

## Chapter 921

“Hannah!” I shrieked. I fastened my gaze on the man she was clinging to. He was tall and attired in a black down jacket. That man wasn’t exactly handsome, but his height and confidence imbued him with a magnetic aura.

The five of us engaged in this stand-off without anyone speaking for a while. I sneaked a peek at John and noticed that his face had grown thunderous and his eyes wild. After a long while, John spluttered, “How long has it been?”

Hannah looked unaffected as she casually replied, “A few months.” Those words, and all the enormity of their meaning, hung in the air between us.

John suddenly gave a loud snort. Flashing her a scornful look, he asked, “Why?”

“There’s no reason why, John. All relationships must come to an end somehow,” Hannah said breezily. Her manner seemed entirely frivolous.

Hearing her response, John hung his head. He seemed to be laughing at the sheer absurdity of the situation as his shoulders shook uncontrollably. Undoubtedly, he was unable to restrain himself any further as his emotions swelled within him and burst out in a torrent.

Without hesitation, John lunged forward and punched the other man hard in the face. Due to the pure impulse of his move, however, John’s blow did not land as well as he had probably hoped it would.

I expected Hannah to cry out in indignation or beg for mercy, but she remained unflappable. She merely crossed her arms and retreated. It was as if she was a mere spectator of the fight rather than its motive.

Meanwhile, Ashton drew me behind him protectively. We, too, watched on without intervening.

It was only when it seemed that John was on the verge of beating the other man to death that Hannah finally spoke.

“Let him go, John. If you’re still mad, take it out on me. He doesn’t know what’s going on at all,” she said with an aggravating coolness.

John paused and looked at her savagely. His eyes were bloodshot. However, he simmered down and slowly walked over to Hannah. “What do you want?” he asked with difficulty.

I had always known that John was in love with Hannah. He had his demons, and to him, Hannah had always been a place of refuge from the rest of the world. I suppose John had always firmly believed that Hannah would never leave nor betray him. In his mind, Hannah was the lighthouse that would always be waiting patiently back at the shore for him to sail home.

Yet John had forgotten that people were terribly fickle beings. He had made Hannah wait for him for too long a time. She was a woman, after all, and needed a man to love and care for her. After some time, Hannah had finally grown weary of being left out in the cold.

Hannah looked at John. She either did not notice the melancholy in his eyes or merely refused to see it. Exhaling deeply, Hannah said, “Kiki belongs to the Stovall family, so I won’t take him with me. The villa and the car are both under your name, so I’ll return them to you. As for everything else, let me keep them. I’ll take them as a reward for staying by your side all these years.”

Hannah let out a deep breath, then laughed mournfully. "There isn't much else. Other than Kiki, we don't have any other common possessions. At least the legal side of things won't be too complicated. If you don't have time or energy to care for Kiki, I will. However, you'll need to pay child support. I won't ask for anything else from you."

It was heartrending to see a relationship reduced thus to the stark, bare-bones of assets and payments. There was nothing left to say between John and Hannah. Even goodbye felt redundant.

John's emotions had gradually subsided. He then merely replied, "We'll talk about it when we get back."

Without waiting for Hannah's response, John walked heavily towards his car. He started it and drove off without a second glance at anyone else.

Ashton and I remained where we were. As for Hannah, she watched as John's car gradually vanished in the distance, then turned towards the man sitting on the ground. "Are you all right?" she asked nonchalantly.

The man softened and patted Hannah's arm reassuringly. "I'm fine."

I stared at them, lost for words. After a while, we simply turned and walked away.

Feeling heavyhearted, I remained silent even after we'd gotten back to the car and driven off.

"Don't worry. I've sent someone to follow John. He'll be fine!" Ashton said reassuringly beside me.

I looked at him, then replied shortly, "I'm not worried about John. It's Hannah I'm concerned about. She was clearly in love with John. Why did she suddenly decide to give up their relationship?"

Ashton rested one hand on the steering wheel, his elbow on the door of the car, a picture of placid serenity. With an air of wisdom, he philosophized, "Autumn doesn't arrive in the middle of spring. And when it does, the leaves on the trees don't fall all at once. Perhaps Hannah was made to wait for too long and lost hope in the relationship."

I bit my lip and turned away. Unbeknownst to Ashton, I was no stranger to that feeling.

I'd drifted off to sleep on the drive back, and Ashton had picked me up and carried me straight into the bedroom. I opened my eyes blearily to look at Ashton, who was getting undressed and ready to shower at the side of the room. "I don't know what's happening to me lately," I moaned. "I get drowsy very quickly and feel rather weak."

Ashton froze at my offhand remark, his hands arrested in the middle of taking his shirt off. He lowered them slowly and turned to me with a peculiar beam on his face. Delighted, he proclaimed, "We'll make a trip to the hospital tomorrow!"

## Chapter 922

I found Ashton's reaction rather bizarre and asked, "Why go to the hospital? It's not that big of a deal."

Ashton sauntered over to my side and looked fondly down at me. "Everyone should go for an annual medical checkup. I think it's been about a year since you last went for one."

I nodded absently, then lay back down on the bed. Since Ashton had left the bed to me, I sprawled happily across its entire width while sighing in satisfaction and comfort.

It was the beginning of winter, and the temperature in K City had plummeted sharply. Ashton was insistent on sending me to the hospital and was up and about early in the morning. I'd been disturbed from my sleep by his bustling about and sat in the living room still yawning, half-awake.

