

Chapter 696

He seemed slightly disappointed and sighed, "Mr. Fuller is doing his best."

"I know. He's always been doing his best, which is why I feel safe handing Summer over to him." I nodded with a smile.

"Are you planning to let Summer stay with Mr. Fuller permanently, Ms. Stovall?"

I shook my head. "I'll come and get her as soon as possible. I don't want to trouble him for too long. Besides, he isn't obligated to take care of Summer."

"Then who is?" A sudden voice piped up and surprised me.

I turned back and saw Ashton standing behind me. His expression was dark and his gaze cold. "Armond? Or perhaps you've found another guy who's obligated to take care of her?"

His sudden appearance took me by surprise. Joseph had silently walked away after Ashton showed up.

At that moment, only Ashton and I were left at the scene, and I didn't know what to say.

After a pause, I finally piped up. "Thanks for taking care of Summer, Ashton."

He chuckled coldly. "No need to thank me. Don't forget that she's legally my daughter after all. The moment we actually get a divorce, I am completely fine with paying my alimony, but don't even think about getting Summer back."

“Is that a threat?”

“You could say so.”

I smiled, not too ruffled by his words. “That might be better for all of us. After all, she’ll be much better off with you than she can ever be with me. You have money and power. Besides that, you can give her a much better environment than I can. Maybe I’ll be better on my own, or maybe remarrying will be a good option as well.”

With an unblinking stare, he looked at me. His gaze was full of dark contempt, and he wasn’t trying to disguise the rage on his face. “What an outstanding plan,” he chuckled coldly.

I chuckled as well. “Thanks for the compliment, Mr. Fuller.”

Then I noticed his tightly clenched fists. If I were a man, he’d probably be beating me up right now. Thank God I’m a woman.

“I’d love to see whether Armond will actually allow you to marry into the Murphy family,” he hissed. He was probably holding back his anger. If not, he might have started getting violent by now.

When he walked away and left, I let out a huge sigh of relief. I really hoped we wouldn’t see each other anymore after this. Our relationship was already messier than tangled yarn.

The bidding carried on until midnight. Armond wasn’t used to burning the midnight oil, so the moment we got into the car, he told me, “You take the wheel. I need to take a nap.”

I nodded, thinking that he probably didn't sleep well since he was hungover yesterday.

Once we reached the villa, I woke Armond up and went into my room. Once I turned my phone on, I saw the pictures that Emery had sent me of her kid.

Her kid was already four months old and was adorably pink-cheeked and plump. I wanted to respond, but since it was so late, I figured it might wake her up.

Thus, I decided to turn off my phone and head to bed.

To my surprise, the results of the Fuller Corporation's public tender were released the very next day. After all, I assumed they would need at least five or six days at most.

What really took me aback was that the Murphy Corporation got chosen. Armond handed everything over to me and said, "You'll be in charge of this project for now, and Linda will help. You can either go to her or me if you have any problems."

I hadn't gotten the chance to be that involved in this particular project. After all, only two days had passed from the moment I learned about it until now.

At that time, I didn't reach out for the files, but instead, I stared at him and said, "You know I barely know anything about this project. I didn't even write the proposal myself. It's not fair to the actual writer of the proposal, and I'm also not confident that I can do a good job."

Seeing that I remained unmoved, he then placed the files on the desk instead and replied, "I wrote the proposal. Besides, there's still some time before the start-up date of this project. You can familiarize yourself with the project in the meantime, and Fuller Corporation will be sending someone over to keep up with you on this. You can discuss

things with them before starting the work and talk to Linda about any resources you need from the Murphy Corporation.”

At that moment, it seemed like he was dead set on me taking charge of this project. I knew that turning him down wouldn't take me anywhere. After some thought, I asked, “When is this going to start?”

“The Fuller Corporation will let you know,” he said. “Apart from us, they also chose the Cruise Corporation. So try your best to communicate with them as much as you can so this can be a win-win situation.”

I nodded and sighed before gathering the documents. I had to meet Nora in the afternoon.

Before he left, I said, “I'm going to meet Nora around noon. It might take a while.”

He raised an eyebrow. “What happened?”

“She got into a fight with someone. I think she got hurt,” I explained briefly.

He smirked and looked a bit happy. “A fight? Did her true colors finally show?”

I pressed my lips together and looked at him. “Do you want to visit her with me?”

“Why should I?”

“Because of a man.” Since Ashton was involved, that wasn't too far off.

He raised an eyebrow again. "Bring some chrysanthemums to her for me. Hope she gets well soon."

