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She suddenly laughed. However, the next moment, tears started streaming down her face as she said, "So what? It has been so many years. I've already let go of my dignity in order to be with him. It doesn't matter whether he has any feelings for me, as long as I love him. Since he had already promised to marry me, he will not go back on his words. How can you blame me for what went wrong between John and Hannah? Sometimes, fate just works in funny ways. Regardless of whether they still love each other, the time has already come for them to part ways. Some people are just meant to be passerby in our lives. I'll be the one who will be walking this journey with John from now onward."

I merely looked at her and didn't know what to make of that. As such, I shrugged and replied, "I've already said my piece. It's up to you whatever you want to do!"

Just as I was about to go outside and wait for Hannah, Yvonne stopped me and said, "I just don't understand. Why is it that you can accept Hannah but not me? We're both tainted, but why is it that I'm the one despised by everyone instead?"

I wasn't going to say anything, but since she had asked, I had no choice but to tell her. After a moment of silence, I spoke, "Please don't compare yourself to Hannah. Honestly, you are not even on the same level. We don't just assess someone based on looks or status, character also comes into play. You should know very well that Hannah is way prettier than you but talking about looks is too superficial. So let's examine your characters instead. Hannah knows her boundaries. She would never get involved with a married man with kids. She's also not a hypocritical woman who would shamelessly covet something that belongs to someone else and achieve her aims through despicable means. Yvonne, if you are an honorable person, you would not have schemed to sleep with John. You would also not have threatened Hannah multiple times. That is the difference between the both of you."

Yvonne's face turned purple as I spoke. She must be trying really hard to suppress her rage. After a while, she looked at me and asked, "Did you hear all of those from Hannah?"

I let out a faint smile and shook my head, before replying, "You're thinking too much. I'm just too familiar with such unscrupulous methods as they have been used countless times by women who tried to seduce Ashton."

Just then, Hannah and Chandler came out. Hannah had changed back into her own clothes. When she saw the pale look on Yvonne's face, she was stunned for a moment before looking at me and said, "It's quite late already. Are you hungry? Let's go get something to eat!"

I nodded and left the bridal shop with Hannah and Chandler. After Chandler went to get the car, Hannah tugged at my arm and asked, "Did you agitate her just now?"

I shrugged and replied, "Not really. I merely stated facts. Anyway, I'm not against John getting married. I'm just thinking that if he wants to settle down seriously, he should find someone who is decent and would make a good partner to him. He can be really irritating sometimes, but he's still my brother after all. I know that he's insecure and fears loneliness. Perhaps he desires to have a stable family of his own more than anyone else. I had thought that you would be the one for him but he did not cherish you. Yvonne is definitely not the woman for him, neither will she make a good addition to the Stovall family. As such, I played the role of a bad guy."

Hannah tilted her head up slightly and took a deep breath. With a smile, she replied, "Maybe compatibility is never the most important factor when it comes to relationships. If John truly loves Yvonne, even if everyone else is against her, he will still feel blissful to be with her. Scarlett, I know you want the best for your brother, but sometimes, only the two people involved in a relationship know it best."

I was stunned by her reply as I had expected her to agree with me. I looked at her with a slightly shocked expression on my face and paused for a moment before asking, "So, Hannah, are you really over John?"

Letting out a bitter smile, she looked at me and replied, "It's not that easy to get over a man I loved for so many years. Rather than that, maybe I've just become more rational. After meeting Chandler, I finally know what I want. I've been too stubborn all along. Even though all the signs were there, I was still not willing to let go. John and I have argued and fought multiple times. We've also driven each other to the brink of insanity, but after much thinking, I feel like I can finally let go now. There's still a long journey ahead of me and I wouldn't be fair to myself if I continue to trap myself in darkness. Life's too short to ill-treat ourselves. We should live every moment to the fullest."

She paused and looked at me before continuing with a faint smile, "Actually, I really envy you and Ashton. After going through trials and tribulations, the two of you still ended up together. Moving forward, the both of you will have each other to depend on and will be building a future together. That's so wonderful. Everyone's experiences are not the same and some have better luck than the rest. You and Ashton are really fortunate to have each other and it's something you should cherish."

Just then, Chandler drove over and Hannah and I got into the car. However, I was still thinking about what she just said. Many of us could spend our whole lives figuring out what we really wanted and what was most important to us, but still unable to get an answer.

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Suddenly, my palms felt warm. To my surprise, Hannah had shoved a hand warmer into my hand without me realizing it. She chuckled and said, "Chandler was worried that we would be cold, so he got these for us. It's cold outside so it's better to keep warm!"

I nodded and looked at Chandler, who was at the driver's seat. "Thank you!" I said to him.

Chandler smiled candidly and replied, "You're welcome. Hannah has cold hands and feet all the time. You girls seem to have colder body temperatures than men, so it's better to pay more attention to keeping warm."

Feeling amused, Hannah said, "Chandler, how many girlfriends have you had in order for you to come to such a conclusion? Am I supposed to be thankful to all your ex-girlfriends?"

Upon hearing that, Chandler immediately parked his car at the roadside and turned around to look at Hannah. With a serious expression on his face, he said, "Hannah, I swear that you're my first girlfriend. I know that you're afraid of the cold because it was April when we met. Even though the weather was already getting warmer, you always carried a hand warmer with you. You would also keep a blanket and mittens in your car. I know that you are capable of taking care of yourself, but I still hope that I can take care of you in my own ways. I want you to know that you can always rely on me. I pay attention to every detail of your life because I'm constantly learning to be a better partner to you. I didn't acquire all these knowledges because of other women!"

