

Chapter 661

He looked at me with surprise, and he nodded.

Instead of the rubber plantation, the driver went to the forest behind the villa. I could hear the fighting and the sounds of thunder coming from the villa. It's about to rain.

The path was winding, and my head started spinning along the way. My stomach churned, and I retched a couple of times. The sounds of fighting still roared on behind us. Abe and his men were showing no signs of stopping. We were taken into the forest and eventually arriving at a clearing.

It was a heliport, and a helicopter was waiting for us there, much to my surprise. The car stopped, and the driver said, "Get out." Then he leaped out of the car and dragged me out roughly before I realized what had happened.

Nora and the girls were in the cars before mine, and they were taken out too. "Get in here ASAP!" the man at the cockpit roared at us, and I looked in the villa's direction by reflex, but all I could see was smoke billowing in the air.

Nora and the girls were taken to the helicopter. I thought something was off, but I couldn't put a finger on it. I went in with them and noticed Nora was still deathly pale. Then I went up to her. "How do you feel, Nora?"

She opened her eyes weakly and looked at me. Nora opened her mouth and attempted to speak, but because of her throat, speaking was impossible for a while.

The man beside us said, "Take your seats and don't move. We're taking off now."

“Where’s Armond?” I looked back at him curiously.

The man paused. “He’ll be rendezvousing with us in Epea. We have to go right now, or nobody’s leaving.”

I nodded and went to my seat. Nora was still a concern, but the most important thing was to leave right away, and the helicopter took off.

Halfway through, Nora clutched her stomach, and her face contorted in pain, and she kept sweating. I was getting worried for her, and I was going to help her, but someone stopped me. “We’ll handle this, Ms. Stovall. Please sit down and don’t hinder them.”

The staff took Nora into the cockpit, and I couldn’t do anything but watch. We landed on an airport after a few hours. I had no idea where we were because of the long hours of flight.

“Change of chopper. Chop, chop, people. Tempus fugit.” We went to board one of the planes without even going through a security check.

Alright, that was weird. Did Armond plan all this? I reflexively looked back at Tabitha and the girls, who were taken into the plane. They hadn’t been talking over the past few days, and the escape had exhausted them.

They were deathly pale, and I knew they would have fallen if it weren’t for the people around them. I noticed that they were clutching their stomachs, and I frowned. Something’s off. But I didn’t take the chance to ask, since we were urged to board the flight.

Nora felt better once we boarded, so she was let back into the passenger cabin, and there were other strangers with us too. I scanned the place and thought something was definitely wrong, but I couldn't put a finger on it. No point thinking about it then. I buckled myself and waited for the flight to take off.

It took more than half a day to fly from Aploth to Western Europe, and I was still confused even after we landed. We settled some paperwork in the airport, and then we were taken to a villa.

Everyone was exhausted from the long journey, and Nora and the girls had fallen asleep. I tried to stay awake on pure will alone, and I tried to call Ashton, but someone stopped me.

The man who took us to the villa was a burly one, and he never seemed to smile. He had this perpetually cold look on him. When he stopped me, he said, "You need to rest, miss."

I tried to negotiate, "I want to call my family, sir."

He threw me a cold look and answered stiffly, "You are forbidden from contacting anyone without Mr. Murphy's permission." He gazed at me, trying to force me back into the room.

It'd be bad to face it head on if Armond was making the orders, so I nodded and went into the room. I was exhausted and wanted nothing more than to sleep after the long journey, but the jetlag was stopping me from getting any rest.

I had the feeling something was off the moment Armond said he wanted to bring me to Western Europe, but I couldn't figure it out.

I finally drifted to sleep at midnight, but then someone knocked on the door early next morning, waking me up.

I opened the door only to see Tessa before me, looking deathly pale. Since they spent all their time in the glass room, it took a great toll on their bodies. I never talked to them either, since they never said anything.

I was surprised to see her, and she came into my room and locked the door. Tessa was glowering at me. She said nothing, but I could feel her enmity toward me.

Chapter 662

Confused, I asked, "What's wrong, Tessa?"

She sneered at me for a while and pulled her clothes up, revealing her bandaged torso, much to my shock. "When did this happen? Who hurt you?" Who was I kidding? Of course I knew who hurt them. Her wound was on the belly, after all, but still, the fact made me shudder.

I saw the rows of operating theatres in Abe's villa, and I saw how they stuffed women's stomachs with kyanine. The scar on Tessa's torso told me that Abe's men had stuffed kyanine in them.

And then I was reminded of how deathly pale they were over the past few days. And they'd clutch their stomach, holding in their pain. This isn't the glass room's side effect.

Their body's rejecting the kyanine. It's an alien object. No wonder they're looking like this.

I asked, "Are the other girls like this too?" I felt a lump in my throat.