That morning, Ashton had poured out some cereal for both of us. "Would you like some chopped nuts?" he asked, popping his head out of the kitchen.

I nodded, my eyes teary from the multiple yawns I'd just unleashed. "Sure."

It was a cold, misty morning. I couldn't help but shudder at the thought of stepping out into the frigid air and made a mental note to myself to don a few more layers before leaving.

Ashton emerged from the kitchen with the two bowls of cereal in hand. He placed them on the table, then added, "Would you like some pancakes as well?"

I sneezed, then sniffed at Ashton, "No need. I'll just have the cereal. Since we're going to the hospital, why don't we drop by my Mom's place and bring Summer along? We can get her checked out at the same time."

Ashton agreed. "Let's eat, then!"

Without another word, I slurped the cereal noisily. Ashton gave me a look, then chided, "Can't you eat a little more gracefully?"

I felt thoroughly humbled, like a child who had just received a smack on the wrist.

Just then, I recalled that Nora was back in K City, so I reminded Ashton. "Nora's back in K City. We should bring her out for a meal to catch up and play the host. Besides, I don't feel too safe leaving her to Armond."

Ashton nodded, then replied, "All right. Ask her over to stay, then, or arrange for her to stay in a hotel. It isn't safe anyway for a woman to be wandering around K City alone."

"Armond won't hurt her, will he?" I asked anxiously. Ever since the incident at the warehouse, my opinion of Armond had been totally turned on its head. I was thus a little wary of whether Nora could be entrusted to him.

Noting that I had finished my cereal, Ashton nudged his bowl of cereal over to me. "You're hungry, aren't you? Eat up!" he encouraged.

I felt a sense of warmth within me. Actually, I wasn't that hungry, but I ate the rest of the cereal with pleasure anyway.

I'd actually wanted to probe more into the matter, but Ashton forbade me. "We can talk later. Finish your breakfast first."

Ashton had always been rather traditional this way. He firmly believed we should be focused on gaining nutrients rather than information during meals between the two of us.

With that, I nodded docilely, then finished the rest of the cereal before me.

After breakfast, I dawdled a little all the way to the door, putting on my shoes slowly in the hallway. Ashton had gone ahead to start the car. Just then, my phone rang shrilly in my bag. I fished it out only to see Mrs. Brooks' name flashing across the screen. I answered, "Mrs. Brooks!"

Before she could even speak, I felt a rush of woe over the phone. Mrs. Brooks gave a long sigh, then said, "Mrs. Fuller, Renee passed away last night. She said she wanted to be buried with her mother. I brought her back to K City with me today. I don't have any close friends or family, and you were probably the one who showed her the most affection in this life. If you have time to spare, Renee's grandfather and I would like to invite you to her funeral."

My mind went blank. Ashton had already driven the car out to the front. However, I remained in my seat, staring ahead blankly as my head throbbed.

Ashton leaped out of the car and ran up to me, puzzled. "What's wrong?"

I hadn't hung up the phone, so Mrs. Brooks' voice drifted over the line, fearfully asking, "Mrs. Fuller, are you there?"

"I'm here," I snapped. I was choking up and struggled to get the words out of my throat. With a frown, Ashton eyed me as he placed an arm around my shoulders.

"Renee will be buried at Woodhills. She said she wanted to lie next to her mother," Mrs. Brooks declared through her tears, her voice hoarse. She'd evidently spent the past few days mourning.

I made a small sound of acknowledgment. Heartbroken, I drew in a deep breath and said, "All right. We'll come over in a while, Mrs. Brooks."

"Thank you, Mrs. Fuller," Mrs. Brooks sniffled in a low voice. We then ended the call somberly.

When I placed my phone back in my bag, Ashton squinted at me with obvious disquiet in his eyes. "What happened?"

I paused, then said brokenly, "It's Sasha's daughter, Renee. Her grandparents did not continue her treatment and brought her to Turlen instead. Renee passed away mid-journey, and her body will arrive in K City today to be buried."

Ashton frowned. After a moment of silence, he suggested, "Can we go over after we've visited the hospital?"

I shook my head. "Let's go to the airport. We'll accompany them all the way to the cemetery."



Ashton agreed after some deliberation. "OK, I'll come with you."

The news of Renee's sudden departure had stupefied me. I'd always held out the hope that as long as she endured this present suffering, she'd eventually recover.

## **Chapter 923**

Never would I have expected that that would be the last time I saw her.

When we got in the car, Ashton took my hand in his, his warm hand soothed me. I glanced sideways at him and said weakly, "That kid, I..."

"You did your best!" He patted me and said comfortingly, "Don't blame yourself. You did what you could, so just leave the rest in the hand of fate. The child came and left this world as a pure person, and this is probably the best way out for her. that she left. It's the people who are left behind that suffer the most."

Yeah, those left behind without seeing any hope in life are the people who suffer the most.

Sasha's parents were already waiting when we arrived at the airport. Their hair had turned white, and their faces were now covered with wrinkles and vicissitudes of life since I last saw them. Looking at the two of them made me heartbroken. They had gone through so much suffering and even had to deal with the passing of their own child and even their grandchild. Most people could never imagine the number of distressing events they had gone through in their lives.

