

## Chapter 746

Excuse me...

That sounds like the exact opposite of a compliment!

Huffing slightly, I went downstairs to open the main door for her. She dragged her suitcase in like she owned the place. "You'll give me a room, won't you?"

There were five rooms in the villa. On the first floor was a guest room and the housekeeper's room. I was using one of the rooms on the second floor, while another one was occupied by Armond. Hence, there was one more empty room.

I led her to the second floor and arranged for her to stay in that vacant room.

"The natural lighting isn't too bad. It's just a shame there's no balcony!" she remarked and was about to unpack her suitcase.

"There is a large balcony in my room. Want to switch?" I proposed.

She shook her head with a small smirk on her lips. "No. This room is closer to Armond's—much more convenient for me to take action, if you ask me!"

What?

I released a helpless chuckle and teased, "So, are you both together now?"

She paused her actions to look at me and spoke in a rather grave manner. "I have a very serious question to ask you."

Although I was puzzled, I nodded and turned serious as well. "Go ahead."

She pondered for a while before continuing, "When you and Ashton lived as husband and wife in the past, were there times when you guys wanted to do it but couldn't?"

I blinked in astonishment because this seemed to be a sex-related question. Then, I felt my cheeks heat up from embarrassment.

But faced with her earnest expression, I had no choice but to answer her seriously as well. Fidgeting slightly, I said, "Care to elaborate?"

She pursed her lips and complied, "Well, both people are obviously very turned on, but things always stop right at the most crucial moment."

I raised my hand to rub my nose and contemplated for a while. "Is it you or Armond?"

"Both of us!" Her expression was grave. "He bled that one time and I don't really know what happened. Later on, we tried doing it several times, but it was always so awkward. Whatever the case, we have not succeeded!"

This was the first time I was hearing of such a situation. Honestly speaking, I wasn't too sure myself.

Seeing me deep in thought, she inquired, “Did you and Ashton succeed the first time itself?”

The corners of my mouth twitched slightly as I looked at her. “Are you sure it’s Armond’s first time?”

She was taken aback by my question. “I’m not too sure. Well, it’s my first time, that’s for sure, but if it’s not his first time; then why does this keep happening? And the thing is, he doesn’t seem to have any problems!”

I clamped my lips shut, not knowing how to respond all of a sudden.

After some deliberation, I advised, “Why don’t the two of you visit the hospital together? Such things involve both sides, after all. If you’re considering marriage in the future, this would pose as a problem. So I think it’s better you get yourselves checked. Usually, it’s either a psychological or physical issue, but once it’s resolved, everything will be back to normal.”

She sighed and pouted slightly. “Scarlett, do you think he’s only like this with me? Maybe he doesn’t really like me and just feels comfortable with me. We happen to be almost the same age and he happened to meet me, not to mention we share quite a lot of common interests, so he decided to get together with me. Do you think that’s it?”

I stared at her in surprise before chiding, “You are never like this before. Look at you, overcomplicating things! You’ve seriously fallen in too deep. Yes, it’s an undeniable fact that a man’s love for a woman can be reflected in bed, but many times, it’s the little things that he does day by day that matters. Lately, I noticed how attentive he’s been toward you.”

Recalling the incident with the clothes, I piped up, “He even kept your clothes from before. I mean, he’s the president of a company. Why would he keep a woman’s clothes if that woman didn’t matter to him, right?”

She looked at me in stupefaction. “What clothes?”

“The set of clothes he bought for you when we were in Archulea. It’s quite similar to mine in terms of design, but the accessories and embroidery are slightly different. Yours was kept in Armond’s private restroom at the company. I accidentally spilled water on my clothes previously, so he lent yours to me. I returned it to him after washing it and he probably kept it there again.”

When I was done speaking, I noticed the frown on her face and her increasingly unsightly complexion. “What’s wrong?”

She glanced at me and her originally puzzled expression morphed into one of sadness. “That set of clothes isn’t mine. Ever since we returned from Epea, I kept mine in the closet and haven’t touched it since then. Armond hasn’t been to my house before, so he’s never touched that either. How could he have kept mine in his private restroom? It’s definitely not mine!”

I was stunned for a moment and said, “Maybe he accidentally bought an extra set and decided to bring it back with him?”

She shook her head miserably. “Do you think a man like him would give a damn about a set of clothes? Even bringing it back all the way from abroad?”

I turned her words over in my head and tried to reassure her. “Nora, don’t take this matter to heart for now. Let’s talk about it again after we get to the bottom of this. You both owe it to each other. The worst thing that could happen between a couple is a misunderstanding caused by jumping to conclusions. We’re all adults. When it comes to relationships, we need to be clear-headed and rational. Don’t overthink it, okay?”