Tessa looked at me, her lips pursed, her eyes filled with hatred. She didn't answer my question, and I thought she hated me. I couldn't say anything else, so I stared back into her eyes. Anything I had to say would sound like hindsight, and that would make her hate me more.

All I could do was meet up with Armond as soon as possible so I could ask him to get someone to extract the kyanine from their bodies.

I said hoarsely, "Listen to me, Tessa. I'll meet up with Armond. I know he can get someone to take that thing out of you guys." Then I went out. The lobby was guarded by the man who brought us in the day before.

He noticed me and said, "Please go back to your room, Ms. Stovall."

"I want to see Armond."

"Mr. Murphy will be here shortly. Please go back to your room."

"Can I call him then?" I knew he'd come sooner or later, but I needed someone to take the kyanine out of the girls immediately.

The man looked at me coolly and frowned. "It can wait until Mr. Murphy is here. Please do not get in the way of my work, Ms. Stovall."

Dammit. Now I have to wait for him. Armond only arrived that afternoon, and I quickly stopped him. "Mr. Murphy, my friends got kyanine stuffed in them. They need a doctor to take it out. That, or they have to go to the hospital."

Getting a hospital overseas was hard, and anyone would get suspicious if they found kyanine in the girls' bodies. It'd be bad if they looked into it.

Armond nodded and called a doctor, then he looked at me. "We don't have an operating theatre here, and I can't take them to a proper hospital, so I'm getting a private doctor for this.

I knew that much, and I nodded. "I know."

Nora and the girls went into the cars with Armond's men's help, and I followed them, but Armond stopped me. "Stay here. It won't be easy to get away from Abe and his men. Better safe than sorry."

I nodded, then I realized he smelled of blood. Armond went to talk to his men who were going to send the girls to the hospital, then he came back to me. "Rest up. We'll go back once I settle things here."

I nodded and saw him off, then I realized his suit was darker around his waist. That's probably blood. "Armond," I called him.

He stopped in his tracks and looked at me, his face pale. "Anything else?"

“Did you call a doctor? For yourself, I mean.” He didn’t show his wound after he came back, but I knew he was hurt.

He froze up. “This is nothing.” He smiled at me and went to his bedroom upstairs, leaving me alone.

I stood there for a few moments, then I went up to his bedroom and knocked on his door. He opened the door a few minutes later, though he had changed into a white shirt.

I would have thought he was perfectly fine, but he was too pale to be okay. “What is it?” he asked coolly.

I hesitated for a moment before going into his bedroom and noticed the bandage and the haemostatic drug on his table. I turned back, and he coughed. “Just a small injury. Just need to be cleaned up.”

I pursed my lips. “I’ll help you.” I dragged him to the sofa before he could refuse, and then I tried to take his shirt off, but he held my hand down.

I frowned at him. “I need to tend to your wound.”

He froze for a moment, then he smiled and let my hand go. I took his clothes off, revealing the ugly gash on his waist, and blood was still oozing out. My frown turned deeper. This guy has a high level of tolerance toward pain. Looks like something slashed him. Wait, no.

When I looked closer, I realized he was stabbed by a stake, and I frowned again. “How did this happen?”

“I crashed into something during the fight,” he said nonchalantly. “Nothing to be worried about. It missed the vital organs.”

Barely. God, it’s just a few millimetres from his kidney. He had a lot of wounds, but they were minor, just like what he said, but the one on his waist ran deep.

I cleaned his wound for him. Since there was no anaesthetic for him, he felt all the pain from the cleaning up. Lodophor wasn’t as painful as alcohol, but the cotton swab was still going to irritate the wound.

Even so, all he did was frown. He didn’t even flinch, so I asked, “Does it hurt?”

He smiled at me. “No.”

As if. His wound was finger deep. I knew he must be in pain, since he was just human after all. I sighed. “You don’t have to lie. The wound’s too big not to hurt. You aren’t Superman, you know.”

The blood was still flowing out, and I crushed some haemostatic drugs before spreading it on his wound. Even so, the wound wouldn’t stop bleeding. I had to do it a few times before the drugs took effect.

I heaved a sigh of relief. That was an intense session, and I was even starting to sweat. Luckily, the wound didn’t seem to cause any more complications. After I bandaged it, I

felt something warm on my forehead, much to my surprise. I looked up and stared into Armond's eyes. Awkward.

"It shouldn't be infected as long as you stay clear of water." I looked away.

He smiled and pulled his hand back from my forehead. "Do you cook?"

"Huh?" I was stupefied, then I nodded when I noticed him smiling at me. "I do. Are you hungry?"

He nodded and arched his eyebrow. "I was in a hurry, so I didn't have anything to eat. I am starting to feel hungry now."

"I'll make something light for you. Lie down, please." I helped him to the bed, and I was confused about why he kept staring at me. "Are you allergic to anything? Is there anything you can't eat?"

