

Chapter 601

“So, Mr. Fuller, what’s special about the festive season in J City?” Cameron inquired as she smiled awkwardly.

“Nothing much. Just the usual.” He replied casually.

Cameron was dumbfounded.

Zachary placed some vegetables onto Cameron’s plate, hinting for her to focus on her meal instead.

The room went silent as Ashton seemed to be troubled by something.

Ashton was able to move about independently already – probably because he wanted to return to K City. Meanwhile, Cameron and Zachary left for their accommodation.

I stayed with Ashton while he called Joseph to hand over some work to him.

I sat there waiting for half an hour before his call ended.

He furrowed his brows as he hung up the call.

He took over the book in my hand, glanced at me, and said, “Joseph got the best ointment. It should get better within a few days.”

As I felt his gaze landed on my face, I realized he was referring to the scars on my face.

I shook my head lightly and gave a slight smile. “It’s okay. No big deal.”

He lifted his hands while his gaze softened.

I held his hands and informed him, “The doctor will be changing the prescription in a bit, and you can sleep after that.”

He let out a light chuckle and pulled me into his embrace. “Don’t worry. I’m almost fully recovered.”

How could I not worry? Even though the scar was on his back, it was too huge for me to ignore.

As I recalled what happened that afternoon, my gaze turned onto him, and I asked, “Are you still worried about Jared?”

He fell into a daze for a moment and shook his head lightly. “No. I’ve talked to the prison side, and I’m assured that there wouldn’t be any problems.”

I nodded in understanding and suggested, “If you are still unable to accept Cameron and Zachary, I can keep my distance from them.”

He furrowed his brows and seemed a little surprised. “Why the sudden thought?”

How should I put it?

After giving it some thought, I elaborated, “Even though the Moore family was not directly involved in Naomi’s incident, it still happened because of them. I understand your bitterness towards them, and I don’t wish to make our lives more difficult, hence the suggestion.”

He let out a smile and explained, “Scarlett, if we were to do that, it means that we are letting it fester. That’s not a good idea as it is going to make our lives more difficult.”

I was in a daze. Just as I was about to speak again, the doctor entered the ward.

After checking his injuries, the doctor diagnosed, “The scars are healing well with no big issues. They may start to itch, but please do not scratch them, or the scars will open up again, affecting the healing process.”

I nodded in understanding. Meanwhile, the nurse handed me the prescription list to prepare for his discharge.

The time taken to get from W City to K City was only a four-hour flight.

Back at the villa, many people had been waiting at the gate. Sally, who was one of them, went up to Ashton and inquired about his condition.

Zachary and Cameron both looked at me. Cameron hesitated for a moment before she asked, “Scarlett, it’s going to be new year’s eve soon, and it’s going to be boring with just the two of you. Do you want us to join you? If you are worried about the traveling distance, I can visit with your dad.”

I was surprised by the offer. I thought about it for a moment and replied, “You should check with Ashton.”

Cameron glanced over at Zachary, prompting for his input. Zachary looked at me and added in his low voice, “Let’s spend this festive season together. Emery and Hunter will be joining too – the more, the merrier.”

I pursed my lips while I thought about it while glancing over at Ashton, who was being swarmed by the many questions from Sally.

On the other hand, a black Land Rover slowed down at the porch of the villa. It was Joe.

As the car stopped, Joe alighted and went up to Ashton. They looked at each other while Joe asked in a soft and concerned voice, “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” Ashton nodded.

Joe must have heard about the incident at W City.

A crowd of people entered the living room. It seemed like Sally had been around for some days as she had adapted well and was in control of the household.

On new year’s eve.

Unexpectedly, it was snowing heavily at K City. Because Sally could not visit the Moore family, both the Moore family and Sally came to our villa.

After a long day of work, it was finally dinner time. Emery's baby bump grew, along with her appetite.

Emery was very chatty. Sally, who had been alone for some time, enjoyed listening to her chatter.

Cameron was busy portioning food onto everyone's plate.

While Cameron did that, Zachary placed some food on her plate.

Summer kept exclaiming throughout dinner, "Mommy! Please eat fast! I want to see the fireworks."