Chrysanthemums?

I chuckled.

That man really was full of ideas.

I ignored him and started organizing my files. After that, I hailed a cab to the address that Nora had given me.

Chapter 697

It was quite far away, in a neighborhood near the north. Once I got off the car, I called Nora.

The phone rang for quite a while before she picked up. "Babe! Are you here?"

"I'm right downstairs."

"Okay, give me a second."

Five minutes later, I saw her limping down the stairs. She seemed rather unkempt in just her pyjamas with her hair simply tied in a messy bun.

She opened the door, and her face broke into a wide grin at the sight of the chrysanthemums in my hands. As she reached out to take them, she asked, "How did you know I liked chrysanthemums?"

What?

I had no idea. If it wasn't for Armond, I wouldn't even have thought of it.

At the sight of her happy smile, I couldn't help but admit, "Armond asked me to buy them. I thought they would be a bit of a bad omen at first, but I saw these pretty pink ones at a flower shop on my way here and bought them."

She chuckled. "I guess Mr. Murphy is still on his toes when it comes to this stuff. I only mentioned it once, and yet, he remembered. Looks like I might be likely to be marrying Mr. Bachelor in the future, huh?"

After that, she invited me in, and I followed her upstairs. Her house was incredibly messy, which left me a bit speechless. "Quick question – how do you live in a mess like this?"

She stuck the flowers into a random vase and gathered large bunches of messy clothes off the sofa and onto the bed. "I can't sleep if it's too tidy."

I was struck speechless once more.

I looked around the house. It wasn't very big – it was maybe eight hundred square feet with two bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchenette.

“Are you living alone?” I asked.

She nodded as she poured me a glass of water. “I used to live with another girl, but she moved in with her boyfriend. Now it's just me.”

As she spoke, she scrutinized me with narrowed eyes. “Why don't you move in with me so we can split the rent?”

“Of course!” I said with a nod. “But you need to keep the place much tidier. I might go insane if it's this messy all the time.”

She giggled. “If you move here, it won't be this messy all the time. I don't feel like tidying things up when it's just me here. After all, if everything's too perfect, it doesn't feel like home.”

“Then why don't you just go home?” It wasn't as if she wasn't doing well financially. She had no reason to live in such conditions.

She chuckled and said, “I need my freedom as an adult, okay? We all need a little privacy.”

I couldn't wrap my mind around her logic at all. With a shrug, I asked, “How's your injury?” I couldn't help but look at her leg after noticing her limping all over the place.

She sat next to me and replied, “It's nothing serious. I was wearing heels when I fought with Tessa, so I sprained my ankle. Anyway, what would you like to eat?”

The moment she asked that, the doorbell rang, and she went to open the door.

“Hurry up, think of something so we can grab lunch together,” she pestered as she opened the door.

A middle-aged woman stood in the doorway. She seemed completely used to the state of the place and said, “Ms. Oberick, I’m here to help you clean the house.”

She nodded and gestured for the woman to do what she had to do. “So, what do you want to eat?” she asked me.

I couldn’t think of anything in particular, so I went with something random. “What about fish? I’ve been craving some fish for a while.”

“Sounds great!” She went into her bedroom and bustled around a bit. Luckily, she didn’t waste too much time, or we would probably have left the house a lot later.

There was a mall near her place, so we found a restaurant that served fish and chips and ordered what we wanted before sitting down by a window.

She immediately started nosing around the moment we sat down. “Babe, tell me everything about you and Ashton.”

I nearly choked on my own spit and looked at her as I coughed. “We were just another arranged marriage. Mr. Bauman was the one behind our relationship, so there’s not much to tell.”

She held her chin in her hand and looked as if she were actually thinking about it. “Are you two planning to go back to K City soon?”

I was a bit taken aback by her question and couldn't help but reply, “If you want to know about Armond, you can just say so. I'll tell you everything I know.”

Nora chuckled awkwardly after being called out by me. “When's he going to K City?”

“Probably after this project is over. I'll probably go back then as well. Why don't you follow along so we can have some fun in K City?”

“Really?” she asked excitedly.

I nodded. “Of course. You're paying for your own ticket, though.”

“Obviously!” she replied with a mischievous smile on her face.

The waiter arrived to pour us some drinks, and I couldn't help but ask Nora, “What are you thinking about?”

“Clearly, I'm thinking about how to get Mr. Fuller to fall for me once and for all.”

Her innocent girly side was showing. “Have you come up with a plan yet?”

