

Chapter 941

I forced a smile. "I get it. I'll take care of myself, just go."

He was still worried despite that and told Cameron some dos and don'ts before he left. Then, Cameron looked at me. "He's really nice to you."

I smiled. Then my phone rang. It was from Armond, who hadn't called me in a long time. I frowned in annoyance when I saw his number. Ever since what happened in Moranta, I lost any good impression I had for him. But I took his call anyway. "What is it?"

His voice was deep, but also depressing. "It's been a while. We might not be friends anymore, but we don't have to be enemies; so, you don't have to be so hostile. "

I sneered. "You tried to harm my husband. If that's not enough to antagonize me, I don't know what will."

He laughed mirthlessly. "Are you free? Why don't we meet up? You might gain something, you know."

"Thanks but no thanks," I refused.

"Come on, don't say no so fast." He chuckled. "I heard you're trying to find a matching kidney for the Crests' kid. I'm your friend, Scarlett, and I'm a kind man. I don't mind getting a suitable kidney for the child. All you have to do is ask," he said casually, much to my surprise.

I frowned. "What are you trying to do now, Armond?"

"Let's meet up and talk. You raised the child, didn't you? You can take this risk. You risked your life in Moranta for Ashton, so why not for the child? Is she worth less than your husband? All I want to do is to chat with you."

I was surprised that he could sound so nonchalant since he was usually a stern man. What is he really like deep down?

My prolonged silence prompted him to speak. "So it's a no, huh? I feel bad for the poor child."

"Give me the location." I took a deep breath. I didn't know how he would find the kidney, but it was a pressing matter, so I had to give it a try.

He laughed as if his plan had worked. "You are always so loyal, Scarlett. I'm looking forward to our meeting, but don't tell anyone about this, and don't try to pull any tricks behind my back. Or I'll make sure your daughter is bedridden for life even if she gets the bone marrow she desperately needs. You know I can do that."

He said goodbye with a laugh before hanging up. Then, he sent me the location.

I pursed my lips. The city center, huh? And the most bustling place too. I heaved a sigh of relief. If that's the case, he can't do anything to me even if he wants to.

Cameron came back with the vitamins after I kept my phone. "Take these vitamins once in the morning and once at night. It'll help the baby."

I nodded and put the pills in my bag. At the same time, I was thinking about what to tell her since I want to go out.

The ER's door swung open, and out came Summer on a gurney surrounded by doctors. Cameron and I followed them into the ward, but Summer was still in a coma even after the doctors had left.

I looked at Cameron. "I'm going out to get some stuff, Mom. Look after Summer for me. I'll be back in a minute."

She looked at the time and nodded. "Go on. I'll look after her."

I went straight to the location Armond sent me after coming out from the hospital. It was a café near the hospital. When I arrived at the place, Armond was already waiting for me. He gave me a warm smile when we met. "I thought you won't come." Then, he called the waiter to take his order.

I looked at him. "Please make this quick."

He pursed his lips calmly. "So I'm not even your friend now."

"Do you think we can still be friends after what you did?" I held my anger back. He was no longer my friend from the moment he tried to kill Ashton in Moranta. In fact, he was my enemy since then.

He smiled despondently. "You know I would never harm you."

“Depends on how you define ‘harm.’” I sneered. “That’s enough of pleasantries. You have plotted ever since we met, but I don’t really care about your reason. Just cut to the chase.”

He pursed his lips and squinted at me. “Very well then. Remember the sandalwood box you promised to give me back in Venria? I took your girls back safe and sound, but what did you do? You gave me a fake box. Do you think I’m an idiot, Scarlett?”

I froze for a moment. Oh, so he found out about that. I pursed my lips. “I know nothing about that box. You wanted it, so I gave it to you. I can tell you that my grandma gave it to me, so it’s just something my grandma left me. I have no idea what the content means to you, and I don’t know what you want from it.”

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He sneered. “Shifting the blame, are we? Fine. If you don’t want to give me the box, then there’s no meaning to this meeting. Your daughter is on her own now.”

A frown creased my forehead. “I have no idea where the box is right now. It’s always been in the villa and guarded by Ashton.”

He gave me a nod and squinted. “So that means you can retrieve it.”

I frowned again. “I cannot,” I denied.

He chuckled. "Well, the box isn't the only chip you have, but I wonder if you'll accept the deal."

I hesitated for a moment before asking, "What's your price?"

He pointed at me. "You."

I frowned at him, flabbergasted and waited for a further explanation.

He smiled. "Haven't you realized? I've been interested in you for a while now."

I almost spewed the water out, then I stared at him in shock.