When they saw us, Sasha's mother, who probably had cried her tears dry, looked at me with a dry smile. "Mrs. Fuller, we've troubled you too much. We can never repay your kindness in this lifetime."

I shook my head slightly and looked at her. "Mrs. Brooks, don't overthink this. Come, get in the car!"

Sasha's father was not a man of many words. Thus, he remained silent throughout the ride as he hugged Renee's urn tightly. The sight caused tears to well up in my eyes.

As we headed toward Woodhills Cemetery, I noticed that the couple's faces were both filled with exhaustion, most likely because they had not rested well in a long time.

I had originally wanted to take them to eat something first, but judging by their expressions, they probably could not stomach anything. I sighed softly and gave up that thought.

Woodhills Cemetery was the largest cemetery in K City, in which a small area of land already cost tens of thousands. When we arrived, the elderly couple got off the car and walked over to a burial plot that they had bought.

Ashton and I merely followed behind them as they walked. Shane's gambling addiction had caused the family to lose most of their relatives, and since Renee was also ill, the two elderlies were the only people present to send Renee off.

The lonely, empty funeral neither had a stream of people coming to see Renee off nor any flowers. Only the two empty-handed elderly were there.

Unable to stand it any longer, I looked at Ashton and said, "Can you get the funeral home to send over some funeral items for children? It's Renee's last journey, so we should let her go happily."

Although I did not know if ghosts or gods truly existed in the world, I knew that Sasha's parents had spent all their money just to treat the child's illness. They wanted to give her the best, but reality forced them to bid their farewells in such a miserable way.

Ashton nodded in reply and walked off to make a call.

The staff at the cemetery registered Renee's burial site, he noticed that there were only two elderly people and got slightly shocked but did not probe any further. Perhaps he had gotten used to such a sight since he was working in a place full of sorrowful parting. He had seen too many families having to part and was used to the ways of the world.

Soon, the staff at the funeral home had arrived and proceeded with the burial processes and customs. Reluctant to let Renee go, Sasha's mother looked at me with her eyes full of hesitation instead.

I gave her a slight smile as I comforted her, saying that everything would be fine as long as the child left peacefully and comfortably.

Even though the burial was only for a child, the sky had already darkened by the time the funeral ended. Sasha's father squatted in front of the small grave, his face full of pain and desolation.

Sasha's mother then raised her hand to wipe away the tears in her eyes and said, "My dear, let's go home. Renee will keep Sasha company now. They won't be lonely!"

Not good with words, the old man simply wiped away his own tears before he replied, "That's good. At least the mother and the daughter can be together without us being a burden to them. They'll be able to live well."

When we left, the elderly were too embarrassed to take our car back and insisted that they would wait for a taxi. However, as the cemetery was far from the city and the sky was already dark, Ashton and I did not want to let them wait alone.

Seeing that we were still keeping them company while they waited, the elderly couple sheepishly got into the car, thanking us the whole way back.

When we arrived at the urban village, Sasha's mother said, "Thank you for sending us back. The village roads are narrow, so it's not easy to drive in. Thanks so much for today. You can drop us off here, and we'll walk in ourselves."

Ashton had originally wanted to drive in, but the car could not squeeze through the road indeed. Thus, we could only stop the car and let the couple walk in by themselves.

As he watched the two white-haired elderly walk down the narrow dirt road, Ashton asked, "Have they always lived here?"

I paused for a moment, then shook my head slightly. "I'm not very sure. I think Joseph mentioned to me that Shane had gambled away their house. After that, Sasha rented another house somewhere. I think it is probably the one here."

## Chapter 924

The houses in the urban village were old, and the structures and facilities were all inconvenient and there were a lot of safety hazards. However, they could survive here at the very least as it was cheap.

As Ashton continued to watch the elderly couple walking further away, he hesitated, then said, "How long has it been since Sasha left?"

"Almost three or four months."

He frowned slightly. "Most of the houses here have their leases renewed every three months!"

At first, I did not understand what he meant. Then, as soon as I got it, I hurriedly got out of the car and chased after the couple. Houses in the urban village had a short rental period. Previously, when Renee was still hospitalized, Sasha's parents had basically lived there with her. Afterward, they had brought her out for such a long period of time, so it was likely that their house lease was already up.

The dirty path was filled with muddy puddles, so it was not easy to walk in. Ashton grabbed me and glanced at the path in front of us, then frowned. "This place is very uncared for."

I looked around the area and could not help but feel a little cold and lost. The roads and streetlights were mostly faulty, so some parts of the road had no light. As a result, we had to use the flashlights on our phones to light the way. Indeed, this place truly reflected the stark contrast between the poor and depressing living conditions of the bottom rank of the social classes to the luxury lifestyle of the rich people in this city.

After Ashton and I walked for a while, we realized that the couple seemed to have already walked far off. I was about to give Sasha's mother a call before we heard some noises.

The sound came from behind an old building. Using his phone's light, Ashton managed to find a small trail. However, it was very narrow, and only one person could cross at a time. He turned to me and said, "Follow me. Be careful!"

I nodded and followed after him. A while later, a small yard of about ten square meters appeared. It was littered with a mess of items.

Although it was dark, one could clearly see that the items included some daily necessities, old pots and pans, clothes, and many other random items.

