kind of show anymore.”

I pouted. “I kind of agree with her though.” I tried to reassure and win over my jealous hubby.

It had been three days since we returned to K City, and Ashton was busy day and night. Going back and forth between the office and home became a routine for him. I visited him at work because I was concerned about his health since he had just recovered.

When I went down to the lobby, I saw Stella, who I hadn’t seen for almost six months. She looked like an entirely different person under such sophisticated makeup and stylish attire. I wouldn’t recognize her if she hadn’t approached me first.

Chapter 898

“Mrs. Fuller, you’re back from the trip,” Stella greeted me.

I was so mesmerized by her drastic change that I fell silent for a moment. After a while, I threw a smile at her and nodded. “Yeah. By the way, are you going out with someone? You look gorgeous.”

“You’re flattering me, Mrs. Fuller.” She blushed. We both laughed.

Suddenly, my phone rang. It was Sasha’s mother. I answered the call as I knew it was around the time that she would ask me for money for Renee’s chemotherapy.

Instead of the usual sobbing I was expecting, the woman sounded calm on the other end. Instead, she forced calmness into her voice and said, “Mrs. Fuller, are you free to come over? Renee wants to see you and thank you personally.”

She sounded rather unusual to me, so I asked in confusion, “Mrs. Brooks, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing. It’s just that Renee wants to express her gratitude for your generous support with her medical fees.”

I promised her I would stop by. I ended the call, bade Stella farewell, then headed to the hospital.

I hated the iodoform smell in the hospital, so I quickened my pace to Renee's room. Both her grandparents were in the ward with her. They had aged considerably when I last saw them two weeks ago. Now, their wrinkles were more prominent, and they looked haggard.

Mrs. Brooks stood up from her seat when she saw me entered the room. "Mrs. Fuller, thank you for coming."

I shook my head slightly. They informed me they hadn't eaten, so I agreed to stay and looked after Renee. Then, they excused themselves and went to the cafeteria. The emotion I felt when I looked at the child was unexplainable.

She lay asleep on the bed with a pale and gaunt face. It was heart-breaking to see such a lovely girl terribly emaciated because of cycles of chemotherapy treatments.

I took a seat beside her bed as I seriously pondered whether I should ask Ashton's help for her treatments. Renee deserved the best specialist out there who could cure her illness. It was just unbearable to see her suffer.

When I was about to message him, Renee woke up and was surprised to see me. “Ms. Stovall...” she called out my name with a quavering voice.

“Did I wake you up?”

She shook her head and looked at me. “Where are Grandma and Grandpa?” she asked.

“They went out for lunch. Renee, are you thirsty? I’ll pour you a glass of water.”

“It’s fine. Thanks, Ms. Stovall.”

I smiled faintly and held her bony hand. My heart ached for her. “Are you hungry?”

She just shook her head, perhaps still a little groggy from her sleep. I usually felt awkward around little kids, so we fell into silence. I noticed her gaze drifting from me to the ceiling several times.

“Ms. Stovall, am I dying?” She finally broke the silence.

Her question gripped my heart. The air surrounded us seemed too hard for me to breathe. I tried to suppress my tears and force a smile. “No. The doctor will cure you, and you will get well very soon. After that, you can run

outside, play under the blue sky, or even go to the zoo with your grandparents.”

“Really?” Her eyes sparkled with excitement.

I tugged on her hand and nodded affirmatively. “Yeah. After you recover, I will bring you anywhere you want. How does that sound to you?”

Suddenly, she looked attentive, even hopeful. “I have not eaten cake and ice cream in a long time. Grandma said I can only eat after I get better.”

Her earnest response somehow touched me. “Okay. It’s a promise then!”

“Hooray!” she exclaimed. Then she took out a pocket-size notebook from behind her pillow. “Ms. Stovall, my grandma wants you to take this.” She passed it to me. “It’s my mom’s diary. And Grandma said I should thank you for your kind help.”

Confused, I reached out for the diary. “Your mom’s diary?”

She nodded. “Yes. I don’t know what she wrote because I can’t read. Grandma said it can help you. Now, keep it in your bag before some bad guys see it. Read it only when you reached home.” Thus, I shoved the notebook into my handbag.