He ignored my surprise and continued, "The first time I met you was at J City's auction. You weren't exactly beautiful, but you were attractive. Maybe it's because Ashton was beside you, so I only had eyes for you then. And then the meeting at the cemetery. You probably didn't know this, but I was the one who sent the guy who attacked you. Anyway, I wasn't planning to hurt you, and I just wanted to have a reason to talk with you. Fortunately, we got to know each other after that. Then, I wanted to get closer to you, and you gave me a chance. You were in A City then, and coincidentally, you were in my company. Also, you know Savini and that's one great coincidence. Whatever it is, we got to know each other after that."

I stared at him in disbelief. "You're the president of Animus?"

He nodded. "Murphy Corporation has a lot of subsidiaries in A City. Some are just newly acquired, so they aren't named after the corporation yet."

I felt a chill running down my spine as I recalled everything that had happened. Then, I grabbed his hand. "So you were the one behind the night I was arrested because of kyanine possession? Those cops are your henchmen?"

He paused for a moment, surprised. "Wow, you're getting smarter."

No, I was not. I just remembered seeing him that night at the hotel, and I was falsely accused not long after that. I couldn't understand why I was the one who was targeted out of everyone there. I thought Savini was behind it, but he didn't seem surprised when I met him after coming back from Venria alive. And he was all ready for my questioning.

When I thought back to those hellish days, I realized there were a lot of loopholes that couldn't be explained. Tabitha and Laurel came from normal families, but Nora wasn't. But even so, Channing didn't say a word about her kidnap.

I must have looked concerned, but all Armond did was throw me a dark smile. "Are you thinking about the happy days we had in Venria and Western Europe?"

My face fell, and I got ready to leave before the waiter came back with our coffee, but he stopped me. "Your daughter can't wait around any longer, Ms. Stovall. Stop throwing a tantrum and take my offer."

He was smiling when he said that, as if Summer's life was just a chip for him to play with. Disgusting. I glowered. "What do you want?"

He gave me an eerie look. "Why don't you start dating me?"

“Are you mad, Murphy? I’m married! And I won’t date you even if I’m not! If you don’t love Nora, then tell her! Don’t make her wait!” The man was not just a hypocrite. He could act like a gentleman, a scheming b*stard, a cold warlord, and a shameless per*ert. Suddenly, I realized I never knew this creature—he’s a demon in human skin.

“I won’t make it hard for you.” Then, he pinned me down on the seat. “Why not give me a chance? If you date me, I’ll get your daughter the kidney that she needs so desperately.”

I glared at him incredulously. He was making the source of kidneys sound like something within his reach. Then, he sat back before me. “All you have to do is nod. I’ll make sure your daughter gets treated immediately.”

I looked at him. He’s already beyond disgusting. Any description is going to be an understatement. I took the coffee the waiter served and splashed it on his face. “Get professional help if you have a mental illness. You’re going to hurt someone sooner or later.”

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Then, I left without saying a word. Armond shocked me to my core once again. I had the feeling he could take any human organ he wanted at any time. All he had to do was say the word. That fact alone made him terrifying.

At that moment, Cameron gave me a call to ask me why I was out for so long. I lied by saying that I had gone quite a distance, so I couldn’t get back that soon. In the end, I bought some stuff at a convenience store nearby before going back.

Summer was lying in the bed. She was looking skeletal after the chemotherapy sessions, and looking at her broke my heart. Even so, I couldn’t cry before her, so I

forced a smile. "Are you angry with Mommy, Summer? It's been a while since I last saw you."

Summer shook her head and held my hand weakly. "No. Grandma said you have a baby in your belly, so you can't stay here for too long, or the baby's going to get sick."

I took a deep breath before holding her hand back firmly. I couldn't face her because of my guilt. I felt that everything was my fault. If I hadn't let her go with Jared to W City, she wouldn't have to suffer that much.

If I hadn't left for A City, if I hadn't left her behind with Cameron, I would probably notice something wrong with her. Cameron even called me to talk about Summer's symptoms, but I delayed her treatment because of my carelessness. I shouldn't have gotten pregnant either. I always thought I cared and loved Summer with all my heart, but I realized I was only acting out of my selfish desires. I brought her to R Province because I thought it was best for her, then I brought her back to K City and left her alone for the same reason. I brought this suffering unto her.

I felt guilty, and I couldn't face her because of that.

"What are you thinking about, Mommy?" Summer waved her hand before me, snapping me out of my trance. "I'm not scared, Mommy. Granny told me lots of people fall sick, but everyone gets better if they follow the doctor's orders."

I nodded, but I felt sad. I knew I would break down the moment I started talking, so I felt relieved when Cameron came in. "Talk to granny for a bit, Summer. I'll be back in a second."

Cameron wanted to ask me something, but since I was in a hurry, she stopped herself.

My tears finally fell when I got to the staircase. Ashton called me, but I waited for a bit before answering the call. He was silent for a while before asking, "Have you taken dinner. Is Summer fine?"