I nodded while Ashton placed a piece of meat on my plate. I lifted my head and met his gentle gaze. He gave a light smile and said, "The lamb is very tender. You need to try it."

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I could not help myself but smile at what he did. I agreed with Emery's advice that we should follow our hearts if it could make us happy.

Failing to suppress my delight, I placed some roasted vegetables onto Ashton's plate and instructed in a coy manner, "You need to eat more too!"

I distributed it to everyone else while Cameron and Zachary smiled at each other and looked at me with warm gazes.

It was the perfect time with loved ones. It had been a long time since our hearts were that full.

After dinner, Cameron and Sally pulled me out of the kitchen to watch the fireworks in the yard.

It was the only festive season with fireworks display in the bustling K City.

That made new year's eve even more special. "I'm going to make a wish at the fireworks later," Emery exclaimed while she lifted her head to gaze at the snow falling.

Hunter pulled Emery into his embrace and inquired with a light chuckle, "What are you going to wish for?"

After giving it some thought, Emery replied, "I wish for our baby to be born with great health."

Both of them exchanged sweet gazes and smiled.

I turned to spot Ashton looking at me, so I asked him, "Are you going to make a wish?"

The corner of his lips curled up as he nodded. "Yes. I'll wish for us to be well."

I was not satisfied with his perfunctory reply, so I exclaimed, "How is that a wish? Any other wish?"

He gave me a sidelong glance and redirected the question at me. "Do you have any wish to make?"

“Hmm... I wish for us to have an adorable baby in the future.”

He landed his gaze at me for a long time, gaze as deep as the sea.

Pow! The fireworks exploded in the night sky, dazzling everyone with their beauty.

My head lifted naturally to gaze at the work of art. In excitement, I grabbed onto Ashton’s arm and exclaimed, “Ashton, it’s the fireworks! Quick! Look at the fireworks!”

I clasped both my hands together, faced the fireworks, and made a wish. “I wish for us to have an adorable baby!”

There was an old wife’s tale about the lonely deities who loved to catch shooting stars for fun.

Hidden within the stars were the human’s wishes. The deities would fulfil their wishes if they took pity on them.

Therefore, many people made wishes upon shooting stars, hoping the deities would fulfil their wishes.

When I was younger, there were many shooting stars at R Province, so I made many wishes. I made so many of them that I could not remember any.

As I grew up in the bustling J City, there were no shooting stars – only fireworks. I stopped making wishes due to the pain I experienced as I grew up.

However, I sincerely wished for a child with Ashton.

I felt warmth as Ashton pulled me into his embrace. “Scarlett, I still owe you a wedding,” he whispered to my ears.

I smiled at his words and lifted my head to look at him. The glorious lights from the fireworks landed on his face at the right spots. It made him look exceptionally dashing.

“Ashton, I don’t need a wedding. All I want is for us to stay together for the rest of our lives.”

He pulled me close, planted a kiss on my forehead, and said softly, “Okay, let’s make a promise to never leave each other.”

After many years, I realized that sometimes, ‘forever’ eventually turns into regrets.

The fireworks painted the dark sky of K City for the whole night, along with the snow.

Ashton could not stay out for long with his injuries, but he held in the pain for me to gaze at the fireworks for a little longer.

I was worried, so I helped him to the bedroom. “I can see it from the balcony too! Meanwhile, you can go and take a shower.”

He smiled, poked the tip of my nose teasingly, and entered the bath.

I have always loved the fireworks despite their short lifespan.

My phone had vibrated for a long time with an unknown number on display. I stared at it for a while and eventually decided to let the call through.

There was no response from the other end of the call.

As I was about to hang up the call, someone exclaimed, "Happy new year!"

That low and timid voice sounded familiar – it was Marcus. Ashton wanted me to stop keeping in contact with him, so I had deleted his number.

While gazing at the fireworks, I felt a sense of peace and replied in a relaxed mood, "Happy new year!"

"Great!" He replied.

A long pause followed. I was probably too focused on the festive atmosphere to sympathize with his pain.