We were having a nice talk when her grandparent returned from their lunch. “Mrs. Fuller, thank you so much,” Mrs. Brooks said gratefully.

“Don’t mention it. Don’t worry about her hospital bills. I’ll find another way.”

“Mrs. Fuller, my husband and I have tried our best. We have decided to give up on the treatment. Renee has gone through so much. We want her to enjoy her childhood to the fullest.” Despite the smile, she sounded despair.

Chapter 899

Her words stunned me. I was at a loss for words. “Why, Mrs. Brooks? I’ve sought advice from the doctor. He said there’s still hope. If you’re worried about the cost, please don’t be. Just leave it to me. Renee is still young. There are endless possibilities ahead of her...”

Before I could finish, she broke down in tears and shook his head helplessly. “Still, she can never break free from misery. My husband and I are old now. We will only become a burden for her in the future. Not to mention, she has a wicked uncle. We caused Sasha’s death. So we can’t let Renee go through the same faith as her mother. She should live the rest of her life with no regret. She deserves happiness in this life and the next life.”

I could feel Mrs. Brooks' pain. Somehow, I agreed with her, because even if Renee pulled through this difficult period, there was no one she could turn to. Shane, that jerk alone, would definitely make her life a living hell. Also, she had to take care of her grandparents alone in the future.

No, I must not give up hope. Before I could muster enough reasons to persuade her, Mrs. Brooks looked at me and said, "Mrs. Fuller. I know you are being kind, and we really appreciate it. It's getting late now. You should head home."

I held my tongue and left the ward, utterly frustrated. I knew I have no right to decide on their family matters. Most of all, I couldn't meddle in that little girl's future.

Suddenly, I felt a vibration in my handbag and reached for my phone. It was a call from Nora. "Scarlett!" She was as loud as always. "Are you at K City? Have you seen Armond? He hasn't called me for days! Why exactly did the police seize the Lavelian Village project? And you, when will you come and visit me?"

I sat on the chair as I watched people walked in and out of the entrance. I saw people with different emotions—anxiety, despair, joy, and sorrow. There was also a couple who were holding their newborn baby tenderly. I watched them closely and was fascinated to see the realities of life.

Nora waited for my response on another line, but I could not utter a word. The frustration still lingered in me. "I will not visit you for the time being," I said after a moment of silence. "Just take care of yourself and don't worry too much. Something must have happened to the Murphys, but I'm sure Armond will contact you once things have settled down."

She sighed and pouted. "I am hoping for you to come because I am so bored here. You know what? Grandpa is arranging blind dates for me every day! I don't know what has gotten into him. He's suddenly opposing my relationship. He said Armond is not a good match for me. Geez, the old man is so fickle!"

I didn't know how to respond to that, so I just said, "Stop complaining. Maybe Mr. Oberick thinks that's what's best for you."

The sun had already set when we ended the call. I was not surprised because the days were always shorter in that area, especially during autumn, where the weather was unpredictable.

At the villa, I parked my car in the garage. The smell of food lured me to the kitchen. I leaned against the door frame and watched Ashton, who was busy with the dinner preparation. I couldn't help but break into a big smile at the sight of him in an apron.

He noticed my presence and paused. With a startled gasp, he asked, "How long have you been standing there? You should tell me you're home."

“I’m home.” I smiled.

He broke into a helpless grin. “Wash your hands. Dinner’s ready.”

That night was the first time I saw him in a grey sweater. “You look much younger wearing other colors than black,” I complimented him.

He arched an eyebrow and gave me a solemn look. “So you mean I look old all this while?”

I found his expression funny. “A little, like an old nerd. You looked intimidating and unapproachable. I prefer you like this. You look more amicable.”

“Fine, I will start wearing more colors.”

I was surprised that he would take my advice seriously. He had made changes to his bad habits, control his temper, and even took time to reflect on his life.

I could say it was a hundred and eighty-degree change in his image. The Ashton I knew was rather cold and hardly ever smiled. It was not a sudden change. The transition took ten years long. I didn’t notice it until I saw him jealous, longed for attention, and broke the habits. Sometimes, he would even throw tantrums. Tonight, I saw the gentler side of him.

He might not express his love verbally, but he made a habit of caring.