"Yes." I nodded. "What about Jared? Did he agree to it?"

"Yes. I'll take him to the hospital tomorrow. What happened? Your voice sounds hoarse. Are you crying?"

I wanted to say no, but I knew I couldn't hide it from him. "Summer's just skin and bones now. It's heartbreaking whenever I see her." I didn't know how to break the meeting with Armond to him. First, I didn't know what Armond was trying to do; secondly, I couldn't understand why Armond said it was easy for him to get a suitable kidney for Summer."

"Don't worry. I won't let anything happen to Summer. Mrs. Dune told me you look tired. Don't forget to rest up when you get home. I don't want you to exhaust yourself," he said gently. Well, he did mellow out over the years.

I stayed at the staircase for a bit after hanging up, then Nora called me. I thought it'd be awkward, but I took the call anyhow. Nora was as vivacious as usual though. "Can you pick us up at the airport, Scarlett? We just got here, so everything's really unfamiliar."

I froze up. "You're in K City?"

"Yeah. Armond said you're really worried about your daughter when I called him. I can't really help you, but I can take care of her for you. I won't trouble you, I promise," she said a lot, and I was surprised, but I felt touched.

I could feel tears coming up again, but I answered, "Thank you. I—"

“Oh, stop yammering and come pick us up quickly. K City’s freezing. I should have worn more clothes. It feels so chilly right after we landed, you know,” she grumbled.

I smiled. “Alright, I’m coming over. Wait, ‘we’? Who did you come with?”

“A new friend I got to know. She’s here on a business trip, so we came together. I’ll introduce her to you later.” Her teeth were chattering from the cold.

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“Okay.” I hung up and told Cameron a few things before leaving.

She wasn’t wearing anything thick, and it was already winter in K City. It was impossible for me to take some clothes from the house, so I had to pick her up first.

It was hard to get a ride at the hospital, so I was left waiting, much to my chagrin.

“Scarlett!” someone called out to me, much to my surprise. I looked around to see who was calling me and saw Hannah, which was quite a shock.

She was wearing a tan-colored jacket, and her hair was tied up in a bun, making her look younger. She was also wearing an elegant pair of pearl earrings. Hannah didn’t have the cute look of a young lady, for she was already in her thirties, but she was mature, attractive, and elegant.

“Why did you come to the hospital? Are you sick?” I smiled at her.

She returned the smile and came up to me. “Not me. My boyfriend’s mother. We came to visit her. I was just going to call you to see which room Summer is in so we can see her too.”

At the same time, Hannah’s boyfriend parked his car at the roadside and greeted us.

Hannah asked, “Are you going somewhere? We can give you a lift. It’s hard to get a ride right now, and you guys can get to know each other. Don’t want you guys to feel awkward if you bump into each other next time, you know.”

I paused for a moment, then I smiled at her boyfriend. “I need to go to the airport. It’s quite a distance away, but let’s catch up some other time.”

“Eh, it’s fine. We don’t have anything to do today, so I’ll go with you. I have something to discuss anyway. You’re really busy lately, aren’t you? If I let this chance slip, god knows when the catching up will happen.” Hannah took me to the car and went into the backseat.

She told her boyfriend, “To the airport, Chandler.”

The man nodded and revved up the car.

Hannah held my hand. “He’s Chandler, my boyfriend. He works as a programmer.”

The man gave me an honest smile, and I smiled back. Hannah continued, "And this is my friend, Scarlett. I told you about her."

We got to know each other after that. Chandler looked like an honest man, and he seemed to be younger than Hannah. I met him before at the restaurant. He was about six feet four in height. A towering giant, really. He wasn't conventionally handsome, but he sent out a good vibe.

Then, I looked at Hannah. I never bumped into her again after leaving the Stovall residence. Well, it was just a few days though. I was about to ask her about John, but it looked like she had probably decided to dump him.

I kept my mouth shut since her life was peaceful at the moment. Dating John was not a golden experience for her. To say it was torture might even be an understatement. In any case, nobody could fault her for leaving.

"Oh, are you picking someone up at the airport?" Hannah asked.

I nodded. "Yeah. My friend from A City came. It's chilly right now, and it's hard to get a ride there. Moreover, she isn't wearing a lot of clothes right now either."

Hannah nodded. "I think we have some clothes here." Then, she asked Chandler, "Chandler, did you take the clothes in the trunk home? You know, the ones I put a few days ago."

Chandler shook his head. "No. Work has been hectic these couple of days. I've forgotten about it."

She pouted. "You always forget what I told you. Man, you and that bad memory of yours, but this is actually good." She smiled at me. "Your friend's a girl, right? If it's fine

for her, I can lend her my clothes. Winter in K City can be a nightmare Don't let her fall ill."