I did not notice the loneliness in his voice as I continued staring at the shimmering view. "Thank you, Marcus. Tonight's fireworks are really stunning. I wish for us all to be well."

If possible, I would love to wish for everyone's wellness.

For Marcus to build his own family and have kids of his own; for Ashton and me to receive the same; for us to enjoy life's simple pleasures.

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Marcus did not respond and kept his silence. He probably could not find the right words to say. Hence, I kept silent while I continued to stare at the fireworks.

Ashton got out of the bath and hugged me from the back.

“You really like fireworks huh,” he asked in a deep, sexy voice.

I nodded as I took in the lingering smell of the body wash on him. “This is going to be a long winter. Let’s head to R Province when you are less busy. I miss the watermelon and rose plants at the yard.”

“Sure,” he nodded, hugged me at his chest level, and lowered his chin onto my shoulder.

“Who were you on the phone with?” he probed as he took a glance at my phone.

I regained my senses, looked at my phone screen, and wanted to off the phone to end the call with Marcus.

However, Marcus had already ended the call. It was just a lit screen on display.

I felt a tinge of guilt and replied, “A friend called.”

Luckily, I had deleted Marcus' number from my contacts. Even though my reply was vague, Ashton would never have guessed for it to be Marcus.

He did not probe further. "Go take a shower and sleep early tonight!" he nagged in a gentle tone.

I nodded, placed my phone aside, and entered the bath.

By the time I was out from the bath, Ashton was already lying on the bed. His scars had faded. I dried my hair, climbed onto the bed, and snatched the book away from him.

"No reading on the bed! The bed is a place for sleep," I nagged.

He gave me a sidelong glance. From up close, his gaze seemed darker, nose bridge higher and lips thinner.

I swallowed my saliva to moisten my dry throat, turned my gaze away, and coughed out, "Good night!"

I buried myself into the blanket while he switched off the lights. I felt my body temperature rise.

He held me closer to his body, and I took a sniff at the fragrance emitting from his body. There was not a single trace of smoke.

"Ashton," my tensed body leaned into his embrace and continued, "Are you trying to quit smoking?"

He leaned in and lifted my chin. I could still see his charming features and dark gaze under the dim light from the window.

“When was the last time we did the deed?” he asked seductively.

I was in a daze while I nodded.

My face turned hot after I regained my senses. I asked him in a soft voice, “Can you?”

That following day, the falling snow covered every part of K City with strong winds blowing as I woke up in Ashton’s embrace.

He was still soundly asleep. His sharp eyebrows resembled those of the characters in martial art novels.

A moment later, he opened his eyes. I was startled for a few seconds before my lips curled into a smile. “Good morning!”

“Hmm?” he responded with a raspy voice and continued to hug me. “It’s snowing. Let’s sleep in a while more.”

I nodded but could not fall back asleep. I stared at the ceiling and wondered how great it would be to wake up with him beside me every day.

I got up to wake myself fully. Meanwhile, there was the sound of a kids’ chuckle.

It was Summer. I walked over to the balcony to observe Sally and her engaging in a snowball fight. Despite their age gap, they were equally agile. Both of them were dressed in thick feather coats, making snowballs and throwing them at each other.

They burst into laughter whenever their opponent got hit. It was not an easy game. Most of the time, the snowballs would either be dodged or would hit the snow.

Ashton got up and hugged me from the back. He leaned into my ear and whispered, "Do you want to play?"

I nodded while pushing him towards the bathroom. "Go wash up! Let's head down to join the game."

He chuckled lightly and headed to the bathroom while I went to the wardrobe to get a change of clothes. On the way there, I flipped open the blanket.

It was like I had expected – there was a big patch of blood. It was not period blood.

That was not the first. I started to panic.

A wave of laughter broke my chain of thought, so I covered it back with the blanket and continued my way to the wardrobe.

Ashton was done washing up when I was done changing. He looked at me and nagged, "You need to put on more layers!"

I nodded, buried myself under more layers of clothing, and I rushed downstairs.

Before I could react, Summer threw a snowball at me immediately after she spotted me.

To make it a fair game, Summer teamed up with Sally against me. However, I was unprepared for the sudden attack by both of them.