"You stupid old fools. These things have been stored in my house for free for a few months. You should be glad that I didn't collect any storage fees from you. Instead, you dare to come to take them from me? Don't you feel embarrassed? Why would I want all these things? They're such a mess. Just take them away and don't get in my way!" The one speaking was a middle-aged woman who looked a little rough. I could vaguely make out her features in the dim light. She was wearing a poor-quality mink coat and a pair of overly dramatic gold earrings. Her lipstick shade looked strikingly scary. As she scolded them, she continued to throw the items outside.

With reddened eyes, Sasha's mother said, "Mary, I didn't mean it like that. We're just here to take some clothes since winter is almost here. As for the rent we owe you, it's

acceptable that you take all this as payment. But our clothes aren't worth any money and you have no use for them anyway. If you just let us take them, we'll be able to survive this winter."

The woman snorted coldly. "Take them then. Don't cry to me about how miserable you are. I've seen too many of such people in my lifetime. Who isn't struggling to survive? If you want your clothes, just take them. But if you can't afford to pay the rent, don't even think about living here anymore. There are many other people who want to rent this place!"

Sasha's mother nodded as she searched for their clothes in the small yard. On the other hand, Sasha's father squatted, staring at something. Although the light was dim, it seemed like he was looking at a photograph.

"Mrs. Brooks!" I said as I walked into the yard.

When she heard the sound, Sasha's mother looked toward us and froze for a moment before she asked, "Mr. and Mrs. Fuller, why are you here?"

As she spoke, she intertwined her fingers in embarrassment. I smiled and replied, "Ashton and I were worried, so we came to check on you."

"I'm sorry you have to see this," replied Sasha's mother, embarrassed.

I understood how she was feeling as this was a showcase of their poverty and embarrassment. Sadly, there was nothing she could do to hide them.

Without dragging it on any longer, I looked at the landlord and said, "They are old. Do you still have any houses on the first floor?"

When the woman recovered from her dazed state, she looked at me and replied, “Of course. Do you want to rent it?”

I nodded. “Help them bring all these back in first. I’ll pay you accordingly!”

She looked at me, then at Ashton, and soon put on a smile as she nodded. Then, she started to move things back.

Sasha’s mother looked at me blankly. “Mrs. Fuller, you’ve helped us enough. This…”

“Mrs. Brooks, live here with peace of mind and don’t worry about anything else. Just take some time to recover. Everything will get better in the future.” I did not know how else to comfort her.

When the woman was done moving the things back in, she looked at us with a bright smile and asked, “I’ve taken care of whatever’s here. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

## **Chapter 925**

I smiled slightly before taking out some money from my wallet and stuffing it into her hands. “This is enough for them to stay here for some time. The extra cash is for you to help me take good care of them. You’ll get more next time.”

As soon as the woman received the money, her smile was so wide that her entire face scrunched up, as she continuously nodded and said some nice, reassuring words



Since I had taken out all the cash I had on me, I looked at Ashton. He smiled back at me helplessly as he retrieved his wallet from his blazer and passed it to me.

I smiled at him before opening his wallet to take out all his cash, then handed it to Sasha's mother. "Mrs. Brooks, take this money first. We'll be back to visit you sometime later. Just give me a call if you need anything else."

She repeatedly declined, "I can't take this money. You've already been kind by paying the rent for us, so we can't take any more money from you. Please take it back, Mrs. Fuller."

I shook my head and replied, "Just take it. The two of you can use it to live well here. I'll only feel better if you accept the money. Otherwise, I won't feel at ease. Just take it and live a better life with Mr. Brooks. Don't worry; things will definitely get better in the future."

Looking at the tears on her face constantly flowing down, I did not know what else to say. I merely said some kind words to her before I left with Ashton.

When we were back in the car, I could not help but let out a sigh.

Ashton looked at his watch, then to me. "What do you want to eat?"

If he had not reminded me, I had almost forgotten that we had not eaten anything since morning. Thinking about it, I could not help but look back into the dark path.

Ashton seemed to know what I was thinking, for he said, "Don't worry, I've already gotten someone to send over some food. Just put everything aside for now and think about what you want to eat."

After some time, I replied, "Let's go get and have stew. It's already quite late, so let's eat somewhere nearby."

His smile carried a hint of helplessness as he squeezed my cheeks. "After busying around the whole day, do you even remember what you originally intended to do today?"

I nodded. "Let's go to the hospital when we have time. There's no need to rush these few days."

He gave me a light kiss on the cheek and replied in a helpless, pampering tone, "Let's grab a bite then!"

Ashton was busy for most of the following days. As it was November, Fuller Corporation had to prepare a quarterly business report and plan for next year's developments. Resultantly, he left early for work and returned home late almost every day.

Although I no longer worked at Murphy Corporation, the resignation procedure still had to be handled accordingly. I had originally wanted to have dinner with Nora, but when I was finally done with my work and gave her a call, she said that she had already gone to A City.

I could tell that Nora had something she wanted to say, but she did not want to talk about it over the phone. As for Louis, since nothing was found, they had let him go.

As Louis was getting old, he liked to be in lively atmospheres. Thus, after he came out, he kept calling us over for a meal.

Soon, it was Friday afternoon.

John and I had agreed to go to Stovall Residence for a meal. I had originally wanted to ask him about the situation with Hannah, but since he seemed reluctant to talk about it, I did not probe any further.

I got myself ready and changed into some warm clothes at home. I then headed over to Fuller Corporation, planning to go to Stovall Residence with Ashton.