Having been together with Ashton for so many years, I realized that many times, the pain and suffering I endured was caused by my own reluctance to open my mouth and explain.

## Chapter 747

For so many years, I had suffered too much in that relationship and I didn't wish for Nora to go through the same pain. If a relationship started off as a sweet one, I believed that it could continue being that way.

She nodded and gradually calmed down. "Okay, I'll listen to you and decide after I get to the bottom of this."

With that, I helped her to unpack. Armond was at the office, so it was only the two of us. She went to the kitchen and barred me from entering, saying that it wasn't good for a sick person to be in such an oily environment.

Hence, I was left with nothing to do. Because of the rain, there were many puddles of water in the yard. No one came to clean the villa in the past few days, so I grabbed some equipment and began cleaning the place.

Armond's abrupt return surprised me and my eyes traveled down to see the bags of groceries in his hands. Slightly confused, I asked, "What are these?"

"Aren't you guys cooking?" he said as an answer. Then, he handed me a bag of fruits and continued, "The villa doesn't have a housekeeper, so the two of you will have to settle it yourselves."

I nodded in response. He already told me about this, but shouldn't he be at the office now?

With the bag of fruits in my hand, I watched in perplexity as he strode into the villa in a haste.

Sensing someone's gaze on me, I looked toward the yard next door and was met with the sight of Ashton's slender and towering figure.

I flashed a faint smile at him and nodded slightly as a form of greeting.

With that, I went back into the villa with the fruits. Seeing Nora and Armond working together in the kitchen, I decided that it was best not to interrupt.

Thus, I busied myself with washing the fruits and sat at the dining table while waiting for the food to be served.

When the doorbell rang, Nora glanced at me and jerked her chin. "Go get the door, missy."

I got to my feet, walked out to the yard and saw Ashton standing beyond the gate.

Stepping forward and I asked, "Mr. Fuller, do you need something?"

He grunted in response. "I need to discuss something with Mr. Murphy."

I opened the gate and invited him in even though I was sceptical. Why is he looking for Armond at this hour? Is it about something work-related?

Nora and Armond, who were still busy in the kitchen, didn't seem surprised to see Ashton at all.

Armond nodded politely and said, "Welcome, Mr. Fuller. Have some fruits first. I'll be done soon."

Ashton returned his nod and sat at the dining table. Then, he reached out to grab my half-eaten pear and casually bit into it.

"Wait..." I wanted to stop him, but he had already taken a bite out of the pear and I couldn't very well tell him to spit it out, could I?

The point was, I had already eaten half of that pear, so it was mortifying to see him eat it just like that.

After taking a few bites, he raised his eyes to look at me with a hint of confusion. "What's wrong?"

I shook my head and withdrew my gaze, then grabbed another fruit to eat because I couldn't just snatch the pear out of his hand.

He watched me take the seat across from his with raised brows. As if realization suddenly dawned on him, he widened his eyes and asked, "Oh, were you eating this pear?"

Appalled, I started coughing violently and almost choked. What the hell is wrong with him?

I chugged down the glass of water on the table and gradually relaxed.

He was still staring at me with a profound gaze. "What's wrong?"

Peeved, I didn't even try to hold back my temper as I snapped, "Nothing!"

I seriously suspected that this man was doing it on purpose.

To my chagrin, he nodded and brushed off the matter altogether.

I drew in a calming breath before shifting my attention to the man and woman in the kitchen.

Nora may look like a rash and impatient person, but she was, in fact, a modest woman down to the core. Although she hailed from a wealthy family, she wasn't anything like those spoiled, rich brats. What was more, she had excellent cooking skills. Many girls would be repulsed by the hassles that came with cooking, but she seemed to enjoy being in the kitchen.

Armond was naturally a cold person. That was why he craved loving tender warmth.

As I watched them flit about the kitchen, I found that they looked good together in every way possible.

"Armond isn't the right one for you, so you should wipe off that wistful look from your face because it's useless!" Ashton voice broke my train of thought just then.

I looked at him with a frown and couldn't help but feel slightly annoyed by him. "What wistful look are you talking about exactly?"



He raised his brows tauntingly. “Don’t tell me you don’t feel wistful watching the person you like having such well-honed chemistry with another woman and listening to them bicker like long-lost lovers?”

Stunned, I glanced back at him. It seemed like he had been observing me all this time. As I met his gaze, I felt myself getting lost in those obsidian orbs. Flustered, I quickly averted my eyes and remarked, “Mr. Fuller, you seriously have a knack for misinterpreting things. I just find their interaction really sweet.”

The corners of his mouth lifted imperceptibly. “Is that so?”

I pressed my lips together, giving up trying to explain as it would only make me more frustrated.