“You're quite close to him, yeah? Have you ever seen any potential love rivals?” she asked as she looked at me with her face still in her hands, looking as innocent as a sixteen-year-old.

I nodded. "Yeah. Yours truly."

She scoffed. "Apart from you, obviously!"

"You, then."

She burst out laughing, which I already expected. Just then, she was starting to look extra cunning and told me, "What are his hobbies? Help me find out what he likes and let me know!"

Chapter 698

After some thought, I told her, "I think you can get to know Linda. She definitely knows more than I do."

"Linda?" she asked in confusion. "Is she a love rival too?"

As expected, intelligence really did go down the drain once someone was in love. After a pause, I said, "Linda has a child who's already in middle school. Don't overthink things. Before transferring under Armond, she was Robert Murphy's assistant, so she should know him quite well."

"Alright! Help me ask her out so we can meet over dinner!" she said before continuing, "Actually, how does tonight sound? Maybe you can ask her after work."

"Sure. You have to pick me up, though. Actually, you might as well come with dinner."

“Why should I make dinner? Aren’t we going out to a restaurant?”

“Armond had gastric problems. I’m telling you – he’s crazy. He doesn’t eat anything that’s not to his standard. And I have to help him manage all three meals, or I might lose my job!”

She looked envious. “What about you let me do that instead? I’m sure I’ll take great care of him.”

“Okay! You’re in charge of his meals from now on.” I was more than excited to hand that over to her. After all, I would be incredibly busy once the Fuller Corporation’s project started.

After chatting for a while longer, the waiter served our food. At that moment, Nora was staring out the window in a daze.

“Quit daydreaming and eat up. I have to go back to the office soon,” I piped up.

She turned back and sighed, “You know, life really isn’t fair. How can there be so many good-looking people like you whereas I look like this? Would the world fall off its axis if I was pretty too? Was God particularly annoyed when he was making me?”

I smiled lightly. “You can ask him yourself. Besides, you’re not ugly. You just need a bit of dressing up, that’s all, so don’t be so harsh on yourself.”

She looked at me and replied, “Just look over there. That lady could probably rival Aphrodite. She even has a red Cayenne. With looks like that and a car that grand, she probably doesn’t need to worry about anything. I’m assuming she has tons of rich men lined up around the block.”

I looked toward where she was pointing and couldn't help but be taken aback. Isn't Rachel in K City? What's she doing here?

"This is A City's most prestigious neighborhood. Most of the residents are lowkey people from rich families, and they're mostly local," Nora explained as she looked at Rachel. "Someone as beautiful as that clearly isn't from around here. She doesn't seem like a sugar baby either, so she probably bought the house with her own money."

Nora was so engrossed in her analysis that I couldn't help but say, "She's in charge of the Fuller Corporation's AI projects. Ashton hired her from overseas. She really is both pretty and rich, which is what most women want for themselves."

"Damn! Aren't you afraid that Ashton will get snatched up by someone like that hanging around him?" She wasn't even eating at that point but was simply staring at Rachel with eyes as round as dinner plates.

Meanwhile, Rachel looked like she was waiting for someone.

"If he actually ends up with her, I don't think I'd be that mad about it. After all, I don't think someone like Rachel will fall for anyone less."

Nora looked at me a little wordlessly. "Wait, why do I feel like you're willingly giving your man up? What's with that?"

"Hey, your fish is getting soggy. Eat up before it gets too cold," I said in an attempt to change the topic.

She pouted, clearly not finished speaking. Suddenly, she looked at me a little sheepishly and said, "I think I jinxed it."

I stilled in shock before looking out the window again. A man had just come out of the mansion that Rachel was waiting next to, and that was no one else but Ashton himself.

He was dressed in dark grey casual wear as if he was going out for dinner.

That's good. Ashton and Rachel are practically a match made in heaven.

I turned away and continued eating my fish.

Nora seemed restless as she looked at me. "What are you doing? Your man is with some gorgeous supermodel, and you're fine with it? That's your husband, for goodness' sake!"

I just sighed and smiled at her. "Nora... Your fish is about to come back to life if you don't eat it soon."

She frowned, almost leaping off her seat as she got up and looked at me. "Scarlett, it doesn't matter if your man is involved with an ugly hag or a pretty lady. You can't accept anyone else butting into your relationship!"

With that, she jogged out before I could come to my senses. After a while, I heard her voice from outside the window call out, "Fancy meeting you here, Mr. Fuller!"

Since Nora had already run outside, I stayed in the restaurant and tried to ignore them.

Nora suddenly called out especially loudly, "Scarlett, it's your hubby!"