What a way to confess. Hannah was momentarily stunned by the man's speech. A moment later, she burst out laughing while hugging her hand warmer. Fixing her gaze on Chandler, she replied, "Chandler, what was that all about? Can't you see that my friend is here too? You should have controlled yourself and told me in private."

Feeling embarrassed, Chandler scratched his head. With his face flushed red, he said, "I just didn't want you to misunderstand so I was in a rush to clarify!"

Controlling her urge to laugh, Hannah looked at him and replied, "Just drive. We're so hungry!"

Observing the lovey-dovey interaction between those two, I suddenly realized that it was true that to care about someone meant giving her enough affection and reassurance such that she would have a sense of security, just like how Chandler treated Hannah. If a man loved a woman, he would do anything for her and protect her from any harm. No excuses.

After we arrived at a restaurant in town, Hannah looked at me and said, "It's almost time for Ashton to knock off. Do you want to give him a call to ask if he wants to join us for dinner?"

I had almost forgotten that my phone was kept in my bag and in silent mode all these whiles. When I took it out, I saw a few messages from Hailey. But first, I rang Ashton.

The call went through after a few rings, but it was Stella who picked up. In a polite tone, she said, "Mrs. Fuller, Mr. Fuller is in a meeting right now. It will be ending soon. I'll let him know that you called. Or would you prefer me to pass on a message for you?"

"It's OK. Just ask him to call me back!" I said simply and hung up.

Hannah looked at me with a quizzical look and asked, "Is he still occupied with work?"

With a faint smile, I nodded and replied, "He's still in a meeting."

I only opened the messages from Hailey after we found a seat and sat down in the restaurant.

I'm busy handling the company's matters!

After this busy period, let's find a time to catch up.

A while after she sent those two messages, she texted me again.

Is your daughter still looking for a suitable kidney?

How old is your daughter?

Are you guys intending to seek Armond's help?

After I finished reading all her messages, I replied: Do you know something about Armond?

Hannah passed me the menu and said cheerfully, "Just order anything you like! It's Chandler's treat. You don't have to feel bad for him!"

I smiled and put down my phone. I wasn't very familiar with Koandria cuisine. As such, I just chose a random dish. When I was passing the menu back to Hannah, I noticed that she was staring at the direction of the entrance. "Scarlett, isn't that Ashton's aunt, Sally?" She asked.

I followed the direction of her gaze and froze for a moment. It was Sally indeed. Perhaps it had been such a long time since I last saw her that she seemed to have changed so much. She was dressed in a pink coat and had tied her hair into a ponytail, looking extremely youthful.

Hannah looked at me and asked curiously, "Do you know the man she's with?"

I shook my head. That man looked around fifty years old and was donned in branded clothing. He was tall and skinny. That, together with the black-framed glasses he was wearing, he looked like someone who dabbled in the arts.

“I think I know who he is!” Chandler, who was looking at the menu a moment ago, suddenly spoke. “He’s Jim, a professor from K University. He’s also an author and had written several books. He was even nominated for the Nobel Prize when I was in school. However, he was also known for being a nerd and not interested in romance. He was never married and the word was it that he’s quite rich. If I’m not wrong, gardening is his only hobby.”

I was actually quite surprised. I remembered Cameron telling me that she had previously bumped into Sally at the hospital and saw her with a man. I thought she had seen wrongly at that time. But judging by the way the both of them were behaving, they did seem quite intimate.

When they entered the restaurant, Hannah asked, “Did they just get into a relationship at this age?”

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I smiled and shook my head. “I’m not sure but let’s stop gossiping about them. At her age, if Aunt Sally manages to find someone suitable for her and have a partner for her remaining years, that’s a good thing.”

“That’s right!” Hannah nodded and continued seriously, “I suddenly believe that destiny really exists. We all have our own predetermined paths to walk. Some people get to enjoy a smooth life with fame and riches but die young. There are others who have it rougher but remain in good health until they die of old age. There are also some who have a difficult start in life but work hard and ultimately get to enjoy the fruits of their labor. It’s the same when it comes to relationships. True love might only come to some at a later stage after experiencing trials and tribulations.”

I nodded, agreeing with her views. Chandler ordered a few of Hannah’s favorite dishes and said, “What about us? It was also not easy for us to be together, right?”

Hannah looked at the man and replied, “We just met each other at the right time.”

Seeing that they are showing off their love again, I looked down at my phone. Hailey texted again. It’s difficult to explain over the phone. Let’s find some time to meet up!

She was right. That issue was too complicated to be properly communicated over the phone.

Just then, I saw an incoming call from Ashton and answered it at once. “Has your meeting ended?”

He replied in a hoarse voice, “Yup, just ended. Where are you now?”

“I’m in town having dinner with Hannah and Chandler right now. Do you want to join us?”

“Sure!”

After I hung up, Hannah looked at me and asked, “Is that Ashton?”

I nodded and she asked worriedly, “Have you been resting well these days? I already noticed that you looked quite pale when I saw you this morning. Are you losing sleep feeling troubled over Summer?”

I froze for a moment and let out a bitter smile before replying, “She’s Macy’s only child. I... “

I sighed and did not finish my sentence. Not wanting to discuss that topic, I looked at Hannah and said, “Ashton will be coming later. I should go say hi to Aunt Sally first.”