Luckily, Ashton joined me shortly after. Summer started to whine after getting hit several times.

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“That’s unfair! You’re a team of two adults while we’re just a team of an old granny and a small kid,” she sat on the snowy ground and whined.

“Sheesh! Summer, since when did I become an old granny? I’m still very strong, okay?” Sally exclaimed.

Summer winked at Sally, hinting for her to back her up. Sally got the message and exclaimed, “Summer’s right! This is not a fair competition.”

“Then shall we shuffle teams?” I suggested. Both of them looked at each other and let out a smile.

Ashton pursed his lips and whined, “I’m injured, so the change does not make much of a difference!”

It was obvious that he was using his injury as an excuse.

Summer let out a deep sigh and called out, “Mr. Fuller is lying!”

Since Summer was unwilling to compete within the existing grouping and Ashton was unwilling to swap teams, we could only build snowmen.

The snow in K City had always been abundant, going up to ten centimetres deep. Building a snowman was the perfect activity.

Many years later, in J City, where there was no snowy winter, I miss the snowy K City filled with snowmen throughout.

While Fuller Corporation had been stabilized, I felt as if Marcus was someone I never knew, as Ashton did not allow me to mention him at all.

As spring approached, leaves started to sprout on the leafless trees in K City. Some trees were even flowering.

Ashton recalled that he had forgotten to bring me for plum tree appreciation the previous year. In response, I reminded him that he had forgotten many other promises as well. For instance, we were supposed to head to the north the year before.

Nevertheless, I planned for Summer to take a term break to bring her back to J City that year.

Ashton was unable to join us as he was occupied with work. He got Joseph to join us instead as he was worried about us.

At the airport, while waiting for our flight, Joseph went to buy some stuff. At the same time, Emery called.

“When will you be back from J City?” she asked while sounding like she was chewing food at the same time.

“I’ll be back in a month’s time!” I replied. After all, the purpose of that trip was simply to visit old friends.

“Make it quick! I’m about to give birth soon, and you must not miss it!” Emery ranted over the call.

I chuckled. “Alright, noted! I’ll definitely be back to witness your childbirth!” I promise. Meanwhile, Joseph was walking back.

Joseph handed me a bottle of water and reminded me, “Mrs. Fuller, it’s time to board the flight.”

“I promise to be back by then! Bye, I’m going to board the plane now.” I ended the call as a queue started to form at the boarding gate.

I held Summer and boarded the plane as Joseph sent Ashton a text. When we got to our seats, Joseph requested blankets for us and said, “It’ll take four hours to arrive, so please take a nap.”

I smiled at him and asked, “Joseph, I knew you’re married but do you have any kids?”

He nodded and replied, "Yes, Mrs. Fuller, I have kids."

His reply was very straightforward.

The way Joseph covered Summer with the blanket and adjusted her position revealed that he was a caring husband.

"Joseph, did your wife move to K City with you?" The last time I remember, they resided in J City. However, with the company's relocation, they might have relocated.

"Yes," he nodded.

Very well.

I wanted to have a chat with him but it seemed impossible.

Time passed quickly as I managed to take a nap and had some food in between.

Upon arrival, Joseph sent us back to the villa that we used to live in.

I was stunned upon seeing Mrs. Eriksen as her hair had turned grey.

She smiled at me and explained, "Mr. Ashton got me to come over to take care of y'all for a few days."

"It's been a long time, Letty. You've slimmed down." She held my hands as she spoke.

My heart was filled with surprise and joy.

I then introduced Summer to her. Due to her old age, she did not have the strength to carry Summer. She held her hand instead.

Joseph left once we settled into the house. Mrs. Eriksen filled me in with what had happened during those years since I left. Ashton would return frequently and got himself drunk, only to return to work at K City the next day. Even though he seemed drained by it, he seemed to indulge in it.

He also frequented the cemetery, even staying there for the whole night at times. Whenever there was heavy rain, he would fall sick upon returning. Even so, he would still willingly head there.

It seemed like there were many stories as I listened on.

After hours of chatting with Mrs. Eriksen, Stacey arrived. She returned after a year of no contact.

