

Chapter 706

Ashton brought me back into the car and rolled the windows back up. I had no energy left to move or talk, so I just leaned against the car and slowly drifted off to sleep.

When I woke up to the sound of water running in the bathroom, I found myself lying on a hotel room bed.

I knew I was brought to the hotel by Ashton, so waking up on a foreign bed didn't worry me as much.

Even after the rest I had, my head was still spinning, and my body felt limp. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't get myself out of bed.

So that's how it is after I drink. I may be sober, but my body just refuses to cooperate with me.

The bathroom door opened, and Ashton stepped out with a towel wrapped around his waist. "Are you awake?" he asked as he glanced at me.

I nodded and instinctively pulled at the covers. It was only then that I realized I had been stripped naked.

My eyes widened in horror as I glared at Ashton. "Ashton, you're despicable! You knew I was drunk, and yet, you... "

He turned toward me with a raised eyebrow. “And yet I what?”

I couldn’t make heads or tails of his reaction, so I mumbled, “Did you do that to me?”

He casually yanked his towel off to dry his hair before asking, “Do that?”

He knows what I mean, yet he still acts all innocent about it.

Since he seemed reluctant to give me a direct answer, I changed the subject. “Where are my clothes?”

He stopped drying his hair to look at me, still with the same indifference he had before. “You should be asking me where my clothes are,” he replied coolly.

“Fine. Where are your clothes then?” My anxiety increased when I realized the room stank of booze, and both his and my clothes were missing. What have I done? Wait... What have we done?

He threw his towel aside and leaned closer to me. “My custom-made suit cost one hundred and eighty thousand. Include my emotional damages, and that would be two hundred thousand in total. How do you plan to settle that?”

His words left me speechless. When did I owe him two hundred thousand?

“You puked all over me, don’t you remember? The hotel has security cameras. Do you need to see some footage as proof?”

As I took in that familiar scent of his, my instinct was to avoid him altogether. But he had me backed into a corner, and there was nowhere I could hide.

“I threw up again?” I asked apologetically. I had no memory of what happened after I had fallen asleep in the car.

He said nothing as he looked at me, a hint of arrogance in his eyes.

Perhaps I had been so blackout drunk that I couldn't remember throwing up on Ashton. And seeing as how both our clothes weren't in the room, I was starting to believe him.

After some hesitation, I began to worry about the monetary amount he mentioned earlier. “Do you really need that much for emotional damages?”

I knew that all his clothes were custom-made by famous, big brands, which justified their insane price tags. But twenty thousand for emotional damages was just too far-fetched for me.

“Every meeting I conduct is valued in the tens of millions. Asking for twenty thousand isn't too much of a stretch, is it?” he replied calmly.

“But, I didn't know you had a meeting to attend. I didn't even know you were coming. And besides, I wasn't the one who called you...” I protested, my voice trailing off weakly.

With a monthly salary of a mere few thousand, where was I going to find two hundred thousand to pay him back?

“Does that mean I should delete your number from my phone? And that I should never answer your calls again?”

“You didn’t have to pick up the call,” I mumbled in frustration, as the image of him hugging Rachel earlier that day once again filled my mind. Hit with a pang of jealousy, I added, “I guess I really am to blame. I have probably ruined your date with a gorgeous woman.”

“Scarlett, what nonsense do you have in your head?”

I stared at him with furrowed brows, anger slowly simmering away. Perhaps all that alcohol had lowered my inhibitions because I decided to speak my mind.

“Yes, there’s nonsense in my head, unlike Rachel. She has the looks and the brains. She’s good at everything while I’m not. She’s the only good match for you, so why don’t you go back to her. I didn’t want you here anyway.”

I lowered my head as I tried to hold my tears back. Everyone was always blaming me for not knowing my place and for pushing Ashton away.

But little did they know that I was the one who had to endure the most hurt. I was the one who had lost the baby. And I was the one who had to put up with all the resentment and grievances.

When I didn’t hear a response from Ashton, I looked up and saw him looking straight at me.

I was taken aback by how intense his stare was and tried to avert my eyes. However, he cupped my chin and turned me around to meet his gaze. “Are you bringing up Rachel to agitate me? You keep trying to push me toward her even though I don’t feel for her that way. I went along with it to keep you happy, but now you’re blaming me? If you can’t overcome the hurdles in your heart, I’m

willing to wait and give you all the time you need. Even if it takes the rest of my life, I'll continue to wait."