After I parked in the underground parking lot, I gave Ashton a call. However, even after a few calls, he still did not answer any of them. Since he was probably busy, I stopped calling after that and flipped through my phone while waiting in the car.

Just then, my phone vibrated and a notification popped up about a new message on WhatsApp. I was stunned as I looked at the message. It was from Hailey.

For a moment, I could not remember who she was. Then, when I eventually remembered her, I clicked open the message. It read: Hi Scar, I'm Hailey.

Scar? I was taken aback. No one had ever called me that before, so I was not used to it.

I texted back: Hello, nice to meet you.

She seemed to be just as bad at socializing as I was because she immediately got to the point and replied: When will you come over to A City? I want to have a chat with you.

I hesitated for a while as I pondered. I had no time to go to A City recently. I replied: I don't know yet. What's up? Did something happen?

She only gave a one-word reply before she stopped responding to me. She texted: No!

Although Hailey and I had only met once, fate was a difficult thing to predict. The impression she had given me back then was that of a gloomy, cold person. However, it was weird because I was neither scared of her nor did I dislike her. To some extent, at least she was quite a truthful person.

Bam! As soon as I heard the sound of a car door closing, I put away my phone and looked out the car. Ashton was helping a young girl out of his car.

They both looked injured. The girl seemed to have passed out, and her condition looked quite serious. Meanwhile, Ashton was covered with dust, and there was a scratch on one side of his face.

## **Chapter 926**

I hurriedly alighted and ran over to his car. "What happened?" I asked.

Ashton turned around upon hearing my voice. "I have encountered a trouble maker. Why are you here?" He was surprised to see me.

“Uncle Louis is back, so John invited us over for dinner.” I had a better look at the girl he was supporting. She was Stella, the reception at Fuller Corporation. Ashton helped her into the car and remarked, “Okay, but we have to send her to the hospital first.”

I nodded in agreement. From a distance, a man came running. It was the guy who proposed to Stella in the lobby.

“Let me go with you, Mr. Fuller,” he requested. His worried gaze never left Stella, who was lying unconscious in the backseat.

Ashton nodded and signaled him to get into the car.

I noticed Ashton was injured, so I stopped him from getting into the driver’s seat. He looked at me, baffled.

“You are injured. Let me drive.” I got into the driver’s seat and started the car, not giving him any chance to object.

Ashton sat in the passenger seat and kept silent throughout the journey. I had many questions in mind but keep quiet as well since he was not ready to talk about it. Much to the distress of her friend, Stella remained unconscious.

At the hospital, Stella’s friend went off to make payment after checking her in. Ashton and I were standing in the corridor, watching the sky as it darkened. He was engrossed in thought.

I approached a nurse and arranged for him to get his wounds cleaned up. Next, I went to a nearby mall to get him a new jacket. Ashton was only wearing a black sweater as he had removed his jacket to keep Stella warm.

On my way back, Stella's friend called out to me in the lobby of the hospital. "Mrs. Fuller, thank you for sending Stella here."

He must have been extremely anxious over Stella's injury, as he looked disheveled and his face beaded with sweat. "Don't mention it. It was no big deal," I assured him

I paused, then queried, "Can you tell me what happened earlier today?"

He was momentarily taken aback by my question. "It was Sasha's brother. He wanted to attack Mr. Fuller, but Stella blocked him. He behaved like a crazy man. Mr. Fuller was worried Sasha's brother would get more agitated upon seeing him, so he left the building via the underground garage. The lobby at Fuller Corporation must still be in chaos now," he reported.

He did not go into many details, but I could imagine the scene. What puzzled me was that Shane had always been based in Moranta. Why did he come back?

"We should thank you and Stella instead," I nodded and thanked him.

After we ended our conversation, I went up to the ward, shopping bag in hand. Ashton's wounds were dressed. The doctor had attended to Stella and found she had suffered head trauma. There were various abrasion wounds on her body too. "Why is she still unconscious, doctor?" I queried.

“She was injured on the head, and was also traumatized, so it may take a few hours before she regains consciousness.” The doctor advised as he gave instructions for her to be warded.

“Will she suffer from any long-term side effects?” Her friend was concerned.

“We can’t tell for now. With head injuries, we cannot rule out a concussion. We will find out when she wakes up.”

I handed the newly bought jacket to Ashton. He looked sullen. “Can we still make it to meet Uncle Louis tonight? If not, I will give him a call so they won’t expect us.” I asked.

Ashton’s expression softened as he turned his gaze on me. He took the jacket from me and put it on. “It’s alright. We can head over in a while,” he responded.

Thereafter, he turned to Stella’s friend and asked, “You are Justin, right?”

“Yes, I am, Mr. Fuller,” Justin replied.

“You stay and take care of Stella. Should anything happen, call the number on this name card. You can contact me anytime if you need anything, be it money or other things.” Ashton handed a name card to Justin.

I grimaced. Ashton had an unusual way of dealing with people and situations.

“Thank you.” Justin’s expression changed, but he still took the name card.

Ashton was about to lead me away when I stopped and took a bank card from my bag. I handed over the card to Justin and said, "Please help us take good care of Stella. Use this card to pay for her medical fees and any other expenses. Feel free to contact us if you need other assistance. When Stella wakes up, kindly let her know that she should rest well and not worry about anything else. We will handle the other matters."

Justin hesitated for a moment before accepting the bank card and nodded in appreciation.