Talking about Summer’s situation was pointless. I could only hope that a suitable kidney for her would be available soon.

Hannah understood that I did not want to continue talking about it and nodded. “Sure, go ahead. There should be still a while before our food is served,” she said.

Sally and Jim were sitting by the window. The middle-aged couple was behaving just like teenagers in love. One of them was talking animatedly while the other listened quietly and responded with smiles intermittently. One could tell from the look in their eyes how much they adored each other.

I must have arrived at an inopportune moment. When Sally saw me, she was obviously startled and had an awkward expression on her face. “Scarlett, why... why are you here?”

“I just happened to be having dinner with my friends at this restaurant and I saw you. I thought I should come over and say hi. Aunt Sally, who’s this gentleman?” I asked, beaming.

A blush of embarrassment spread across Sally’s cheeks. Jim, who had seen much in life, remained composed and answered instead. “Hi, I’m Jim. Sally and I are dating. I guess you must be her niece? Please have a seat.”

His candidness surprised me. I joined them at their table and introduced myself to Jim. I could not help but smile when I saw the blush on Sally’s face. “Aunt Sally, Ashton and I are quite busy lately. Are you angry that we haven’t had time to visit you?”

Still feeling a little awkward, Sally smiled at me and replied, “I’ve heard about Fuller Corporation’s situation and understand that Ashton is occupied with work. Anyway, you youngsters have your own matters to attend to. I’m already feeling bad that I can’t be of any help to you. The only thing I can do is not to be a burden and worry you guys.”

I nodded and thought about Summer. I realized Aunt Sally was still unaware of that. With a smile, I replied, “Aunt Sally, we should have a gathering after this busy period. You have to bring Uncle Jim along, yeah?”

Sally nodded. I could see that her cheeks were still in a shade of pink. Since I had already greeted her, I should get going in order not to disrupt their date.

Just when I stood up and was about to leave, I saw Ashton walking towards us. I was rather stunned at how speedily he arrived.

“Oh, Ashton is here too,” Sally said as she noticed Ashton as well.

I walked towards him and asked, "How did you reach so quickly?"

He pulled me closer towards him and frowned. "Why is your hand so cold?" He asked, while at the same time holding my hand in his, warming it. "The office is quite nearby and the traffic was smooth. That's how I'm here so fast!"

"Oh," I simply replied before whispering into his ear, "I forgot to tell you just now. Aunt Sally is here too."

While we were talking, Jim had already stood up and approached Ashton. After the two men exchanged greetings, Ashton asked me, "Aren't you with Hannah?"

I nodded and we said goodbye to Sally before joining Hannah and Chandler again. The dishes were served the same time we arrived back at the table.

When Hannah saw Ashton and I, she smiled and said, "I was just about to go over and get you." Then, she introduced Chandler to Ashton and all of us sat down.

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I looked at Ashton and Chandler; one is reserved and arrogant, the latter kind and down-to-earth. It was not surprising that the two of them had very little in common to talk about. Hannah and I, on the other hand, were busy chattering away.

Hannah looked at the shrimps Ashton peeled for me and said, "You know what, I'm actually quite jealous of the way you two interact with each other. It's not sickeningly sweet, but one that seems very natural."

I smiled in return and watched quietly as Chandler carefully fed a shrimp to Hannah. "I'm the one who's envious of you. Look at how thoughtful and gentle Mr. Coleman is to you. You must cherish him."

She nodded in assent. "That's for sure. I wish the best for you and Ashton too."

It was already quite late by the time we finished dinner and returned to the villa.

Back to our bedroom, Ashton seemed already tuckered out, so I decided to keep the questions I had to myself. After taking a shower and finally lying in bed together, Ashton's voice was a little croaky when he asked, "Is John going to do anything now that Hannah is getting married?"

I was mildly surprised by his sudden interest in this matter and shook my head. "I'm not sure. All I know is that he also plans to marry Yvonne. God knows what's going on in his head."

Now that he brought up this matter, I asked curiously, "Ashton, what would you do if I married another person?"

The man opened his eyes and fixed steadily at mine. His voice was low and solemn when he replied, "Will you?"

I rolled my eyes at him and said, “Why not? Life is so unpredictable, anything is possible. Case in point, years ago, John wouldn’t have thought that Hannah was going to bear his child. And now, when John finally falls in love with Hannah, she has decided to become someone else’s bride. We can’t bet on things to remain the same forever.”

Instead of answering my hypothetical question, his dark eyes continued to glare at me intently. I grew impatient and started to pester him, “Why are you looking at me like this? Just answer my question!”

“I will never let you go, or allow you to fall in love with another person, much less letting you marrying someone else other than me. So, your question is invalid.” His demeanor was so overbearing I had to forego all other follow-up questions at the back of my mind.

I sighed. “It’s just an innocent question. I don’t understand why you are taking it so seriously.” Feeling a little stirred up, I turned my back against him.

Ashton then moved closer to me, his chest was so close against my back I could feel his strong heartbeats. His big hand rested on my belly as he assumed a dulcet tone, “Scarlett, I believe that many things in life are achievable when you put your minds to it. I can’t predict my future, but one thing I know for sure is that, as long as I live, I will not let you go. I never buy the saying that if you love someone you should set her free. I’m just an ordinary guy who wants to be with my wife and can’t bear to see you live with anyone else. So, don’t you ever think of such a thing again, okay?”