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"I'm not asking you to wait!" I cried out, tears welling up in my eyes. "I've told you before that I don't need you to wait for me. So what if I'm not happy about this arrangement? Time is the best medicine, isn't it? I pushed you to Rachel because I don't want you pestering and upsetting me when I'm with someone else in the future. Is that so wrong?"

I paused to wipe my tears away as Ashton remained silent. "Once we each have found a better partner for ourselves, it'd be best to stay out of each other's lives. You know it wasn't me who made the call, and I never wanted you there either. I'm willing to compensate for having puked on you, but do you have to slap me with a whopping two hundred thousand fee? You said I'd get half of your assets if we got a divorce. I'm letting you know now that I want nothing from the Fullers. I've also gotten my lawyer to transfer HiTech's ownership to you. From here on, we'll have nothing to do with each other. I'll pay for your suit, but not for the emotional damages you claim to have."

With that said, I angrily pushed Ashton away. I wrapped myself with the towel he had tossed aside and made a beeline for the door. I don't care if anyone sees me like this. The body is just a shell. To hell with anyone who dares criticize me.

I had only taken a few steps toward the door when Ashton grabbed me and pushed me onto the bed. I could see the fury in his eyes as his pent-up anger and frustration burst forth.

The more I struggled, the more Ashton held me down. "You're wrong if you think I'm someone who will come and go as you wish. Stop messing around and tell me exactly what you want me to do. Or do you think you're the only one for me?"

I bit my lips in fear, cold beads of sweat rolling down my face. "Ashton, you b*stard!"

"I'm a b*stard?" he growled. "Tell me what it means to be husband and wife. You left me without a word and kept pushing me to other women. Every time we speak, you say you want to sever all ties with me. Scarlett, do our marriage certificates mean nothing to you?"

That was the last straw for me. "Ashton Fuller, I'm going to sue you."

I was in so much pain from being pinned down by Ashton, and my head was still hurting from the alcohol. All the emotions that had been bubbling inside of me had finally surfaced. I couldn't help but burst into tears.

My voice was hoarse and quivering as I continued, "Just tell me if you want to destroy me. You are Ashton Fuller, and you can easily get any woman you want. You're only mad at me because I was the one who pushed you away. If I became obsessed with you as Rebecca did, you'd have tossed me aside like an old rag. You just refuse to accept the fact that I've rejected you."

Every word I said was like a stab to my heart, and I sobbed even harder.

Ashton suddenly let go of me. He looked me in my eyes as he asked softly, "So, in your opinion, everything that I've done to get close to you is because I'm unable to accept your rejection?"

I could see the hurt in his eyes as he said that. Unwilling to look at him again, I lowered my head.

Ashton brought my chin up to meet his steely gaze. "Why are you hiding? There's no need to be afraid. Just be honest with me."

When I didn't reply, he chuckled. "What? Feeling guilty already?"

I was so close to a complete breakdown. "Ashton, what on earth do you want with me? Don't you know the reason I'm pushing you away? It's your fault that I'm unable to bear any children now. Like any other girl, I just want to feel my parents' love. I've always envied other girls for being able to ride on their fathers' shoulders, but you've ruined all the expectations I have of my parents. Are these reasons not good enough for you?"

Seeing how stunned he was, I added, "Yes, I love you, but so what? I could have given us children, but because of your selfishness, I went to hell and back. Not only did I lose a child, but I also can never be a mother again. And to make things worse, I can't ever look my biological parents in their eyes because you've turned us into enemies. Are these not reasons for me to push you away?"

Ashton merely continued to look at me, his eyes so cold and hard.

I laughed bitterly. "You think that as long as we have mutual love and understanding, we can go back to what it was like and once again be the couple that everyone envies. But Ashton, ask yourself truthfully, can we really move on from the past? Because I know I can't."

In my defence, I had tried my best to forget everything that had happened to me. I once thought that maybe if I had a child again, I'd be able to bury the past.

Alas, destiny played a cruel joke on me. I could no longer bear any children, and I also had to be constantly reminded of the child I lost. My past would haunt me forever.

After all, I'm a mere human, not an animal. Sighing to myself at the thought, I knew I would always have memories that continue to torment me. Each time I saw a mother with her child, the memory would come back and rip me apart. I could no longer love Ashton the way I did because the more he stayed in my life, the more I hated him.

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Therefore, I chose to leave him.

After a long while, he stood up and walked to the side silently. He lifted the phone and made a call.

“Joseph, send over two sets of clothing.” He hung up and went into the bathroom.

After a while, he came out, and there was a knock at the door. He wrapped a towel around his waist and answered it.

When he came back, he held two bags in his hands. He did not shy away from me at all. He simply changed into his clothes and blow-dried his hair in front of the bed.