After that, Ashton and I left the hospital.

He made a few calls while I was driving to Stovall residence. He called to remind Joseph, who was in Moranta, to be careful. A few calls were made to give instructions to look into the incident that happened earlier in the day. He heard that Shane was taken away by the police.

I drove in silence while he was busy, not wanting to interrupt him.

After a while, I broke the silence. "Why did Shane try to attack you? You did not harass his woman, and you have no monetary conflict with him either. Why is a gambler after you?"



## Chapter 927

Ashton looked out of the car window, deep in thoughts. It took him a while to answer, "He is after money, but not from me."

I looked at him, puzzled.

He raised his eyebrow and warned, "Look out! Red light!"

I turned back to look ahead and jammed the brakes, startled.

He clapped his hand on his forehead and mocked, "I managed to escape unharmed from Shane, but in the end, I die from my wife's carelessness. That is a little outrageous, don't you think?"

I frowned and chided, "Stop spouting nonsense."

He chuckled and the atmosphere lightened.

The traffic light turned green and I drove on.

Along the way, he filled me in on the details. "It is Armond. He must have faced a lot of pressure from his family when he lost big due to the incident in Moranta. He hired Shane to make a scene, officially declaring war on me. I suspect he planned to pursue a long-neglected matter."

“What long-neglected matter?” I was clueless.

He started telling me a story.

Thirty years ago, the Murphys were not involved in the oil industry. They had some factories and a pharmaceutical company. Their business then was not as diversified nor huge as compared to now. The main player in the oil sector was the Sanders, one of the most prominent families in K City during those days. The oil sector wasn't a major industry at that time, so the Sanders assigned the concession of that business to their adopted daughter, Winona Stovall. When Winona married into the Murphy family, she brought the oil business into that family as well.

I was shell-shocked. “The Winona Stovall you mentioned is my grandma?” I had to clear my doubts.

Ashton nodded.

“Isn't she adopted by the Sanders? Why is her family name Stovall?”

“Mrs. Sanders had difficulty conceiving, so they adopted a daughter, naming her Winona Sanders. However, Mrs. Sanders got pregnant not long after and had her own baby. Due to some personal reasons not privy to us, the Sanders changed your grandma's last name to Stovall, which was Mrs. Sanders' family name.”

I nodded and probed, “What happened next?”

He gently swept back some messy strands of hair from my forehead and continued, “After Winona married into the Murphy family, the industrial revolution and development of the electronics sector caused the oil industry to grow by leaps and bounds. As the

exploration rights in the country were in your grandma's hands, the Murphys jumped in and did big-scale exploration and extraction. Instantly, they rose to become one of the richest families in K City. Some of the old-money families tried to cozy up to the Murphys. Others felt threatened by their rise, so they plotted against the Murphys. As your grandma held the key to the rise of the Murphys, she was targeted and suffered much. Your grandma knew the importance of oil to the family and the country, so she planned to control the development to make it sustainable in the long run. The Murphys were blinded by greed and did not heed her advice. Out of desperation, your grandma hid the oil concession document in a secret compartment of a box and left with it."

"The box with the secret compartment is the sandalwood box grandma left for me, isn't it?" I made an intelligent guess.

He nodded. "Yes, that is the one. Armond tried to get close to you because he was eyeing that box."

I recalled when I first met Armond, it was at my grandma's burial ground. He stood in front of my grandma's tombstone for quite a while. I did not really pay attention at that time as I thought he was just a casual passerby. Looking back, I should have suspected otherwise as he had an unusual expression.

"I had already given Armond the box!" To me, that was just an ordinary box. That was why I gave it to Armond without any hesitation when he asked me for it when we were in Venria.

Ashton looked at me and nodded, "I know."

My eyes popped out of my head. "How can you be so calm when you knew?" I could not imagine the consequence, now that the oil concession agreement fell into Armond's hand. Although the oil concession had reverted back to the state, it was previously a private asset. There was no official handover, so the Murphys could bring up the issue and seek legal redress.

He grinned and confessed, "I had the foresight to switch the box."

I was stunned. "If Armond knew about that, he would kill us. The document in that box is worth an obscene amount of money. If the Murphys get hold of that money, they will have some breathing space and can continue their fight with the Fullers."

"From the look of it, he had not opened that box." Ashton confidently smiled. I was intrigued by his nonchalant manner. "How can you be so sure he had not opened that box?"

"If they had opened the box, knowing how the Murphys are, they would have publicized it to bring attention to themselves. They would also have contacted the Finance Ministry to taken legal recourse to relook into the matter. This would bring in loads of money for the Murphys. It would be difficult not to hear about that," he quipped.

## **Chapter 928**

"What will happen if the Murphys opened the box and realized they had been fooled?" I questioned.

"They had the fake box, which had no openings. Unfortunately, that also means they will continue to hound us, so we are in for more trouble," Ashton smiled and predicted.

“At the end of the day, the Murphys are after money. They are already very wealthy. Why the obsession with money?” I sighed.

Before we knew it, we had arrived at the Stovall residence. The compound was brightly lit. The housekeeper and a few staff were waiting for us. The housekeeper greeted us, handed our car key to the valet, and led us into the house.

The table was already set, but only Louis was in.

“Letty, you have arrived! Come, dinner is ready. Let’s eat.” Louis came up to warmly welcome us.