I wasn’t sure if it was his bold profession of love or his steady heartbeat against my body, the fog in my mind suddenly lifted and I could see things clearly as they were. I finally conceded, “Alright, I won’t ask such a stupid question again.” My head rested on his shoulder and my fingers intertwined with his. “Ashton, when Summer gets better, we will start afresh as a family.” The man then held me tightly in his arms.

All my life, I was never able to fully grasp the concept of happiness. But at that moment, I finally understood that happiness could just be as simple as spending the night holding onto someone you love who also loved you back.

“Ashton, you...” Realizing what he was about to do, my eyes widened in the next instant. “What are you doing? I’m pregnant, we can’t do that!”

He turned me around so that I was now facing him. Our eyes locked and he said in a coarse voice, “Scarlett, it’s been a while since we...”

I hesitated for a brief moment before I replied in a soft voice, “But, but it’s inconvenient now that I’m pregnant.”

Ashton leaned his head against mine and I could feel his humid and heavy breaths inches away. I held my breath and dared not utter another word.

After a few seconds, the man took a deep breath and finally said, “Alright, let’s go to sleep.”

Ashton still held onto me, but his hands finally stopped moving around. I stole a sigh of relief and recalled what happened during the day. “By the way, are you not allowed to bring a phone during meetings lately?”

“No, why is that?”

“Oh, it’s nothing. Just that I’ve tried calling you a few times and they all went to voicemail. So, I was wondering if there was a no-phone rule instated in your office.”

“My office is very close to the conference room. So, sometimes I’ll leave my phone in my office during meetings. It won’t happen again.”

I let out a faint smile. “Okay.”

Maybe it was just a coincident that Stella picked up his phone today.

The next day, I rushed to the hospital after being informed that Summer and Jared’s bone marrows were not compatible. I arrived at the hospital and met with Cameron and Zachary, who looked like they hadn’t slept all night.

There was discernible sorrow in Cameron’s voice as she spoke, “My dear, the doctor has confirmed that their bone marrows do not match. We’re going to have to search for one that’s compatible with Summer’s.”

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I was puzzled. “Why not? Summer is his biological daughter. How is that possible?”

“It turns out they have different blood types, so it doesn’t matter that Jared is Summer’s biological father. If we perform the surgery anyway, it’ll be like a bad organ transplant, which will make Summer’s condition worse,” Cameron tried to explain the situation to me in her limited medical terms.

My mind went momentarily blank. I had hoped that in the scenario where their bone marrows didn’t match, he could at least donate his kidney to Summer. But now, it seemed that my last hope was also squashed.

As though being sucked out of all energy, I slumped into a chair and was lost in thoughts.

It wasn't until the doctor came out from Summer's ward that I snapped out from my daze when he said, "Can we all please proceed to my office?"

As Cameron helped me up, I noticed that Zachary's expression was rather grim and appeared deep in thought.

As we all took a seat in the doctor's office, Cameron asked anxiously, "Doctor, what are we going to do now that we can't find suitable bone marrow for Summer?"

He looked at us and slowly explained, "Bone marrow transplant is a major operation, therefore it's imperative that we find a compatible donor, or we will risk dangerous level of organ rejection post-operation. There are increasing numbers of acute leukemia patients for the past two years, but suitable bone marrow donors are still very rare. I can understand your concerns, however, the only thing we can do for Summer right now is to continue her chemotherapy. In the meantime, we will keep searching for matching bone marrow."

Zachary asked, "Let's say we have no luck in finding her a suitable donor, how long does she have?"

The doctor was a little rattled by the stone-faced Zachary and had chosen his words carefully when he replied, "If we stick to our current treatment plan, her prognosis is actually quite positive. She will have at least three more years."

“Alright. I understand.” Zachary nodded before he stood up abruptly and left the room without uttering another word.

Cameron was panic-stricken and she quickly turned to me. “Letty, quick! You have to stop your father. We haven’t gotten to that stage yet!”

Despite being puzzled by what she said, considering the urgency in her tone, I stood up and hurried after him. Zachary was dialling on his phone as he waited in front of an elevator.

I called after him, “Dad, what’s going on? Where are you going?”

He turned to me with a self-reproach look on his face. “Scarlett, I know you can’t forgive us for what we did to your baby years ago. But don’t you worry now. I won’t let anything happen to another child of yours. I’ll do whatever it takes to save Summer.”

I was still as a loss of what he was planning to do as he was about to take off in a grave manner.

I grabbed onto his arm before he could leave. “Dad, hold on for a second. Ashton is already working on ways to save Summer too. Don’t you worry, she’ll be okay.”

Nonetheless, my words seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. Just then, the elevator door opened. Zachary stepped into the elevator and stopped me from following suit. “Stay here and look after your mother. I’m just going to look for a better doctor and I’ll be back soon.”

Right after the elevator door was shut before me, Cameron hurried over and her expression grew more desperate when she didn’t see Zachary. “Scarlett, where’s your father? You should have stopped him. He’s onto something dangerous!”

“He said he was going to look for another doctor and asked me to stay back.”

Cameron was frantically pressing at the elevator button and her voice was choking up as she said, “If he really was looking for another doctor, couldn’t he just do it through the phone? I can’t let him do this, not after he’s finally decided to settle down and live a normal life with us. If we let him do this, there’ll be no turning back for all of us.”

Sensing that something was off, I looked at her and my jaw was tightening. “Mom, there’s no way I can catch up to him now. But I’ll get Ashton to stop him. While I’m on the phone, you’re gonna have to get yourself together, and then tell me what really is going on, okay?”