I nodded. Hannah seemed different somehow. She used to be elegant and hard to approach, but she was warmer and more approachable now.

She was surprised to see me smile though. "Are you going to ask about John and I?"

I froze up for a moment, but she explained, "It's fine. Chandler knows about it, so you don't have to hold back. Ask away. Oh, I almost forgot about this, but Chandler and I are getting married. I was going to ask you to come with me to the bridal house for the gown fitting. You know I don't have many friends, so you're the first person I thought of. But with Summer being hospitalized, I know you must be busy as well."

I stopped for a moment to process what she said. Then I smiled. "My mother's looking after Summer. Tell me in advance if you're going to try out the gowns. But you sure you talked it out with my brother? Kiki's still young, so I support you, but..."

She nodded at me. "I know what you're trying to say, but I'm going to be thirty-three soon. My best years are coming to an end. I've let go of everything and did everything I had to. I thank god for having met Chandler when life seems to be at a dead end. He spoils me a lot, and thanks to him, I found out that love can come in such an adorable way. We may fall in love with a lot of people throughout our lives, but there can only be one person who walks with us until the end. I want to live my life with Chandler, and I know the kind of life I want to lead. I know you're worried about your brother and Kiki, but I think of you as my friend, Scarlett. I hope you can think about this from my perspective, alright?"

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Yeah. Hannah had kept herself exclusively for John for too long. She accepted every sh*tty thing he did for the sake of a twisted love. Because of that, she had forgotten that she too, was in need of love.

She resolved to leave because she wanted to live her own life. I guess John would never know who he had lost. I guess he would never come across someone who'd wait for him for years anymore. He lost someone who'd give everything up just to give him a home.

I held her hand. "Uncle Louis and I will support you no matter what, Hannah. Uncle Louis sees you as his own daughter, and I know he'll give his blessing. We're grateful for you because you gave us Kiki. We're your family, so tell us if you ever need anything."

She chuckled. "I know you'd support me." She poked Chandler. "Don't ever try to bully me, you hear? I have a family behind me now."

Chandler grinned. "You always had a family behind you."

I smiled. Then, I realized that we couldn't get what we wanted a lot of times because we were obsessed with the illusion of a grandiose love, but happiness had always been about the little things.

Hannah had dated John for many years. All she wanted was a peaceful life for her family, but John didn't catch up on it even though he had the same wish. Eventually, she slipped away from him.

The moment I got out of the car, I saw Nora before the airport's entrance. She was wearing an autumn trench coat and a dress, and she was shivering.

Nora trotted up to me with her luggage in tow. "Oh my god, you're finally here," she gushed. "I was freezing, gosh. The winter in K City can kill, literally speaking. I mean, why is everyone flocking to this place anyway?"

She kept grumbling as I helped her with the luggage. Before I could put it in the trunk, Chandler had already taken it from me. He grinned. "Leave this to me."

Hannah took out a thick down jacket from the trunk. "Is this fine?" she asked me.

I nodded and covered Nora with it. "You should have called me. I could have gotten you some clothes. Oh, you came with a friend, didn't you? Where is she?"

The down coat warmed her up a little, and she looked around. "She said she was going to warm her hands up. Oh, there she is." She pointed at the exit, so I looked in that direction. Much to my surprise, I saw a familiar face. It was none other than Hailey, who texted me a lot just a few days ago.

She was in even thinner clothing than Nora was, and she was pushing her luggage while coming up to us. Hailey's constitution wasn't that good, to begin with, so she was starting to turn blue from the cold. Of course, she looked surprised to see me too.

"You didn't get any hot water, huh? Told you this airport's too big." Nora noticed she wasn't holding anything.

I looked at Hannah awkwardly, but she only smiled and took out a grey coat. "Good thing Chandler didn't take them out."

I thanked her before going up to Hailey with the coat. She smiled at me. "We meet again, Scar."

I handed her to coat. "Looks like it." She was the only one who'd call me that.

Nora looked at us in surprise. "You guys know each other?"

I nodded. "We met before."

She pouted. "What are the odds of that!"

After the simple introduction, Chandler put their luggage in the trunk before coming back into the car. "Where will you go now, Ms. Stovall?"

I told him the villa's address, then he revved the car up again. But then Nora quipped, "Oh, I rented a place in the city center, so it's fine. Hailey and I will be staying there."

I pouted. "But the servants have already cleaned the house, and staying by yourself is going to be a hassle."

"Don't worry, it won't. I have a ton of stuff to deal with, so staying at your place is going to be a hassle for you instead. And the place is really more convenient for us too." Nora was still as talkative as a child.

I wanted to convince her, but Hailey said, "We'll stay at the place Nora rented for now. She told me you have a lot on your plate now, so let's not add more to that, okay?"