Hence, I rested my chin on my palm and continued watching the two people in the kitchen. Meanwhile, I felt Ashton’s eyes boring into me, causing me to feel slightly edgy, so I got up and walked toward the kitchen instead.

## **Chapter 748**

Looking at the two people in the kitchen, I chirped, “Hey guys, can I help with anything?”

“No, no, no,” Nora replied with a grin. “As I said, you’re a patient today. Just have a good rest and don’t come in here. The kitchen is greasy as hell. Shoo, shoo!”

Faced with her rejection, I looked to Armond instead. “Mr. Murphy, why don’t you go ahead with your work? I can help Nora in the kitchen.”

At that, Nora turned to Armond in question. “Are you going to discuss work later?”

Armond’s eyes darted to Ashton who was seated at the dining table and he shook his head. “No. Why?”

I was startled to hear his answer. Then, why did Ashton come here? For the free food?

Nora wagged her brows at me and grinned. “Go ahead and rest. Everything in the kitchen is under control and lunch will be ready in a bit.”

I flicked my eyes to Ashton, but still decided to go into the kitchen after some consideration. Padding over to the spot next to Nora, I put on a pitiful expression and whined, “I know you care about me and I’m really grateful for that. So don’t chase me away, okay? I want to stay here to help you!”

Of course, a sharp-witted person like Nora could tell my true intentions. She glanced sideways at the person at the dining table, then looked back at me and smirked. “Good excuse you got there. But why are you avoiding him? At least be friends with him. Don’t tell me you’re going to pretend to be strangers forever?”

I spaced out slightly after hearing her words, realizing that my thought process often varied from those of others. I thought that Ashton and I could only be strangers, but I never thought that we could get along like friends.

Seeing me lost in a daze, Nora added, “Scarlett, have you ever thought that perhaps you’re the one who’s overcomplicating the problem? Ordinary people like us only wish to live a normal and peaceful life with our partners. Regardless of what happened, life is

too long to spend it alone. If humans insisted on separating over minor conflicts, then what would become of everyone in this world?

“Truth be told, many married couples would more or less have some strife between them, but as time goes by, they’d gradually get past their differences. My grandfather always said that if electrical appliances at home broke down, they should be replaced because those are non-living objects. No matter how hard you try to repair it, it’d be useless. But it’s different for people. Think about it, if two people insisted on replacing each other because of some minor dispute, then how many partners would we have to change throughout this long life of ours before we finally grow old? Besides, can we guarantee that the new one we choose will really be better than the first one we were with? I doubt that!”

I pursed my lips, finding some logic in Nora’s words. After a brief pause, I drew in a breath and said, “You’re right and wrong at the same time. It’s not a matter of who’s wrong or replacing each other between Ashton and me, but you’ve helped me realize something. Regardless of what our future holds, I’ll stop avoiding him or pretending to be strangers. From now on, I’ll treat him like a friend.”

Hearing my decision, she smiled in encouragement. “Now that’s what I’m talking about. Never run from problems. Facing them is the best way to solve them.”

With that, she handed me a plate of food and ordered, “Now go help me serve the food.”

I took the plate from her and brought it out of the kitchen. Ashton also entered the kitchen and helped set the table.

What surprised me was that he really seemed to be here for the free food and only used looking for Armond as an excuse.

Nora's cooking was exceptional and Armond seemed to enjoy her food a lot. Both of them didn't look like a couple who had just started dating. Instead, they looked like close friends who had known each other for a long time.

At least that was how Armond seemed like around Nora.

After eating, Ashton and I were on dish duty.

In the kitchen, I realized I really didn't know how to act around Ashton anymore.

Nora said that we should get along as friends, but those years we were together, we either quarreled or gave each other the cold shoulder. Of course, there were the occasional sweet and romantic moments as well.

Come to think of it, I knew nothing about this man and I couldn't seem to get past my first impression of him.

"What's on your mind?" His voice reached my ears and I recollected my thoughts to shake my head.

"Nothing," I replied tersely.

He took the plate from my hand and gazed at me solemnly. "Do you like Armond that much?"

I was stumped by his question, but when I saw Armond and Nora bantering in the living room and recalled the way I had spaced out earlier, realization dawned on me.

Ashton must have misunderstood and thought that I zoned out because of the heart-warming scene in the living room.

I shot him a sideways glance and noticed his dark eyes fixated on me. Mischief filled me and I nodded. "Yeah. What would it take for a woman to be able to meet such a handsome man like Armond? I think I'm pretty lucky to have met him."

The temperature around me seemed to plummet a few degrees, so I stopped talking and bowed my head to wash the dishes as though my life depended on it.