With tears rolling down her cheeks, she finally nodded. After I contacted Ashton and told him to get in touch with Zachary, I helped Cameron sit down on a bench in the corridor.

After the woman finally collected herself, she slowly spoke, “My dear, have you heard of organ trading?”

I was stunned by her revelation as cold sweats started to form on my forehead. Shaking my head, I continued to ask, “Mom, what’s going on?”

Wiping the tears away from her eyes, the woman slowly explained, “Scarlett, there’s nothing in this world you can’t buy with enough money and power, including human organs. Your father started thinking about it when Summer started falling sick. He used to work with mafia, so he knows his way around this black market. I tried to talk him out of this, but he wouldn’t listen to me. Now that our lives are finally back to normal, and you are expecting another child, it’s just too much risk to involve both our families in this business.”

I took a few moments to calm my racing heart. “Mom, has Dad found one?”

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Cameron looked at me with her eyes widened in intense fear. “My dear, you can’t be seriously considering it! These organs, they are all harvested with illegal means!”

“Mom, that’s not what I meant. I’m just trying to figure out where Dad could be heading that’s all. Whatever leads he has right now, we have to discuss this matter together before deciding what to do.”

She nodded, but her body did not stop trembling.

When Cameron was calmer and more collected, she started to analyze the situation, “Your father had washed his hands off this business many years ago. But starting a few days ago, he’s been secretly contacting a few of his old buddies regarding this matter. I overheard from his conversations that the black market, as well as the operations, are only carried out in A City. So, your dad must be on his way to the airport to fly over there and meet with the dealer.”

Upon hearing which, I made another phone call to Ashton for him to intercept Zachary at the airport. I turned to Cameron and asked, “Who else knows about this?”

She shook her head. “Just the two of us. I didn’t want him to take the risk. If found out, our whole family will be done for.”

Sensing that my silence might mean otherwise, Cameron tried to probe, “Scarlett, tell me, if your father found both compatible bone marrow and kidney for Summer, would you have agreed to it?”

Her question was loaded with massive moral conundrums; my head was filled with many questions to which I didn’t have immediate answers. I lowered my head to look at my phone, at a loss for words.

Cameron grew more anxious as she grabbed onto my arm and said grievously, “My dear, listen to me, you can’t do this. Summer is such an adorable kid and we all love her dearly. But you can’t gamble your future with this matter. It would have been okay if this only involves me and your father, since we’ve had our share of lives at this age. But things are different for you and Ashton. You’re finally expecting another child and you still have a long way to go. As for Summer, we may just have to accept that this is her destiny. Please promise me you won’t make a rash decision on this.”

Cameron’s concerns were valid, and anyone with a sound logic should arrive at the same conclusion. However, I had long regarded Summer as my own daughter, so the only logical sense as a mother was to save my daughter by whatever means necessary.

I looked at her and sighed. “Mom, Summer is my daughter. There’s no way I’ll give up on her. If the dealer manages to find a donor from a clean source, why can’t we give Summer a chance to live?”

Cameron’s eyes widened in disbelief. “Are you out of your mind? There’s no way that kind of things will be clean!”

I knew there was no way that I could sway her mind right now, but I couldn’t help but imagine a scenario where someone passed on from an accident and we could offer a sum of money to her family. It would not have brought her life back, but in a way, parts of her spirit got to live on. The concept of organ donation at death might sound cruel to some people, but if the alternative for the body was to be cremated, leaving nothing but ashes behind, why not let them save another life?

“Mom, let’s not talk about this right now. Can you please keep Summer company while I try to locate Dad and talk to him?” It’s too early to dismiss any remote chance Summer may have.

Cameron did not sound fully convinced. "My dear, whatever you do, please be mindful of the potential consequences they may have on both our families. Do you understand what I mean?"

"I do."

I left the hospital and tried to reach Ashton by phone, but it was engaged. I then attempted to call Zachary's number, also to no avail. I was feeling rather helpless when my phone rang.

Seeing Armond's name on my caller ID only made me feel more frustrated. My tone was more than agitated when I answered his call, "What do you want?"

Instead of being offended, an audible laugh rang from the other end of the line as the man spoke, "Sensing from your impatient tone, I suppose you ran into some trouble. Why don't you come and have a chat with me? I may be able to cheer you up."

"If you have nothing more to say, I'll hang up now." My patience was running thin for this pervert.

He sighed and said, "Hold on a second, I was told that Zachary is on his way to A City. I'm wondering whether that's because Jared's bone marrow is not compatible with Summer's. If that's the case, then I suppose he's heading toward A City to search for..."

The man had now successfully riled me up. "Armond Murphy, what kind of a sicko are you? And what do you want from me?"

"I just told you, I may have some information that's useful to you so that your daughter will stop suffering from chemotherapy." His tone suddenly took on a serious note,

“There’s no need to dismiss me just yet. I know exactly what you’re looking for and I may even have means to secure some for you. So, what do you say about meeting up?”

I paused for a brief moment to ponder on his words. Maybe what he said wasn’t all bullsh*t.

“Fine. I can meet you up.”

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He seemed to be smiling approvingly when he replied, “I thought you were going to reject me again. Great, I’ll send you the address after this. Don’t be late, or I’ll be sad.”

After hanging up the call, I tried Ashton’s number again. Finally, he answered the phone and there were some traffic noises from his end.

“Ashton, is everything okay over there?”