I stopped persuading them after that. Chandler sent them to the place they rented in the city center. It was an apartment with two bedrooms. It wasn't big, but the decor was nice.

Since she had nothing to do, Hannah and I helped the girls tidy up the place before going to the mall to purchase a lot of winter apparel.

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Nora wanted us to stay over for a barbecue that night, to which Hannah agreed readily. "No prob. Chandler can cook. He's a good chef."

Chandler blushed from the praise. Since everyone agreed to it, we went to get a mountain of ingredients and prepared for the barbecue, and it didn't take too long to get the food ready. Nora said, "Call Ashton over, Scarlett. It's quite late, so he's probably done with work."

Well, it was getting dark, and everyone was here, so I thought I'd invite him. It was a good chance for them to get to know each other. Then, I called him. It went through a moment later, and I asked, "Are you done, Ashton?"

"He's still in a meeting, Mrs. Fuller. It might take a while," a woman answered instead of him. It sounded familiar, but it took me a while to realize that it was Stella.

"I see. Tell him to call me back once he's done."

“Yes, Mrs. Fuller.” She hung up after that.

I frowned. Nora, who was washing the veggies, noticed it. “Oh, is he still working?”

I nodded. But he usually brings his phone with him. So why was Stella the one who took the call?

“Aw, and I thought we could have held a gathering. I just called Armond, and he said he’d come over since he has time,” Nora mumbled.

I gasped reflexively. “You guys came back from Moranta together?”

Nora didn’t seem to know what happened between Ashton and Armond in Moranta. She nodded and puckered her lips. “I don’t want to talk about it. I was going to stay here for a bit after Moranta, but he got on my nerves so much that I decided to go back.”

I stared at her. “Did you guys get into a fight?”

She shook her head angrily. “It’s worse than that. I thought he’s a gentle man, but he’s just a hypocrite.”

I froze, thinking that she might have seen his darker side, but then she said, “When we were still in A City, he promised me he’d take me to his parents when we came to K City. I got really nervous over it, but he fooled me and told me to go back after I have enough fun here. What a rascal!”

I frowned. So he's still pretending to be a mild-mannered man in front of her, huh?

"I'm going to whoop his arse when he shows up. He sucks as a boyfriend. You know him well, so please lecture him for me, will you? He's really too much!" Nora was a straightforward lady. Once she was done complaining, she went to chat with Hannah and Chandler.

I looked at her quietly and sighed. So Armond didn't tell her about the incident in Moranta. But she should have met Holden, shouldn't she? Didn't Holden tell her anything? I texted Holden, asking him if he had told her anything about the fight between Armond and Ashton in Moranta.

The doorbell rang after I texted him, and Nora went to take it happily, despite the fact that she had just complained about Armond earlier. Even so, when she saw Armond standing outside, she snorted. "Well, look who has decided to show up?"

He looked at us before smiling at her. "I see you have a whole group here. Getting ready to beat me up, I assume?"

Amused, Nora pouted. "As if. Get in. Annoy me again and you'll never hear the end of it."

I was standing at the kitchen's doorstep as he came in with her. He squinted at me coolly before putting on his warm, fake smile. "Rowdy night, I see."

Nora snorted. "Of course, it is." Then, she introduced everyone to him.

I was still looking at him, but all I could see was that dark, eerie man in the café. That thought alone chilled me to the bone.

“He’s evil,” Hailey whispered, much to my surprise. When I snapped out of it, she had paled a bit, perhaps from shock.

I gave her a concerned look. “What is it? Are you feeling unwell?”

She shook her head and took a deep breath. “I’m fine.”

Nora came with Armond to say hi. “Why don’t you girls take a break and let him do it? He’s being punished for coming late, so I thought this is a good place to start.”

Armond was beaming brightly. He looked at me, then at Hailey. “You got a new friend, Nora?”

Nora nodded and held Hailey’s hand with a smile. “I almost forgot. He’s the boyfriend I’ve been talking about. His name’s Armond.”

Chapter 947

Hailey still looked pale, and she nodded at Armond stiffly. She seems scared. Is it because of him?

Nora was a bit of an airhead, so she didn’t notice Hailey’s expression. She turned to Armond. “This is Hailey, my friend. She lives in A City, just like me.”

Armond smiled gently at her. "Hello. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Hailey was trembling slightly as she shook his hand. "Hello," she whispered almost inaudibly.

Thinking that Hailey was just being shy around strangers, Nora smiled. "She's a shy one, so socializing's not her forte. Alright, let's start the barbecue. We're starving here."

Armond smiled and went into the kitchen, followed by Nora.

I grabbed Hailey, then she dragged me out of the kitchen. Her hands were as cold as ice, obviously shocked from the meeting. She then downed a glass of water to calm herself.

Instead of asking her straight off, I waited for her to get a hold of herself. A short while later, she looked at me. "He's evil."