After greeting Louis, I looked around and realized John was not around. “John is not back yet?”

“He is on his way. We shan’t wait for him. Let’s get started.” Louis showed us to our seats and instructed the maids to serve dinner.

Just as we got seated, we heard a car driving in. “This rascal sure has a good sense of timing. He will appear right on the dot when dinner is served,” Louis derided.

“Oh my, you are early. I did not expect you to come this early. I thought the two of you will only stroll in around 8 p.m.,” John said as he walked in.

I turned to look and scowled when I caught sight of his companion.

“Rascal, get out!” Louis hollered.

“Uncle Louis, don’t be so mean. I was busy, yet still took time off to come back when you asked me to. How can you chase me out before I could even warm the seat?” He then turned to Yvonne, who was standing next to him and urged, “Yvonne, present the gift you bought specially for Uncle Louis. That should please him.”

Yvonne duly walked over to Louis with a big smile and a gift box in hand. “Uncle Louis, Johnny said you enjoy tea. I hope you will like this premium. Do try it when you are free.”

She presented the tea with both hands and had a perfect smile on her face. She looked every inch a well-mannered, elegant scion.

All the time she spent hanging around the socialites was not wasted after all. She had learned a lot from those ladies. If I had not seen the ugly side of her when we met in the bar years ago, I would have thought she was an heiress of a wealthy family.

Time had worked miracles, transforming her into a lady.

Louis did not take the gift from her hands. His dark gaze was on John. “What are you thinking?” he bellowed.

John shrugged and nonchalantly said, “Yvonne is presenting you with a gift. Out of courtesy, you should at least take it from her hand. If you want to nag at me, do wait till everyone leaves after dinner. If you flare now, you will spoil the day for all of us.”

He then took the gift from Yvonne, placed it next to Louis, and led her to sit at the table. "What is everyone waiting for? Let's eat!" He acted as if nothing had happened.

I glanced at the indifferent John, stood up, and poured Louis a glass of water. "Uncle Louis, have some water."

Louis took the water from my hand. He was visibly furious, staring sternly at John. He looked like he was ready to thrash John anytime. John couldn't care less and was eating his dinner, unconcerned.

Louis was angry as it was supposed to be a family dinner, so Yvonne's presence was not welcomed. John clearly understood that, but he still brought her along.

It was not a good time to find out why he did that, so I kept quiet.

Another car drove in shortly. I was surprised as I did not expect more guests.

Hannah walked in with her nanny and her son. Louis' face broke into a smile when he heard Quilo's voice. He hurried out to carry him.

"In the future, let me send the driver to pick you. It is a struggle for you, with baby in tow." Louis started chatting with Hannah.

Hannah's gentle voice could be heard saying, "It is just a short distance from here. I called to inform you I'll be late, and not to wait for us, yet you..."

She abruptly stopped in the middle of her sentence. The sight of Yvonne and John caught her by surprise.

She recovered quickly and turned to us, her smile still intact on her face. “My apologies for being late, Scarlett and Mr. Fuller. We left home late and got caught in a traffic jam.”

I smilingly shook my head to assure her it was okay. We chatted briefly before sitting down to dinner. Quilo was left in the nanny’s care in the next room.

What was supposed to be a cozy family dinner turned into an awkward one. Only John continued eating, unaffected.

## **Chapter 929**

Yvonne was fawning over John, serving him food, feeding him, and catering to his every need.

Hannah was impassive. She occasionally updated Louis on Quilo’s development and shared she was thinking of enrolling him into a sensory class for babies. Louis was all for it and encouraged her to do so.

He handed Hannah a black credit card and gave her full authority to spend as she deemed fit. He also told her to look for a house nearer the town center if she was not satisfied with the villa she was staying in.



Yvonne stole a few glances at Hannah, but she did not betray any emotions in her expressions. Ever since she cozied up to John, she should have received big allowances. John had bad spending habits and would have splurged on her.

Regardless, she must be envious when she saw the black card Louis gave Hannah.

Everyone was preoccupied with their own thoughts during dinner. As soon as it was over, Hannah went to feed Quilo. I got the maid to distract Yvonne and dragged John into the garden.

“Are you out of your mind, John Stovall? Why did you bring along Yvonne?” I chastised.

He shrugged, leaned against the wall with his arms crossed, and dismissed, “Why can’t I bring my girlfriend? Since it is a family dinner, and she will be family, then what’s the harm?”

“Are you serious?” I looked at him, dumbstruck.

He nodded. “At the end of the day, I will have to get married. There is nothing wrong with Yvonne. She is pretty and has an ordinary family background. At least she would not have the guts to betray me and mess around behind my back.”

“John, you would never look within and see if you had done anything wrong, would you? Put your hand on your heart. How long have you kept Hannah waiting for you? You took her love for granted. Do you really think it is fair for you to neglect her?” I rebuked him.

“And what justified her to have an affair with another man?” John hollered. “She could have told me directly if her needs were not met. Why betray me in that disgusting manner?”

I nearly laughed out loud. “What about you? She had an affair with one man. Have you counted the number of women you have fooled around with all these years? Have you ever rejected any woman who throws herself at you? No! You happily embrace one after another. Have you ever considered how much it pains a woman to have to bear with all these? She gave birth to your child, gave up her life to cater to your every need, and learned to cook all the dishes you like. What have you done for her? John, her frustrations and disappointment were built up over time. It took her many years to finally muster the courage to live her own life. Of all the people, you have the least right to criticize and blame her.”