“I’m stuck in traffic.” Ashton sounded a little flustered. “But don’t you worry; I’ve managed to make contact with Mr. Moore. He promised that he won’t be making the trip to A City for now.”

I heaved a sigh of relief. “That’s great. Can you please take him to the hospital later? I’ll call Mom right now to let her know.”

I gave Cameron a quick update on the phone before receiving a text message with the address where I was supposed to meet Armond.

The address was not far from where I was so I decided to take a cab there.

I arrived at the address to find a cafe bistro that actually resembled more of a private residence. I almost missed the entrance until a waiter greeted me and led me inside.

Armond was already waiting for me in a private room. Dressed in a casual blue sweater, his jacket was draped over a chair next to him as the heater was turned on in the room. Upon my arrival, his lips curled up in a faint smile as he spoke, "Have a seat. Try some of the Earl Grey tea here."

Biting my lips, I took a seat across from him as he slowly poured hot water into his tea pot. After which, he slid a tea cup in front of me and said gracefully, "Smell the aroma from the tea leaves."

I took the cup and placed it under my nose to take a whiff. It did smell fresh and earthy. I put down the cup and said, "It's aromatic."

He kept smiling. "Very tasteful."

His relaxed manner in tea making was in direct contrast to the anxiousness I was feeling all day. Sensing he was in no hurry at all to disclose his real intention, I finally broke the silence, "Armond, I don't have all the time in the world to enjoy tea with you."

His brows frowned slightly, as though I was the biggest buzzkill to his mood. He scorned me and said, "I live life in pursuit of enjoying the quality of the finer things. If you think that I'm wasting your time, the exit is that way," the man said while pointing his slender finger at the door.

He knew clearly that I would not leave just yet, not before I got what I came for.

Pursing my lips, I once again picked up the tea cup and downed the drink in one big gulp. His condescending voice rang in front of me as I did so, "You ought to savour good tea in small sips, not downing it like some cheap wine!"

I put down the cup and stared at him. "It still ends up in the same place. I don't understand what's all the fuss about."

Furrowing his brows, the man poured another cup of tea from his pot and grunted, "Drink and taste it slowly!"

I was increasingly irritated. I wasn't even a tea person to begin with; not to mention differentiating the taste of the tea between big gulps and small sips. However, to get him off my back, I had no choice but to taste the tea his way.

Armond was finally satisfied with the show I put on. "Not bad."

I heaved a sigh of relief and fixed my gaze at him.

Unfazed by my glare, the man drank the last of his tea elegantly before he commented, "This is indeed exceptional tea."

Finally, his vision fell on me while his lips curled up in a smirk. "Am I to understand that you're willing to be with me?"

My brows furrowed into a knot as I tried to contain the mounting rage in my chest. "You already know that I'm a married woman. I can offer you money if that's what you're

after. In addition, if you manage to save Summer, I'll make sure you get to keep my grandma's sandalwood box."

The man let out an unsettling chortle as he replied, "This bargaining chip is quite attractive indeed. However, that box is not the most urgent matter to my family. Right now, you're what I want the most."

I stood up, thinking that I had come all the way here for nothing.

"Don't be in such a hurry. I'm not done explaining myself. How are we going to be together when you're so impatient?" The content of his words could pass for something a boyfriend would say to his girlfriend. But the fact that they came from Armond just made me feel chilly all over.

I pursed my lips and remained silent.

This time he finally got straight to the point. "Okay, fine. There's no point going down that road again. Now, why don't you do me a favor, and I'll let you know how to replace your daughter's faulty organ with one that's functioning?"

"What's your condition?"

If one decides to broker a deal with the devil, one has to be prepared to go to hell.

For a few moments, he just stared at me until I was losing patience before he suddenly blurted, "Stay here to have dinner with us and be on your best behavior."

"You have company?" I asked while lifting my eyebrow.

At that moment, I heard a quick knock on our door and turned around to find a middle-aged woman walking toward us. Her otherwise elegant and beautiful features were shrouded by an overall shadow of long-term sickness, not unlike the pasty look on Hailey's face.

"Armond, I was told by the counter staff that you brought a friend here. Is this she?" the woman asked merrily.

The usual gloom and sinister looks on the man's face instantly replaced with that of warmth and tenderness. He stood up and spoke in the most respectful manner I had ever heard, "News travels fast, Mom. She just got here minutes ago."

Chapter 968

The woman let out a friendly chuckle and turned to Armond. "You should have informed me earlier that we're expecting a guest so I can be more prepared. After all, this is the first time you brought a female friend over here."

The woman then walked toward me and asked kindly, "You must be hungry now. What would you like for dinner?"

I hesitated for a brief moment and shot Armond a quick glance. He was now looking at me with his darkened expression, causing me to respond accordingly, "Thanks, Mrs. Murphy. I'm easy."

The woman continued to exchange more pleasantries with me before she headed out to get dinner ready.

The second the woman left our sights, a glint of malevolent reappeared in Armond's eyes. "Cooperate with me, and I'll tell you what you need to know."

I pursed my lips and asked, "She's your mother?"

"Hmm." He nodded. "For years, she has been hoping that I'll get married and settle down with a family. When she comes back, just go with whatever she says and don't you try to get at her."

I replied flatly, "Don't worry. It's you that I despise. Unlike you, I won't lay a finger on a sick person. I'm not a monster."

"How did you know she's not well?" he asked with his brow lifted.