I lay in bed while he stood at the window. With a low and reserved voice that held a hint of helplessness, he said, “Here are some clothes. From now onward, I will not bother you anymore. You are free.”

He put the bags on the bedside table. Then, he took his phone and car keys and turned to leave.

“Ashton!” I called out to him.

He stopped in his tracks. His slender back stiffened. He did not turn to look at me but replied faintly. “Yeah?”

I let out the breath of air that I was holding in. Biting on my lips slightly, I said, “If it is possible, I would like for the both of us to go to the Civil Affairs Bureau to get divorced.”

The air froze instantly. His hands balled up into fists. Veins popped up on the back of his hands.

“Sure!” He uttered that clear solitary word after a long while.

Watching him leave, I could only lie on bed and let my tears flow freely.

Life is a long journey. Now everything was back to square one. In the next life, I wished that instead of having the kind of love that was breath-taking and fiery, just an ordinary encounter and subsequently growing old together with the love of my life would suffice.

That night was destined to be another sleepless night.

After sleeping for a few hours, I was groggily awakened by my ringing phone.

It was a call from Nora. “Scarlett, I did it. F*ck! I did it last night.”

My head was throbbing. I did not understand what Nora meant. "What do you mean by you did it?"

"Err..." she paused for a bit and said, "I slept with Armond last night. And I think it was quite wild."

I was stunned. Going along with what she said, I questioned, "Wild?"

Nora replied, "Yes. My clothes were completely ripped! You won't believe this. He even destroyed my newly-bought lingerie!"

"Is this your first time?"

"No!" she exclaimed. Then, she suddenly realized something. "F*ck! I didn't see him around this morning. I couldn't have broken him, could I?"

I... I was at a loss.

To be honest, this was the first time I encountered a situation like this.

"Err... Shouldn't you just call him?" Armond looked like he was over thirty. He couldn't be so inexperienced that he would get hurt from having intercourse.

"Yeah, I should. I'll hang up now!" Nora did not behave bashfully and nervously at all for a girl who just had sex.

I was just about to hang up when she was reminded of something and suddenly asked, “Oh yeah, where did you go last night? Linda called me just now and told me she was absolutely wasted. She couldn’t remember who you left with.”

I pursed my lips and couldn’t help but ask, “Hold up. Didn’t you drink until you blacked out last night? How did you know you were with Armond?”

She snorted in laughter. “Are you kidding? I may be drunk, but my brain is still fully conscious. Besides, how could I miss the chance to sleep with the man I liked? That would be unlike me. Now spit it out. Who were you with last night?”

“Ashton!” There was no point in concealing.

Nora exploded with excitement on the other side. “Damn! You were with him last night? How was it? Did you make up?”

“No,” I sighed, “if everything goes according to plan, I will probably get the divorce papers these few days. Then, we will go back to J City to finalize the divorce.”

She went silent for a bit. Then she asked, “Scarlett, I need to ask you seriously – Why?”

I smiled faintly. I could feel that I was over it. “Many things happened in the past. There is just too much that can’t be clarified between the two of us. So, I can’t stay with him. I guess this is fate.”

She sighed and advised, “Perhaps you have already made up your mind and you have your own plans in mind. If so, I support your decision. But Scarlett, I really do think that you will only meet and love a man like Ashton once in a lifetime. In the future, you might regret letting go of him.”

I nodded. "Maybe it will be as you said. However, bear in mind, Nora. Life is full of choices. No matter what we decide, we will always regret the path we did not take. So, we should just roll with it!"

She mumbled in response. There was a hint of pity in her tone, but she did not say anything else.

After hanging up, I looked at the time and noticed that it was almost eight-thirty.

I had to go to work! Hastily, I got up, washed up, and put on fresh clothes. Soon, I was out of the door and on a taxi to the company.

When I reached the entrance, I realized that I may have forgotten Armond's breakfast.

"Good morning, Scarlett!" I could hear Nora greet me from behind.

I was quite surprised. "Why are you here?"

Chapter 709

Nora held up the food container in her hand and said, "I know you have no time to take care of my man. So I brought him breakfast. And..."

She lowered her voice and whispered, "... And I came to see if he is alright."

I winced at this display of affection and nodded gingerly. “Great, you go and check on your man. I need to go clock in. I’ll contact you in the afternoon.”

I scurried past the office entrance and felt relieved to get in finally. After settling down at my work desk, I caught my breath.

Linda saw me. She handed the bread in her hand over to me. “It looks like you have not had your breakfast. You’ll just have to make do with this. According to scientific findings, not eating breakfast is as bad as eating poop. In conclusion, eating bread is still better than eating poop. So eat up!”