I paused for a moment. I knew she was talking about Armond, so I asked, "Do you know him."

She nodded, then sat on the sofa and looked at the kitchen. "I've seen him before, but it has been quite a while since then," she whispered.

I was going to ask more, but Nora and Armond were already back with the kebabs, while Hannah and Chandler made sure the flames were still roaring. Since everyone was going to dig in, I held my question.

I observed Armond while we were barbecuing, but he didn't seem to know Hailey. How does Hailey know him and she's even terrified.

"You're spacing out again. What's up with you?" Hannah handed me some food. "You have lost some weight. Here, have some kebab."

I snapped out of it and nodded at her.

Armond squinted. "Indeed. I heard about your daughter. Tell us if you need any help."

"Yeah, you don't have to do everything alone, Scarlett." Nora nodded

I forced a smile. "Okay."

Armond had some of his juice and looked at me. "Your daughter needs a bone marrow and kidney transplant, doesn't she? It won't be easy to get the ones she needs. How's it going right now?"

The moment he said that Hailey accidentally smashed the sauce bowl before her. She apologized and quickly cleaned it up, and Nora helped. "It's fine. I can do this myself." Hailey wiped the sauce off her clothes.

All the color had drained from her face, as if she was horrified about something. I had a strong feeling she knew something about Armond, much to my surprise.

Everyone sat back down once the mess was cleared up. Nora looked at me. "It won't be easy to get a kidney transplant for a child, especially a matching one." She turned to Armond. "Can you help her?"

Armond gave me a cryptic look. "I am sure there is a way."

"Really?" Nora stared at him with excitement as she waited for his answer, but Armond only arched his eyebrow at me. "Let's focus on the barbecue for now. We can talk about it after we're done eating."

Nora pondered on it. "Yeah, sure."

I held Hailey's hand again. Much to my surprise, it was still ice-cold despite the heater in the house. That told me the extent of her fear for Armond.

Hailey threw a look of terror at me, while I nodded at her and patted her hand to give her some courage.

Hannah gave me some greens, but I didn't dig in. "Snap out of it, Scarlett. You haven't touched your food. Can't work up an appetite?"

I looked at the little mountain of food on my plate. "No. I'm digging in right now, okay?"

She beamed. "I've never had a barbecue before I met Chandler. It's really awesome, you know. I can get addicted to it."

Chandler blushed, then he gave her a piece of meat. "Dig in then. I can barbecue for you anytime you want."

"You guys are totally gloating. That's gross," Nora threw shades at them, but she did the same thing with Armond with a smile on her face.

Nothing bad happened during the barbecue though. Once we cleared the table up, Hannah and Chandler went back to their place. Nora held my hand and told Armond, "Take her home, Armond. I can't let her hitch a ride alone."

"She can come with us then." Hannah turned to Nora. "And her place is on our way home too."

Before Nora could say anything, Armond interrupted, "Same here. It won't be too much of a problem for us."

Chapter 948

Nora grinned. "I don't think a happy couple like you should bring a third wheel along. Let Armond take care of this."

Hannah wanted to retort, but Chandler whispered something and stopped her.

Then, Ashton called me. I took the call, and he said, "I just finished my meeting. Are you hungry?"

I felt more at ease after hearing his voice, then I went to the balcony. "No. Just had barbecue with my friends. Nora came today, and Hannah's around too, so I was going to call you over, but you were working, so that's that. Have you eaten though?" He just got out of the meeting, so I thought he must be hungry.

He chuckled. "Sounds like I missed out on a feast. Where are you? I'll pick you up. Can you make some pasta for me?"

I smiled. "It's not really good, you know. I'm at Nora's place. It's in the city center. Armond's here too, so can you come over?"

He was quiet for a moment. "Sure." Armond and us weren't friends anymore, so that was the only way I could deal with Armond for the time being.

I made small talk before sending him my location, then I noticed Holden's message. 'Why didn't you call me for so long, woman? Nora's an idiot. Telling her is just going to be a waste of my time.'

Oh, it was probably about the thing I asked him earlier. I texted back before keeping my phone. I see.

Hailey sat quietly in a corner, trying to lay low. Armond and Nora were doing the dishes in the kitchen, so I sat down beside her and handed her a glass of water. "Did you come here for work?"

She took the glass of water and looked up at me. "The company needs clients." She nodded. "I have to make the sales to keep it running."

I looked at her silently. "Running a company doesn't suit you. You should pursue your hobbies instead."

“My father founded the company. It doesn’t matter if I like it or not, I have to hold the fort until he’s free. I’ll keep it running for as long as I can hold it.”

She’s stubborn. I guess there’s no point in persuading her. I nodded and shrugged.
“Good luck.”

She glanced at me for a moment. “What’s your daughter down with?”

“Leukemia.”