Hubby?

I couldn't believe my ears.

Since she had already exposed me, I couldn't just ignore them. I raised my hand by way of greeting.

I thought she was just going to go out to say hi, but she ended up dragging them into the restaurant.

Chapter 699

She even waved to a waiter and said, "Hi, can I have two more sets of cutleries, please? Thank you!"

Then, she led Rachel and Ashton to our table and invited them to take a seat.

The restaurant we were at had small stools instead of regular chairs, which made it a little awkward for anyone in a skirt.

Nora noticed this as well and said enthusiastically, "Oh no, I forgot that you're in a dress. I'll ask someone for a regular chair."

She hadn't even finished speaking before running off to get someone. When she returned, she was carrying a regular chair in one hand. The tables weren't very tall either to match the stools, and Rachel seemed rather out of place.

She was also dressed pretty stylishly in a dress that showed off both her smooth shoulders and fair back. By sitting in a taller chair, she almost seemed more like an art exhibit than a customer.

Apart from that, this restaurant wasn't particularly high-class. The people in here weren't used to seeing such beautiful, fashionable women that often.

It was inevitable that someone like Rachel would attract more stares. They didn't seem sleazy or uncouth, but simply curious and appraising.

Of course, the awkwardness was also inevitable in such a situation.

Nora seemed completely unfazed by this and asked Ashton, "Mr. Fuller, is Ms. Zimmer your secretary? She's so elegant! I haven't seen a woman this pretty since Scarlett!"

Is she trying to compliment me or dig me an even deeper hole? I thought to myself.

Ashton glanced at me nonchalantly before saying, "She's the representative of Fuller Corporation's AI projects." It was a simple introduction, free of any useless facts.

Nora nodded a little too enthusiastically. "That's so admirable! You're both pretty and smart? I bet you have a boyfriend, right?"

Rachel was clearly starting to get bothered by the stares and forced a smile. "No, I don't."

“What? But you’re so pretty! Do you have someone you like, then? Ah, wait, I should be asking what your ideal type is!” Nora couldn’t stop babbling.

Rachel glanced at Ashton almost instinctively before lowering her head and saying, “I haven’t really thought about that.”

“Is that so?” Nora said dramatically. “My mom always told me that girls needed to have certain standards for their future boyfriends. Someone as pretty and skilled as you should find someone like Mr. Fuller. That would be a good match. Just look at Scarlett and Mr. Fuller! They’re a match made in heaven.”

Yet for some reason, I felt like she meant something else.

Rachel nodded, looking extra uncomfortable.

After that, Nora decided to speak to Ashton instead since Rachel seemed a little awkward. “Mr. Fuller, I should introduce myself. I’m Scarlett’s friend, Nora! We met before, but since we were in a rush, I didn’t get to introduce myself.”

She reached out and shook Ashton’s hand.

Nora was always the talkative one, so she was chatting throughout the whole meal.

“Mr. Fuller, since Scarlett is here, and you’re in K City, are you guys living apart for now?” Nora suddenly brought up.

Ashton’s dark gaze fell on me, and he said, “No. I’ll go wherever she goes.”

“Aw! Now you’re just flexing your relationship to the rest of us,” Nora said with a shy squeal.

She turned to look at Rachel, who was starting to turn pale. “Ms. Zimmer, as Mr. Fuller’s colleague, don’t you get tired of seeing them act all lovey-dovey every day?”

Rachel smiled and replied, “I’m usually in K City and rarely get to see Ms. Stovall, so I wouldn’t get the chance to.”

Hearing that, Nora frowned slightly. “Oh, you guys don’t call her Mrs. Fuller at the company? ‘Ms. Stovall’ seems a bit too standoffish.”

“I rarely meet her after all, so it’s a bit hard to suddenly get used to that,” Rachel continued answering politely.

Nora pouted and glanced at me. I didn’t understand what she meant and just stared back at her in confusion.

At the sight of my indifference, Nora suddenly leaned slightly toward Rachel. Her motion caused a glass of water in front of her to topple over, spilling the contents all over Rachel. There wasn’t a lot of water left in the glass, but Rachel’s dress was expensive, and it was obvious that Nora wanted to get a reaction.

As she wiped the water off Rachel’s dress, Nora apologized, “I’m so sorry, Ms. Zimmer. Maybe you should go to the bathroom to clean that.”

Rachel was frowning at that point. She was obviously ruffled, but she was good at controlling her emotions and remained calm.

Once Rachel left, Nora ignored Ashton's presence and said, "Ms. Stovall, can't you tell that that fine lady has her eyes on your man?"