"No." He was still staring at me, which made it awkward. I tucked him in and went downstairs. There was a lot of food in the kitchen, but they were mostly bread, jam, and some beef. Western Europe alright.

I was going to make chicken soup for him, but there wasn't anything in the fridge for that. There was only flour there. In the end, I decided to get some wild vegetable outside, but there were a lot of guards there.

It felt like a prison, but I knew Armond did that for safety reasons. Since it was a remote area, there was a two kilometre distance between each house, so there was ample space. Wild plants grew abundant in those places, so there were some good wild veggies.

Grandma used to make chowder for me when I was a kid. She'd boil the water and toss the vegetables in, then she'd stir it for about ten minutes, and a serving of chowder was done. It was thick and melted easily. Not great, but a good substitute for chicken soup.

Armond seemed to have fallen asleep when I went back to his room, since his eyes were tightly shut. I whispered, "Are you asleep, Mr. Murphy?"

He didn't stir, so I hesitated for a while before setting the chowder down beside him and covered him with the blanket. Out of a sudden, he held my hand down, much to my surprise, and I noticed him staring at me.

"Did I wake you?"

He smiled and shook his head. "I wasn't asleep in the first place." Then he looked at the bowl. "What did you make?"

I pulled my hand away and sat beside him with the bowl in hand. "You don't have much here. All I can make is some vegetables chowder. See if you can take this."

He tried to get up, but that jolted his wound, and he gasped. I held him by reflex, but I moved too fast and fell down on him. "I-I'm sorry. I... I..." Well, that was awkward, but at least I didn't spill the chowder.

I put the bowl down and helped him up again, but he was staring at me silently. I thought he was angry about earlier, so I mumbled, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I was going to help you up, but I lost my footing."

He laughed. "I know."

Then why are you looking at me like that? I helped him up and handed the chowder to him. "Try it."

He didn't take it. Instead, he looked at me. "Aren't I a patient now?"

I nodded. "Yes." The wound was big enough to warrant him a ward in a hospital.

"If that's the case, then I think you should feed me, right?"

I was surprised he would say that, and I looked at him sternly. "I thought you're too uptight to crack jokes like that."

Chapter 664

He smiled and took the bowl of chowder from me, then he sipped from it. He nodded, probably thinking it was fine. "Do you cook a lot in the past?"

I could never understand how he managed to shift the topics that fast. I shook my head. "No. I often saw my grandma making this when I was little."

He nodded and sipped the chowder in silence, as if reminiscing the past. I didn't want to break the silence, so I observed him. A short while later, he looked up at me. "Was it hard living in R Province?"

I stared at him, stupefied. "How did you know that's where I lived?"

He found that question amusing. "That's not too hard to figure out. I told you I helped you out so I can get my hands on that sandalwood box. Is it that surprising that I'd look into your past then?"

Well, that argument was sound, so I nodded. "I see." He waited for me to continue, so I said, "Not really. I didn't starve or die out in the cold. At least it was better than how I live now."

He smiled at me again and put the bowl away. "Have you ever regretted at choosing Ashton?"

That question took me by surprise, and I couldn't answer him. "There's still some in the kitchen. Do you want more?"

He squinted at me and shook his head, then he stopped asking any more questions.

I went back to my bedroom, spaced out. Have I ever regretted marrying Ashton? Nope. Never.

Midnight came, and thunder rolled in the skies as rain poured. I thought of Armond and his wound, and I wondered if the curtains in his room were closed.

I went to his room and knocked on the door, but nobody came to open it, though I heard something crashing inside. Surprised, I went inside, but Armond was nowhere to be found, though the night light was on. Then I heard sounds from the bathroom.

The lights inside were on, so I heaved a sigh and went to knock on it. "Are you alright, Mr. Murphy?" He didn't answer, and I started to worry. "Mr. Murphy, are you—"

"I'm fine," he interrupted, but he sounded weak.

Worried, I pushed against the door, but it wouldn't budge. Looks like I'll have to wait. He came out a long while later and was covering himself with a towel. Did he take a bath?

I frowned, upset. "I told you to stay clear of water. Your wound's going to get infected, and more so when the weather's hot." I dragged him to the chair, fuming. Then I pulled his towel away to check his wound again, but I overlooked one thing. He just came out of the bathroom, and he only had a pair of boxers underneath the towel.

It was awkward between us, but it only lasted for a second. I calmed down, since I was just going to check his wound. Nothing else. I noticed that he was getting tense, so I said, "Relax. I'm just going to take a look at your wound. It might have to get bandaged again to prevent any infection from happening."

I took the medical kit and hunkered down beside him. Armond had a smoking hot body. He looked thin when he was clothed, but he was really lean. "Dammit. Water got into it, and a pus is forming," I cursed and looked at him. "Just wipe yourself off with a towel if you want to take a bath. Going under the shower is going to infect your wound."