Chapter 900

Noticing that I was staring blankly into space, he waved in front of me. “What are you thinking about?”

I recollected my thoughts and planted a kiss on his chin. “I’m thinking of how lucky I am to be able to meet someone like you.”

He replied, “I’m lucky to meet you too, Ms. Stovall.”

After spending some time alone with him, my troubles dissipated, and I felt better. I went back to my bedroom and received a call from Cameron. She asked me how I was doing and urged me to visit them.

I explained to her my current situation and promised to visit them the next day. Suddenly, Summer called out to me from the other end of the phone and chatted with me for a while before hanging up.

Initially, I wanted to take a good sleep, but right after Ashton and I lay on the bed, his phone rang. Upon answering the call, his expression turned stern as he got up and changed his clothes.

Seeing his reaction, I couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong? What happened?"

"There are some problems with the investigation at Lavelian Village. I have to be there." Upon that, he packed his stuff, while I changed into some casual clothing and followed him.

He wanted me to stay, but knowing my temperament, he let me do as I pleased.

Then, we rushed to the airport and boarded the last flight. On the plane, we took a brief nap, and when we reached A City, the sky was still dark. Hence, we went back to the villa and slept for two hours before going to Lavelian Village.

It had been almost a month since I went to Lavelian Village. Scanning the surroundings, a lot of things had changed. The construction was completed, as a two-story building was erected from the ground. Not only that but the roads were also paved with cement to make walking easier and safer since it was almost winter.

The project was a collaboration between the Fuller Corporation and the Murphy Corporation. However, now that problems had surfaced one after another within the two companies, everything was put to a halt.

Ashton parked the car at the entrance of the base, and we scanned the scene. The police officers had the area barricaded to preserve the scene for further investigation. At the same time, Rachel was communicating with the police officers, while Armond was nowhere to be seen.

“Mr. Fuller, you’re here.” Upon detecting Ashton’s presence, Rachel came towards us and was in a good mood.

Ashton looked at her and asked, “What’s the current situation?”

“The place that Armond transferred the technology equipment was discovered, and the police officers had it sealed off. They are contacting the Murphys right now.” Rachel glanced at me as she reported to the man.

Soon after, Linda came to the scene and was rather agitated when she saw me. “Where did you go? Why is Mr. Murphy locked up in Moranta? What’s going on?”

Things were quite complicated, so I didn’t know how to tell her. After pondering for a while, I said, “It’s complicated. I’ll tell you everything in detail next time. Anyway, what’s going on here?”

The woman pursed her lips. “I don’t know. Do you remember the time when Fuller Corporation’s technology got stolen? They were all stored in the underground warehouse. To be honest, I never knew there was an underground warehouse here after working at the Murphy Corporation for ten years. Goodness gracious!”

Hearing her words, I glanced at Ashton. Back then, I noticed something was off with the structure of the base, so I asked Ashton to look into it.

After a while, Ashton said, "Let's go in and have a look."

We headed toward the base, and police officers were guarding the entrance. Rachel took the initiative to talk to them. "This is Mr. Fuller, the president of the Fuller Corporation. We're here to check on the technology equipment stolen from us."

The police officers took a glance at us and said, "To go in, the person in charge for both companies must be present."

I exchanged glances with Linda. "We are the Murphy Corporation's person in charge of this project. Sorry to trouble you." With that, Linda showed them her work pass.

After glancing at the work pass, the police officers let us in. The equipment on the first floor was the same as before. With Rachel guiding us, we went in and headed towards another door.

When I saw the door, I was shocked. It looked exactly the same as the wall. No one would notice it as it blended in with the wall perfectly.

"Why is there a door here? When was this designed?" Linda blurted out in shock as she furrowed her brows.

I was shocked as well. However, there was more to come. Following that, a long pathway could be seen. As we walked down the pathway, we reached the warehouse and saw the stolen technology equipment.

Rachel said, "It seems like I was right. The equipment couldn't be transported in such a short time since they were big and would attract unwanted attention. Even if they were meticulous about the operation, people would still notice it. So their only way of doing it was to move them here."

Then she turned to Linda and clapped her hands sarcastically. "My, my, what a brilliant plan by the Murphy Corporation. Who would've known that the equipment would be in a hidden warehouse within the building itself?"