She stared down. “She needs a kidney transplant on top of a bone marrow, right?”

I nodded.

She pondered about something silently, gripping the glass of water. “I had a heart transplant before.”

I was surprised she’d tell me about that. I stared at her, and she smiled at me, but she still looked pale. “It was five years ago. I think my father was looking desperately for a heart just like what you’re doing now. I can’t imagine how tortured he must have felt then.”

I didn’t reply to that. For some reason, I thought there was something more to her case. A short pause later, she continued, “You’re right. Running a company isn’t what I like. I love to paint. My dream was to open my own art exhibition all over the world, but I don’t think that can be done now.”

I thought Hailey had depression to begin with, but I realized she had something worse. She looked like a normal girl from the outside, but her attitude told me she disliked human interactions.

She was more like an autistic person than a depressed one. Hailey tried her best to look normal, but she disliked talking to anyone from the bottom of her heart.

“Did you have something to tell me? Was that why you wanted to see me?”

She stared at me, her gaze clean and innocent. She had something to say, but she hesitated, so I advised, “It’s fine if you don’t want to tell me about it right now, but you can talk to me whenever you want to. I don’t know why you’re trying to talk to me even though you dislike me, but I know you have your reasons for that.”

I knew she had something to tell me, but she had no idea how to say it. All she did was stare for a while and looked down in silence. It was hard to get any information from someone with a mental illness, so I didn’t force her to talk. Then I looked outside into the night. Everyone has a battle we can’t see, huh?

“Armond is evil. Even Satan’s a nice guy compared to him,” she muttered, her voice trembling.

I looked at her again. She was pale, and her fists were red from being clenched too tightly. Obviously, she had a great struggle with herself before telling me that short message.

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I wanted to help her relax, but she backed off by reflex and looked at me in confusion. “Sorry, I...”

I nodded before giving her some space. “Calm down. I won’t force you to talk. You can tell me about it when you’re ready. Don’t be scared.”

She bit her lips, her eyes tearing up. When Armond and Nora came over after they were done doing the dishes, Hailey darted into the bedroom, much to Nora’s confusion. “What’s with her?” she asked me.

I was looking at Armond, but he was still putting on his polite front. “It’s nothing. She’s unwell, so she’s retiring for the night.”

Nora nodded dumbly. “No wonder she looks out of place. Is the weather affecting her?”

I nodded. “Probably. Please take care of her.”

She nodded before going to Hailey’s bedroom, concerned.

Armond was giving me a warm smile. “You seem to be unhappy. Is it because I’m here?”

I pursed my lips. “You should end this with her if you don’t love her. Stop hurting Nora.” Armond was a mysterious man. I could never understand which part of him was real, and which was not.

He sat on the balcony's sofa languidly. "I thought you should be more concerned about your daughter, but it seems you care about Nora more. Well, she is adopted after all, so I can see why you don't really care about her."

I held my anger down. "I'd shut up now if I were you."

He smiled nicely. "I'm a talkative guy. Won't you give me a chance, Scarlett? I don't mind having an affair with you. I'll tell Nora off if you'd say yes, and I'd keep it a secret from Ashton. Sounds exciting, doesn't it?"

Armond was disgusting as usual. I looked at him coldly while holding my urge to hurl. "You're disgusting, you know that?"

He dismissed my hostility. "But I like it and I'm having fun."

I went to talk with Hannah and Chandler or I'd puke if I had to say another word to Armond. Honestly, I didn't care about that psycho, but Nora was a newbie in relationships, so I didn't want Armond to hurt her.

Hannah handed me some cut-orange. "Someone seems angry. Have an orange. It's super sweet."

I popped a slice of it into my mouth. "Mmm, it's really sweet. Is Kiki with Uncle Louis today?" Kiki was still young, so Hannah usually wouldn't be staying out so late.

The mention of Kiki saddened her, but she nodded. "John got him a nanny and had him stay with Uncle Louis. I could only visit him from time to time."

I was surprised to hear that, since I thought John would at least let Hannah take care of the child. “He’s still young. Can Uncle Louis really handle him?”

Hannah nodded. “He has weaned, so it’s fine.”

Chandler looked at the time, but he didn’t urge Hannah to leave, though I knew he must have some work to settle. Luckily, Ashton called me. “I’m here. Come down.”

“Sure.” Then, I hung up. “I’ll say goodbye to Nora. It’s getting late, so let’s go home.”

Hannah nodded and came with me to say goodbye to the girls. Hailey was looking better, so she wanted to send us off, but I held her down. “Just lie down, Hailey.”

We went down together, and I noticed that Ashton’s car was right outside. Hannah bade us a simple goodbye before leaving with Chandler, while Armond stood beside me with his hands in his pockets. “You risked yourself to save Ashton. I’m looking forward to see the day when the roles are reversed.”