John was shell-shocked and stared blankly at me, lost for words. I gave him a piece of my mind, although I was not sure if he took in what I said.

I let out a sigh as I turned to walk back to the hall. Aren't we all the same? We do not treasure what we have nor work on the relationship with those we love. In the end, we either lose them, or things turn ugly between us.

If we don't invest time to nurture those relationships, we have no right to complain when things fall apart.

There was a huge swimming pool in the garden at the Stovall residence. It was left unused in the winter as none of us had the habit of swimming in the winter. On top of that, we installed a spa in the house, so the pool became a white elephant.

“You have no right to take anything from the Stovall family since you are going your separate ways. Hannah, you knew John will not be marrying you, so nothing in this house belongs to you.” I heard a commotion, stopped, and turned to investigate.

It was Yvonne. She and Hannah were seated by the pool. They were not on friendly terms, so the only common subject they could talk about was John.

Hannah had her gaze fixed on the pool as she refuted Yvonne. “Why are you harping on this? Are you trying to tell me that I should not take anything from the Stovalls or that I should hand them to you instead? I know what is on your mind. I know you do not want me to reap any financial gains from John. Unfortunately, you are not part of the Stovall family yet. Under the law, you are not a Stovall, and most importantly, no one here recognizes you as family. Ms. Wilde, I like to keep things simple. I won’t bother anyone, and I don’t like others to bother me, so please leave me alone. You can make your demands known to John. If he obliges, you get it. If he doesn’t, then too bad.”

## **Chapter 930**

Hannah was very composed and not ruffled by Yvonne’s attitude. She either did not care about Yvonne, or John no longer has a place in her heart.

Yvonne was upset she did not successfully agitate Hannah. She glared at Hannah. “I know, but it is only a matter of time before I get married to him. He will definitely dote on me more compared to you, and you will disappear from our sights in the future. As for now, I would not allow you to take advantage of him. You are not worthy of him, and you should not reap any gains from the Stovall family.”

Hannah looked at her and all of a sudden, she laughed out loud. “I was wondering why your eyes were on me the whole evening. So this is what you are after!” She took the black card from her purse and placed it in front of Yvonne. “Are you jealous because of this card? If you want it, take it. Stop irritating me.”

Yvonne was infuriated, but she still reached out to take the card. "At least you have some decency. Don't you dare eye on anything of the Stovall family! Move out of the villa and transfer the deed back to them. You can stop dreaming about driving John's cars as well. I will not let you have any of them. As for the clothes and jewelry John bought for you previously, you can keep them, as rewards for your time spent on him," she fumed.

"Haha, Ms. Wilde, you are making decisions on the distribution of the Stovall family's wealth? Do you think you are Mrs. Stovall?" Hannah mocked her.

"John and I will certainly get married, so I have the right to do this." Yvonne boasted as she fiddled with the black card.

Hannah could not care less. As she was standing up to leave, she jibed, "Congratulations then. I hope you marry into money soon." It was obviously a sarcastic remark.

After going through all the trouble, Yvonne managed to get the black card that she was eyeing, but she was also deeply annoyed by Hannah's attitude. She aggressively stomped over to block Hannah's exit and scoffed, "I don't need you to give me your good wishes. Since you are aware of my relationship with John, if I were you, I would get out of here immediately with the b\*\*tard child and stop tarnishing the Stovall family."

I frowned at the harsh words Yvonne used.

Hannah's expression turned dark, and she barked, "Yvonne Wilde, mind your language. I can't be bothered to get into a dispute with you, but that does not mean you can step all over me."

I could not understand what John saw in Yvonne. She was average-looking, materialistic, and uncouth. He could have married any of the heiress or socialites in K City, yet he chose such a woman. How unfortunate.

Before I could step in, Yvonne grabbed Hannah's arm and roared, "Who are you to tell me off? Don't you know you are a sl\*t? Stop this high and mighty act. You are way more disgusting than I am. I hate show-offs like you!" Then, she gave Hannah a heavy push towards the pool.

I quickly ran towards them, shocked. Surprisingly, Hannah successfully fended her off. She grabbed Yvonne's hand, ducked, and managed to keep her balance. Yvonne fell into the pool instead.

I almost forgot. Hannah grew up in the countryside and spent her childhood exploring the wilds. She was nimble and agile. The ability to fend off danger was deeply ingrained in her.

Yvonne struggled to stay afloat in the pool and was screaming for help. I reached the poolside and checked on Hannah. "Are you alright?"

"I am fine," Hannah nodded.

Those in the hall came running when they heard Yvonne's scream. John saw her, frowned, and jumped into the pool to scoop her up. He placed her on the ground and started giving her first aid. She had merely swallowed some water, so was in no danger.

By then, Louis and Ashton also reached the scene, and they asked, "What happened?"

Yvonne recovered from her shock, flung herself into John's arms, and wailed. John held on to her tightly and roared at the maid who was there. "Get moving! It is freezing cold. Can't you see we need a towel here?"

The maid stumbled into the house and brought a blanket to keep Yvonne warm. John immediately carried her into his room. He turned to instruct the maid to summon the doctor and prepare some chicken soup for Yvonne.

Louis was displeased, but he was too gracious to make his guests feel uncomfortable.