I looked at her with befuddlement.

“But why do I feel like you don’t really want me to eat it?”

She smirked, “You’re overthinking it. How was last night? Did you sleep well?”

Linda was asking in a very suggestive tone.

Nora must have told her about my night. I shrugged and replied nonchalantly, “Oh, it was just normal.”

It was working hours, so it was not prudent to keep prattling. She asked me out for lunch later.

And I said okay.

I had to let Armond sign some documents from yesterday. After arranging them, I headed straight to Armond’s office.

Before entering, I knocked at the door. The deep and serious voice of a man answered, "Please come in!"

Pushing the door open, I found him seated in front of his computer. He was diligently working as usual.

Remembering what Nora told me piqued my curiosity. I wonder where did he sustain the injury?

"Mr. Murphy, these documents need your signature," I said, placing the documents right before him.

Glancing at his table, I noticed the container that Nora was holding earlier. Ah, so she was here.

He murmured in response and looked up at me. Then he asked weirdly, "What are you looking at?"

I froze and realized that I was staring at him quite rudely. Awkwardly, I answered, "No, it's nothing. I just wanted to ask if you have had breakfast. Last night, you..."

He stared at me so intently until I felt a little intimidated. He said, "Trying to set up your boss, Ms. Stovall? You're getting bold, aren't you?"

I shook my head and said in utmost sincerity, "Mr. Murphy, you have to believe me. I didn't do anything. I did not know anything about last night's events. Also, you saw me going after Linda toward the end. She had drunk too much. If I had let her leave on her own, it would have been dangerous."

As I reached that part, testing the water, I asked, "Do you feel fine from last night?"

His brows lifted and settled into a frown. "What do you mean by that?"

"Your body!" I blurted out hastily. I was very close to asking if he had gone to the doctor to check if there were any problems.

He gave me an indifferent glance and asked coldly, "Why would my body be not fine?"

Um...

There was no point in asking further. I smiled pleasantly to conceal my embarrassment. "No, no. Your body's great! Always in a good condition."

I definitely could not continue with my queries. I took it as my cue to leave when he said, "Some people from Fuller Corporation are coming over for a meeting later. You are the person in charge of the project. The meeting is at nine. Don't be late."

While nodding and indicating that I got the message, I saw him reaching out to take a file. His outstretched hand was bandaged. I was surprised, and before I could stop myself, I blurted out, "Mr. Murphy, your hand?"

He looked at his bandaged hand impassively and replied faintly, "I accidentally hurt myself last night."

So...

The blood was not what I thought?

The air was heavy with awkwardness. I quickly exited Armond's office and phoned Nora.

"What did you do last night? Why is Armond's hand hurt?" I asked.

She seemed to be a bit taken aback and said, "I am not sure. I can't really remember. When I saw his bandaged hand earlier, I was surprised too. I racked my brain but I just can't recall how I hurt him. That's it! I'm exhausted. I need my beauty sleep now since I didn't sleep well last night. Talk to you later, bye!"

With that, she hung up right away.

Back at my desk, Linda sent over some files that were needed for the meeting. She went out of her way to remind me. "Today is our first meeting with the Fuller Corporation. You have to be alert and make sure everything goes smoothly."

I nodded. Since I have taken over this project, I cannot just do the job perfunctorily.

After scanning through the meeting agenda and important points, it was almost time for the meeting.

I was making my way to the conference room when I met Armond and Linda. They both looked at me and said, "Let's go! We need to go downstairs to welcome the guests from the Fuller Corporation."

This welcoming requires the president of the Murphy Corporation himself? Something is up.

Trailing behind them, I was a little puzzled and had questions. But they were both walking too fast, so I did not get a chance to ask.

At the first-floor lobby, Armond marched ahead with a standard socializing smile on his face. "Mr. Fuller, welcome!"

I looked over to the entrance. Coincidentally, Ashton was walking in with his entourage. They were all dressed in formal suits and looked especially sharp.

It's no wonder. I was right. Armond would not have needed to come out personally for an ordinary meeting.

I lowered my head and followed behind Armond. I occasionally looked up to smile and lead the visitors around.

Chapter 710

Ashton and Armond chatted amicably. These two men who had never met before seemed to be rather chummy with each other. One could tell at a glance that they were wolves in sheep's clothing in the corporate world.

Linda was walking beside me. She noticed that something was off and said, "Don't be distracted. We are at work now. Everything else should be set aside."

I nodded, took a deep breath, and entered the conference room along with everyone else. Linda arranged for a secretary to serve tea.