I shot a glare at him before trotting up to Ashton in silence. He was leaning against the car when I came up to him, then he hugged me. “He’s here too?”

He was referring to Armond. I leaned against his chest and listened to his heartbeats. That always gave me a sense of safety. “Nora called him over. She didn’t know about the incident in Moranta.”

Ashton looked at Armond sternly. Meanwhile, Armond was grinning eerily at us. That man was terrifying. For some reason, I had a feeling he could destroy us when we least expected it.

I held Ashton's hand the moment we got into the car, refusing to let go. Ashton seemed slightly annoyed, but he let me do what I wanted and drove with one hand. Then, I noticed the watch on his wrist and froze. "Is this new? I've never seen this watch before."

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It wasn't an expensive one. On the contrary, it was quite economical, and I didn't remember seeing him owning a watch that cheap.

He looked at me in surprise and arched his eyebrow. "You gave me this watch, remember?"

Well, that was confusing, then I noticed the bouquet of flowers in the backseat, much to my surprise. "Why'd you put that in the car?"

He smiled at me. "This is for you. You'd say it's too conspicuous, so I didn't take it out. Honestly, aren't you the one who bought this watch?"

I shook my head. "I didn't buy anything for you lately, and this is a cheap watch too. It doesn't suit you."

He took off the watch and tried to throw it away, but I stopped him. Then, I took it to have a closer look. It was a niche European luxury watch, though a casual one. It didn't fit Ashton's air at all.

I tilted my head and arched my eyebrow. "Seems like another vixen is closing in, Mr. Fuller."

He smiled. "Sounds like someone's jealous."

I shrugged. "You're a lady magnet, so no surprise there, but this one's interesting. She gave you a watch using my name, though it's a cheap one. Seems like this girl's a smart one."

He arched his eyebrow too. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, you look like you eat caviar for breakfast, so everyone's just going to give whatever's expensive to you, but she didn't. My guess? She makes four to five grand a month, so she's probably working for you."

He nodded. "Please continue."

The watch looked like it was around three grand though. So the lady spent most of her pay on this, huh? "Mind if I ask you something? Why would you think I was the one who gave you this? Who told you anything of that sort?" I could just give him a present anytime I want. There was no need for the middle person, and we weren't really that romantic, so such gesture seldom happened.

"It was already on my desk when I was done with my meeting. The writing looked like yours, so I thought you were the one who gave me the watch." He frowned pensively.

I arched my eyebrow again. "So it's your employee alright. How bold is that." She pulled that stunt despite knowing that he was a married man. If that wasn't bold, I didn't know what was.

I wore the watch around his wrist again, but he dodged me. "What are you doing?"

I smiled. "Don't let the lady down. She must have mustered a lot of courage to give you this."

He pursed his lips. "Are you jealous?"

I shook my head. "Not exactly. You didn't even fall for Rachel, let alone any other woman. I have faith in you. And we have a lot to deal with, so I won't really care about something like this."

He took the watch and tossed it into the trash can without even looking at it. To top it off, he didn't even miss a beat in his driving. "Nice skills, Mr. Fuller."

He smiled. "Thank you, Mrs. Fuller."

That was the end of it then. It wasn't like I didn't care, but I had more pressing matters at hand, so arguing over something like that wasn't worth our time.

The moment we came back to the villa and washed ourselves up, I went straight to bed. I got tired very easily with this pregnancy.

I would have overslept the next day if Ashton didn't wake me up. I stared into space for quite a while. Then, Ashton came out from the changing room. "Earth to Scarlett. Get changed. The officers are going to take Jared to the hospital for the test. We'll have to be there too."

"Okay." I nodded, but I lay in the bed, exhausted. "I wasn't this sleepy in my previous pregnancy though. And I didn't retch this time? Why is that, it feels odd?"

He sat down beside me and handed a bottle of pill to me. "Maybe the baby doesn't want to tire you out this time, so it's sitting quietly in there. Maybe it's a girl."

I leaned my head on his shoulder and frowned at the bottle of pills he was holding. "Why are you taking these pills so frequently anyway? What's so good about them?"

I shook the bottle. "It improves the quality of my sperm."

Goddammit, this pervert! I rolled my eyes before going off to bathe. Then, I had breakfast and changed. He was on the phone in the living room when I was done. I went up to him and patted his shoulder. "Let's go. I'm done."

He looked at me, but instead of taking me with him, he brought me back to the changing room and handed a thick grey coat to me. "Wear this."

I shook my head, frowning. "This one's too thick. It's not even late into the winter yet. If I wear this now, I can't go out for the rest of the winter."

To my dismay, he hung up and wore it over me without giving me a chance to protest. "Lots of people are down with a cold in winter, and more so for you, because you're not in the best of health. You have to take care of yourself."