She gave off the vibe of a professional. She smiled at me and commented, "You've slimmed down!"

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I chuckled lightly and brought her into the villa. Mrs. Eriksen brewed some tea. Stacey stared at me for a while before she said, "I heard Nancy got into trouble."

I was taken aback as it had happened quite some time back. I lightly nodded and asked, “How have you been doing in J City?”

She smiled and replied, “Thanks to Mr. Fuller, I’ve been promoted to be the regional manager. I’m doing pretty well.”

Thinking about it, she was already in her thirties. She paused for a while and continued, “However, I have nothing much going on in my love life.”

If I had calculated correctly, Felix’s death sentence was held in early autumn.

She took a sip of the tea and said briefly, “I went to visit him. He had slimmed down a lot. I thought I’d be glad to see him in a mess since I used to hate him so much, but I did not.”

No matter how much she hated him, they used to share a loving memory after all. As time passed, she was left with a soft spot for him.

She paused and diverted the topic. “Oh! There’s an auction tonight. Do you want to join me for it? I heard that the Murphys from K City organized it.”

“You know me. I don’t like crowds.” I shook my head and replied with a smile.

She pouted and continued persuading me. “We’re not going there for the crowd. I have a friend that’s working for the Murphy Corporation. I’ve seen the item that they’ll be auctioning. It’s a sandalwood box – similar to the one that grandma left for you. I heard

it's a puzzle box that could only be opened when put together with another box. Remember how you asked for my help to open your box? I think it's worth trying."

I took a while to react and repeated, "A puzzle box?"

She nodded. "Do you want to join me? Who knows, we might be able to open the box."

I got curious, so I nodded in response. "Sure, I'll attend the auction with you."

I wondered if the Murphys from K City referred to the family of the renowned expert in the oil industry.

If they were, it would not be easy to gain access to the auction. I could not help but ask, "Do you have an invite? It would not be easy to get into an auction organized by the Murphys."

She smiled and nodded. "I was prepared before I invited you. Thanks to the strong presence of Fuller Corporation in J City, whenever the Murphys organize something in J City, they would invite Mr. Fuller along. He had given me the authority to handle this invite."

I nodded lightly in understanding.

She thought for a moment and continued, "Since you've been in K City for quite some time, have you heard of the Murphys? I've asked around, but no one seemed to know. Observing how they're auctioning many treasured items; I'm guessing that they must be very influential. However, I don't understand their purpose for organizing the auction here, instead of K City."

“I don’t really know much about them too. However, I’ve seen one of them at Emery’s wedding. He seemed reputable.” I processed my thoughts for a moment and continued, “Maybe they’re intentionally keeping a low profile. Even though J City is an ancient city and is less glamorous than K City, there are several antique treasures and antiquarians here. They may have chosen J City to gain some insights.”

Other than the items from the Murphys, the auction comprised some valuable items from the city. Many antiquarians had been invited to the auction.

Those people usually bring valuable antiques to create an eye-opening experience and to compete with fellow antiquarians.

Simply put, it was like a battle of ego.

Unlike those who auction branded goods and luxurious residences to show off, the antiquarians show off their knowledge, what they had seen, and the historical value of the antiques that they hold.

Civilians, those with no money and knowledge, were out of the game, along with those who were rich and had no knowledge.

Only those who were both rich and knowledgeable could join the game.

As Stacey had been with the Fuller Corporation for several years, she had gained the knowledge through attending such functions frequently.

We chatted for a little longer before she passed me the invite and left.

Summer followed Mrs. Eriksen out to prepare the items required for our visit to the cemetery. As I had no plans, I took a shower.

As I came out of the bathroom, Ashton called. "Have you eaten?"

I looked up at the clock – it was close to six o'clock. I shook my head and replied, "Not yet. I'm heading out soon."

I could feel him frowning over the phone as he questioned, "Where are you going? It's getting late already."

"Stacey told me about the auction organized by the Murphys in J City that had a sandalwood box similar to the one grandma gave me. It seemed like a puzzle box. I want to take a look at it." Mrs. Eriksen entered and signalled that dinner was ready as she saw that I was on a call.