Out of nowhere, Ashton, who had been talking to Armond all the while, suddenly spoke. “Mr. Murphy, I had a look at your list of employees just now. Ms. Stovall over here is your secretary?”

Armond nodded, and his gaze landed on me. With a vague smile, he answered, “Yes, she has just joined our company. She is quite capable.”

Ashton nodded and remarked thoughtfully, “No wonder you let her take over the Fuller Corporation project.”

I frowned. Why did he suddenly change the topic?

Sss! Maybe because the atmosphere was a little tense, the secretary who was serving tea accidentally scalded her hand. Due to the pin-drop silence, this little hiss sounded especially loud.

Armond’s brows furrowed for a brief moment. He went on and said, “Mr. Fuller, let us continue with our discussions regarding the Lavelian Village project.”

Ashton grunted in reply but did not speak. He looked at the secretary who got scalded, and said, “Just go get some rest if you are hurt.”

His comment was baffling, but that was not all. After a slight pause, he said, “Ms. Stovall, you wouldn’t mind pouring us some tea, would you?”

I did not manage to say anything before Linda spoke up. “Mr. Fuller, we are sorry. We hope you understand that even though Scarlett is Mr. Murphy’s secretary, she is in charge of this project right now. She needs to present and explain the proposal in a while more.”

Ashton raised an eyebrow. “It’s merely pouring some tea. It wouldn’t affect anyone’s job. If you think that my request is unreasonable, then it is fine.”

He looked toward Rachel, who was seated beside him, and said, “Ms. Zimmer, I will have to burden you with this task.”

Rachel nodded. She accepted the request with a warm smile, accentuating a classy demeanor.

As this series of events unfolded, it made Murphy Corporation look petty and calculative. Linda’s expression turned sour.

Armond spoke up, his distant gaze directed at me. “You should do it, Ms. Stovall. It would be rude for us to let our guests do the serving instead.”

I nodded, stood up, and took the teapot from the secretary.

Rachel had already got up from her seat. Seeing this, she smiled faintly and said, “It’s just a small matter, Mr. Murphy. Now that we are all seated in this conference room, we will definitely be working together in the future. There’s no need for us to be so particular about minor details since we’re a team now.”

Armond smiled in return and replied, “That is true. But if it’s something that we should do, we must do it properly.”

Ashton looked at Rachel. With a caring look on his face, he said to her, “Alright, that would do. Since Ms. Stovall will be servicing us, don’t tire yourself. Your ankle is still sprained. Sit down and rest.”

If these words were said in a daily context, or said personally when there was no one else around, or even said by somebody else – it would not be weird. This time, however, the words came from the mouth of a walking glacier also known as Ashton Fuller.

The intimacy demonstrated instantly permeated the room. Everyone looked at each other. The implication behind those words was loud and clear. More so for the staff at Fuller Corporation who had never seen me before.

Naturally, everyone thought that Ashton and Rachel were an item.

Rachel was stunned too. A blush appeared on her porcelain and flawless face. She looked demure and bashful.

Armond only looked at me briefly. In the next moment, he resumed his discussion with Ashton.

Lavelian Village was a recreational project by Murphy Corporation. They planned to attract tourists from local and afar by promoting the various expensive jade items found there. They needed Fuller Corporation’s AI technology because they intended to use AI to develop a hundred-acre paradise that would attract even more visitors.

At the same time, Fuller Corporation’s AI technology would also get mass publicity. On top of that, Fuller Corporation would build an AI technology museum in Lavelian Village to further advertise this project.

As the two bosses were discussing the project, the rest of us listened quietly.

Fuller Corporation did not arrange for many people to attend this meeting. Besides Rachel, Joseph, and Ashton, there was two other staff. They were most probably in charge of operations in A City.

It was not the first time I had served tea. Never in a million years did I foresee that I would trip when I passed by Rachel. I fell face-first on the floor with great embarrassment.

Sss! The water in the teapot was hot, and it inadvertently got thrown onto me. Linda quickly helped me up. She said worriedly, "Come on. I'll take you to the washroom to clean off."

We were about to exit the room when Rachel called out to us. "We are going to start the meeting for the project any time now. Aren't you presenting, Ms. Stovall? How long would this take? Mr. Fuller is busy with other things in the afternoon."

Linda frowned and countered, "She has been scalded. This won't take long."

Rachel nodded with empathy and explained herself with concern. "I know. I do not mean anything else. I just wanted to remind you that there is not much time left. Please go ahead. I hope Ms. Stovall isn't seriously hurt."