"I'm not blind. Her complexion is too pale for a normal, healthy person."

"Well then, make sure you're on your best behavior," he snarked.

I looked at the certifiably treacherous man before me and lost in thoughts for a brief moment. I remember having read somewhere that stipulates that the more wickedly evil the person is, the easier it is to search for his soft spot. No one can be categorically judged as good or bad, as they are merely driven by their respective motives. People can be motivated by money, their loved ones, or even the people of their country. Whatever actions that follow are only means to an end.

“So how am I supposed to address her?”

The man raised an eyebrow and curled his lips while watching me. “Well, you can call her...Mom, just like I do.”

Furrowing my brows, I decided to ignore him.

Not long after, Armond’s mother came knocking on our door again. With an apron still wrapped around her waist, she happily announced, “Dinner is ready!”

Armond smiled and nodded. “We’ll be there in just a second.”

After his mother left, he once again turned to me and narrowed his eyes slightly as he reminded, “Again, know your place, and keep your lips tight on things that shouldn’t be said.”

Rolling my eyes, I stood up and left the room.

Walking into the main dining area of the bistro, I was amazed by the sophisticated and tasteful internal design. Even though this was not the most spacious cafe bistro in town, every little corner of this place gave off the sense of more money being spent on the furnishings here than in a bigger restaurant.

I saw a bouquet of sunflowers on our table from afar and thought it to be a plastic flower bouquet. But as I came closer to it I was surprised to see that they were real flowers. Sunflowers are definitely not in season right now. How on earth is he able to secure some fresh sunflowers around this time of the year?

Armond's mother continued beaming at me while she sat down beside me. "Armond should have told me earlier that you're visiting today. Please forgive me for the simple dishes tonight. I'll prepare something more to your liking next time you come over."

I shook my head and smiled in return. "You're too kind, Mrs. Murphy. The dishes all look delicious."

The man was rather quiet throughout dinner, save for when his mother asked him some questions, to which he provided very short answers. As such, his mother had kept busy by talking to me.

I wanted to stop her from stacking more food on my plate, but refrained from doing so, thinking that she only meant well. Since I was pregnant, I figured I should probably increase my intake of food anyway.

Nevertheless, my stomach seemed to disagree with me when it started to churn uncomfortably just after a few bites. I darted into the washroom feeling extremely nauseated but didn't retch up anything.

Armond's mother came into the washroom to check up on me. "Is everything okay? Are you feeling sick? Should I get Armond to send you to the hospital?"

Realizing this was my first morning sickness since the pregnancy, I shook my head and smiled faintly, "I'm alright, just feeling a little nauseated that's all. I'll be okay."

Being a mother herself, the woman was suddenly delighted as a broad grin flashed across her face. "Are you expecting? How far are you along? Have you done a check-up at the hospital?"

I was momentarily stunned by the questions she just rattled off and finally decided to tell her the truth, "It's been two months now. I haven't experienced much morning sickness, but otherwise I'm doing okay."

"Oh, that's great!" Her eyes almost narrowed into two thin lines from smiling. She led me out of the washroom and helped me to the table while rambling, "These dishes are not suitable for someone who's pregnant. You wait here and I'll whip up something else for you."

The woman was about to head back to the kitchen when I tried to grab firmly onto her arm. "Mrs. Murphy, there really is no need to trouble you. I'm completely fine with these dishes."

She gently pried open my hand while still smiling merrily. "It's ok, darling. I'm just so happy I want to cook something else for you and baby. You just wait here."

Chapter 969

Armond wasn't dumb. He heard his mother's grumbling, so he waited till she went into the kitchen then turned to stare at me.

I lowered my head to look at my phone, ignoring his cold stare. Ashton was asking about my whereabouts. Worried that he would overanalyze, I merely replied that I was outside.

Armond snatched my phone right after I replied, then stared at me with a scowl. "Play your role well while you're here. Are you pregnant?"

My mouth was set in a hard line, and I glared at him as if he was a maniac. "Don't you have a girlfriend? Why didn't you bring Nora? Right! I almost forgot people like you don't deserve her. Good thing you didn't bring her here and give her some useless hope."

He was unperturbed by my sarcasm. "Does Ashton know you're pregnant?"

I truly thought this man was mad. If it weren't for his mother, I would've torn him up into pieces. "Of course, the baby is his. If he doesn't, who else should?"

He smiled creepily and was giving me a spine-chilling stare. I couldn't sit there any further, just as I was about to stand up and leave.

His mother came in with a lovely smile carrying a bowl of soup. "Scarlett, please have more of this soup. It's good for you. I loved it so much when I was pregnant with Armond. Try it!"

I stared at the bowl of soup placed in front of me. The fight I had with Armond had made me lose my appetite, but I could feel her attentive gaze boring into me. I couldn't think of an excuse to reject her, so I took a small sip.

After a few more sips, I thanked her, "Thank you so much, Mrs. Murphy! It's delicious."

She smiled. "It's no big deal. I can make it for you every day and ask Armond to send it to you. Please come and visit me often. Armond was busy all year round, so I didn't have anyone to talk to. When you have your baby, my place would be all the merrier."

“Oh! Have you started planning for your wedding? Don’t forget about it.”

She then said to Armond solemnly, “You need to pay more attention to the wedding. Every parent raises their girls preciously, so you have to treat them right. Ask her directly if you’re unsure about any of the details. We have to treat her as best as we could.”