He smiled at me again. "I'm used to it, so it's fine."

I thought he was being a bit too nonchalant, as if his life didn't matter, so I glared at him. "I don't care how much you hate yourself, but at least don't try to harm your body. Can't you just live your life to its best? Take the blessing of life and live on, will you?"

He was still smiling politely. "Do you talk to Ashton like that as well?"

I froze, almost losing my composure, and I frowned at him. "When are you taking me back?" I paused for a moment. "Ashton's my husband so of course I care for him. As for you, well, I'm just helping out because I owe you one."

He smiled, dismissing the snarky remark. "I have something to settle here, but we can go back right after that. And your friends might have to rest up for a bit before they can go home, or their wounds might spell the end of them."

I knew about that, and I nodded. "Thank you."

He smiled silently.

The pus in his wound was caused by an infection, and his injury ran deep, so I moved gently in case he was hurt.

"Does your family's business cover the whole globe?" They opened up shop in Venria and Western Europe, so I thought it must be a big conglomerate.

Chapter 665

He nodded, and I continued, "I've known you for a while now, but I know nothing about the business you run."

He stopped for a moment. "Petroleum. And we're dabbling in tech now."

"Petroleum?" I was reminded of Mr. Murphy, whom I met during Emery's wedding, then I looked at him. "You're a Murphy?"

He arched his eyebrow silently, then I was reminded of the auction in J City. "Have you held an auction in J City before?" If the answer was yes, then that'd explain his appearance in the cemetery and his 'coincidental' help.

I gazed at him sternly, then he said, "You're going to kill me at this rate."

I looked down and was shocked to see the cotton swab poking his wound and drawing blood. I pulled my hand back and apologized, "Sorry. I didn't mean it."

I rubbed the salve on his wound and bandaged it. Then I realized he wasn't wearing anything else but his boxers. Awkward, I covered his body with the towel. "It's getting late. Sleep tight."

He grunted. I kept the first aid kit and left the room without saying anything.

Nora and the girls had the kyanine extracted from them, but they were just ladies after all, so needed the rest to recuperate. Armond had a lot to deal with, so he had no time for me. In that case, I took up the job of caring for Nora and the girls.

I was going to call Ashton and tell him about my situation, but it couldn't get through. He must have set up call forwarding. I gave up after a few tries, then I tried to call Emery, but my phone was taken by the female officer when I was in Venria. I lost all my contact, and I forgot their numbers, so it was impossible for me to call them.

Nora and the girls were almost all healed up after a week. Armond was done with his affairs too, and the girls moved into the villa the night before our return.

The brush with death seemed to have taken Nora's lively attitude away. Tabitha and Laurel refused to speak, while Tessa kept reciting mantras as usual. Noticing the awkward silence around the table, Laurel said, "We can go back home tomorrow, guys. Let's drink to it." She raised her glass and smiled at us.

Nora looked surprised, but she raised her glass and looked at me. "We owe our lives to Scarlett this time. She saved us all. If it weren't for her asking for Mr. Murphy's help, we would have been shark food by now."

"Yeah." Tessa stopped reciting her mantra and smiled at me. "All thanks to Scarlett. A toast for her. Bottoms up, girls."

Everyone raised their glasses and finally started to chat. Good. At least the ice is broken.

Everyone started chatting, and Nora huddled closer to me. "Are you friends with Armond?" she whispered. "Are you related to the Stovalls, Fullers, and the Moores?"

Her barrage of questions stunned me, and I paused for a moment. "Not an easy question to answer, so I refuse to say anything, Nora."

"Why? Worried we might be a hassle?" Tessa grinned.

I answered a moment later, "No. I just think it's hard to explain. We've been through life and death. I won't think of you guys as a hassle."

"Oh, stop right there. The girls were the ones who have been through life and death with me, not you. You relied on men and your connections along the way, and you were never hurt, so give me a break," Tessa mocked, but she was telling the truth, so I took no offense.

I smiled awkwardly, trying to continue the conversation, but I was at a loss.

"Tessa, that's rude. We wouldn't have survived if not for Scarlett's connection with Mr. Murphy. Don't look the gift horse in the mouth." Nora glared at Tessa angrily.

Tessa sneered. "You think I'm the one who's looking the gift horse in the mouth? The horse was never there to begin with. Do you really think she's the one who saved us? She could have stopped the surgery in Venria if she wanted to, but no. This hypocrite only 'helped' us after Abe stuck that thing in us. That caused unnecessary pain, and I bet she's just trying to win our favor."

Tabitha frowned, upset. "You could have gone off on your own when we landed if you didn't want her help. But I believe you went to Scarlett's room one night and showed her the scar, obviously begging her to help. Do you really think she owed you?"