I felt uncomfortable at her calling Ashton "my man" and looked at him instinctively. Despite that, he looked completely unfazed.

Chapter 700

I pressed my lips together and said, "Don't be crazy. Ms. Zimmer is a very talented woman."

"What the h*ll?" Nora burst out. "Scarlett, what's gotten into you? What do you mean by that? Are you going to give your man up to her just because she's a 'very talented woman'?"

Ashton was still there, so I knew she was doing this on purpose. Thus, I decided to ignore her question.

She clucked her tongue at my silence and said, "Did you two have an argument or something?"

After a pause, she looked at Ashton and said without even blinking, "Did you cheat on Scarlett?"

Ashton's gaze darkened, and he looked at me. I thought he would get angry, but he seemed to calm down instead and replied, "I don't sh*t where I eat."

Simply put, he wouldn't lay an eye on another woman.

Nora chuckled and nudged me with her elbow. "You better hang on tight to this guy. There aren't many like him in this day and age."

I was starting to feel awkward when the waiter jogged toward us and said, "Is the lady in the bathroom a friend of yours? She tripped and fell. It's rather serious, so you should take a look."

"She tripped?" Nora immediately went to the bathroom.

I fell silent since it was now just me and Ashton at the table. After a while, I looked at him and said, "You should go check on her."

He frowned and looked at me. "Are you sure about that?"

I was taken aback by the sudden question before nodding. "Yeah. She might be in trouble."

He scoffed coldly before suddenly getting up and walking toward the bathroom.

I followed him and spotted Nora helping Rachel out of the bathroom. It really did look rather serious.

Nora saw us and said, "I think she may have twisted or fractured something. She'll probably need to go to the hospital."

Rachel's eyes looked red as if she were trying not to cry. I was surprised, but calmed down and said to Ashton, "You should send her to the hospital. Nora and I are busy, so we won't be able to make it."

Nora looked at me, obviously getting annoyed by my attitude. She then frowned and said, "It's fine. I'll send her to the hospital."

"It's okay. It's not that bad. I can go on my own," Rachel piped up. Her voice was quivering, and it sounded as if she were minutes away from sobbing.

Ashton looked at me, and I reached out to tug Nora's sleeve. "You have to go to the office with me later, remember? Let Mr. Fuller send her instead."

Nora's frown was slowly deepening. "Mr. Fuller?" she asked as she glanced at Ashton.

Ashton looked away from me and carried Rachel before walking away wordlessly.

"Sh*t!" Nora cursed. She looked at me as if she were about to cry for my sake. "What's wrong with you? That's your husband! Why are you pushing him away?"

I didn't know how to reply and simply said, "We have nothing to do with each other anymore. Come on. Let's go to Murphy Corporation."

"What do you mean? Are you blind? Didn't you see how he looked at you? Why are you just pushing him away like that? If he did something wrong, just tell him! Stop doing this psychological cold-shoulder stuff. Scarlett, I'm disappointed in you."

After her angry rant, she walked off without even waiting for me.

I was surprised and finally realized that she was genuinely mad at me. Quickly, I caught up to her and tugged at her arm. “Nora, this is my own problem. You don’t have to worry so much about it.”

She stopped and turned to look at me. Her shiny eyes betrayed her disappointment. “Yes, it’s your problem. But do you know why I’m so mad? Since the first time we met in Venria and ran away together, I could tell you were incredibly smart.

“After that, while we lived in the forest together and you saved me from Abe, I realized you were kind and chivalrous too. I felt like we had similar values and was determined to become good friends with you once we returned to the country. I’m angry now because you’re so different from who I thought you were. I’m not even angry at you; I’m angry at myself. Have you ever treated me as a friend all this while?”

I shook my head. “That’s not the case!”

She scoffed. “Not the case? Scarlett, you’ve never genuinely reached out to anyone. You’ve never loved Ashton, and you’ve never treated any of us as friends. To put it simply, you just treated us like minor characters in your journey of life.”

I was stunned by her rant, and she continued, “You don’t know what friendship means at all. To you, as long as you can hold a conversation with them, then they’re your friend. You even put Tessa at the same level as me, even though she’s despicable. As for Ashton, if you truly love him, there’s no way you could miss the way he’s always looking at you. It’s like he’s constantly tuned into you. Just now, he was silently declining to take responsibility for Rachel, but you forced him too anyway. He keeps stepping back to let you do whatever you want, yet you take it all for granted. Do you actually think what you’re doing is right?”