Armond nodded with a smile. “Mom, I’m not a child anymore. You don’t have to exhort me on every little thing. I’m an adult and I know these things.”

“Armond!”

Their exchange was heartwarming. Armond’s usual dark character was nowhere to be seen. It could be their chat was taking too long, so Mrs. Murphy started to feel tired. Noticing her fatigue, Armond dragged me and said a few words to her before we left.

Not long after we got in the car, I said, “Stop here. I can get my own taxi back.”

The car showed no intention to stop. His dark eyes were focused on the road ahead, and so I repeated, “Mr. Murphy, please stop the car. I can get back myself!”

He narrowed his cold eyes at me. “It looked like you forgot the reason you’re here today.”

Anger poured through me. “Armond, do you know how disgusting you’re acting right now? You called me here and threatened me to follow your instruction if I wanted to know the way to save my daughter. I did exactly as you asked, and now you’re not stopping the car when I’m asking you nicely. You don’t know how every moment I spent with you was torture to me. If you didn’t intend to tell me about the information from the start, just say so! You don’t have to act in such a roundabout way.”

He just stared at me. I knew my words were cruel and hurtful, but I really couldn't deal with him for a day longer.

Silence lingered in the air. The cool air had turned chilly. I thought he would get angry and chased me out of his car or punch me in the face.

However, I didn't think that he would just look at me calmly and said, "The person who could save your daughter is in A City. Take this and go find the person according to the address on it."

On his outstretched palm laid a business card. I took the card without much thought. "Stop the car. I want to get off here!"

He stopped the car by the roadside. I tried to open the door but realized he didn't unlock it. He said when I glared at him, "Initially, I wanted you to have a miscarriage because the baby came at such a bad time, but it seemed that my mother really loves the baby. She had started knitting clothes for the baby, so now you can have the baby. My mother would take good care of it."

Chapter 970

"You are crazy!" I shouted. I didn't want to listen to anything he said because he was too loathsome. Every word out of his mouth was like a thorn pricking me. "I want to get off right now, and this baby has nothing to do with you!"

He smiled faintly with warmth in his gaze. "Tell Ashton that I will take care of both you and the baby for him."

“You are a psycho!” This man was really out of his mind.

He finally unlocked the door. I swiftly got off the car, not wanting to stay there for even a second longer.

I walked in the opposite direction and called Ashton. Ashton had picked up the call immediately after it was connected. “Ashton!”

He said, “I’m behind you.”

I reflexively turned my head and saw a black Bentley following me. I then realized that it was Ashton’s car.

He continued coldly, “It’s cold outside. Let’s talk after you get in.”

Based on my years of experience with Ashton, I knew he was in a bad mood. I hung up the phone and got in the car. The interior of the car was warm, but the atmosphere was chilly.

After I buckled in, I let out a breath and said to Ashton, “When did you get here?”

He glanced at me with rage burning in his eyes. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

I was taken aback by his question. “What?” I didn’t understand what he meant. As soon as the word was out of my mouth, his anger spiked.

He interrogated with a dark look, "Are you going to keep pretending? Don't you know the kind of person Armond is? How could you not know the reason he's looking for you? Scarlett, I thought we are completely honest with each other. Why didn't you tell me about Armond?"

It seemed that he saw me get off Armond's car, but wasn't it too coincidental for him to appear right as I was getting off Armond's car in a city so big? Unless...

I frowned. "When did you get here?"

His eyes glinted with disappointment as he stared at me. "And all you're concerned about is when I got here?"

I shook my head. "No. Ashton, I know we're husband and wife, and there shouldn't be any secrets between us, but we're also individuals. In short, I have my plans and thought that may be different from yours. Even though I know Armond is not a good person and is unreliable, this doesn't mean anything now. I have my reason for meeting him, so please believe me."

His brows knitted into a frown at my explanation.

Shortly after, he kept his frustration in check and replied, "Alright, I respect you. Tell me when you're ready."

He started the car and focused on driving. He didn't glance at me even once. He was acting like a child.

His expression remained dark even after we arrived at the company. He entered the company in silence and didn't spare a glance in my direction.

I followed him, slightly embarrassed. There were many people around, and they looked surprised when they saw me walking behind Ashton.

Arriving at the VIP elevator, the door closed right after he went in. It wasn't that I didn't want to enter, but I couldn't catch up to him.

I was bewildered as the elevator doors closed right in front of me. I was thoroughly embarrassed as I felt the stares and heard the whispers from those around me.

"Did Mr. Fuller fought with Mrs. Fuller? He just left her there. I have second-hand embarrassment from watching her."

"I thought Mr. Fuller was only cold towards the employees, but he was even cold towards his wife. It looks like it wasn't easy being a rich man's wife."

"What did you expect then? Those rich men could pick any girls they want. If they wanted to marry, wouldn't they want to marry a beautiful maid willing to coax, flatter, and take care of them? There's no love among the rich. All they want is a comfortable life and someone to please them."

"You're right. It was just like those series that occurred in the Georgian era in which the queen didn't have any say in front of the king. We have finally reached an era of gender equality, but it doesn't mean anything in the eyes of the rich."

I stood there waiting for them to finish. We shouldn't underestimate gossip between women. They could even refer to soap operas that took place in the Georgian era. Even I felt miserable for myself, listening to their comparison. It looked like I was merely Ashton's trophy wife in their eyes.

The VIP elevator was operated by facial recognition technology, without Ashton, I could only take the normal elevator. As the women reached my side, they finally stopped gossiping.