At first, I thought he would make a dig at me, but unexpectedly, he chose to stay silent.

## **Chapter 749**

When he didn't speak, I peeked at him in surprise, but his eyes were hooded and I couldn't discern any emotion in them.

Unable to help myself, I blurted, "Didn't you come here to look for Armond? Aren't you going to talk to him?"

Without sparing a glance at me, his slender fingers moved across the porcelain bowls as he expertly washed the dishes.

"There's no rush." He only gave me three simple words in return.

The atmosphere became quiet all of a sudden and I felt slightly at a loss.

Suddenly, a ringtone broke through the uncomfortable silence. It was coming from his phone.

He didn't answer it, but turned his emotionless eyes to me for some reason.

I stiffened and asked confusedly, "What is it?"

"My hands are wet. I'll have to trouble you," he replied.

At first, I couldn't grasp his meaning. Later on, I realized that his phone was in his trouser pocket and both his hands were covered with soap.

Coincidentally, I had just wiped my hands dry, so technically, it was convenient for me to take his phone. But...

The corners of my eyes twitched as I fell into a dilemma. "Mr. Fuller, I think that's rather inappropriate."

He cocked a brow at me. "And why exactly would that be inappropriate?"

A woman such as myself reaching into his trouser pocket to grab his phone? How isn't that inappropriate?

He looked at me with a serious yet clear eyes. If I made a big deal out of it, it would seem like I was the one having dirty thoughts instead.

The beautiful piano melody kept playing, as though the caller was anxious.

Ashton was still frozen in the same posture as he waited for me to answer his phone for him.

I exhaled sharply and shoved my hand into his trouser pocket. After taking his phone out, I handed it to him with slightly flushed cheeks. “Here!”

He raised his brows at me and motioned at his soap-covered hands with his eyes. His meaning couldn’t be any clearer—he couldn’t pick up the call in his state and I had to do it for him.

Clenching my jaw, I turned the phone screen to face me and swiped to answer the call, catching sight of the caller ID in the process—it was Rachel.

“Put it on speaker,” Ashton instructed while staring at me with a particularly intense gaze.

I did as I was told, tapping on the speaker icon before bringing the phone to his ear. Due to the height difference, I had to stand on my tippy toes and get closer.

He lowered his eyes to look at me, but didn’t comment. Soon, Rachel’s gentle voice drifted over the other end of the line. “Mr. Fuller, are you home?”

“Yes. What is it?” This man was stingy with his words as always.

Rachel seemed to have grown accustomed to this habit of his because she didn’t seem to mind as she chirped gleefully, “I brought all the previous project files over today for

you to take a look. By the way, you haven't eaten yet, have you? I made you lunch. Give it a try later."

I twitched my lips. How lucky of him to have a beautiful woman at his beck and call!

When his reply didn't come after a long time, I vaguely sensed his gaze on me. Puzzled, I returned his gaze, wondering what was running through his mind.

Just when I thought he wasn't going to answer, he responded curtly, "Mm."

Rachel's unconcealed joy was palpable even over the phone when she quipped, "Then, can you come out and open the gate for me, Mr. Fuller? I'm already outside your villa."

"Sure," Ashton replied. Then, he shot me a glance, signaling for me to hang up the call.

After ending the call, I hesitated for a second before suggesting, "You should go now. I'll handle it from here."

With that, I reached out to take the bowl in his hand, but he held it in a vice-like grip. Bewildered, I widened my eyes at him, trying to figure out what he was playing at.

However, he behaved as though nothing was wrong and declared, "We'll go together once we're done here. Rachel is here because of the Lavelian Village project. Since you're the person-in-charge, you're required to participate."

I pressed my lips together tightly in response to his tyrannical behavior. Rachel's obviously not here to discuss the project with him. Is he stupid or what?



With that, he took his time with the dishes, seemingly unbothered about the fact that Rachel was currently waiting outside. After he was done, he scanned me from head to toe at a disturbingly languid pace before asking, "Do you need to have a change of clothes before heading over?"

Caught off guard, I glanced down at my clothes, realizing that they were rather casual. I had randomly thrown on some clothes after waking up in the morning, not to mention my hair was pulled into a messy ponytail and my face was completely bare.

But I was only going next door and not some faraway place, so I gave him an adamant shake of my head. "No."

It's clear that I'm going there to be a third wheel, so why should I dress up?

His brows scrunched together, but he didn't insist. "Let's go then."

Nora and Armond were talking in the yard. People who were in love seemed to like spending every second of their day together.

After informing them where we were going, Ashton and I left the yard. The moment we stepped past the gate, we saw Rachel standing outside the villa next door.

There was a red Cadillac was parked beside her. Dressed in a white dress with exquisite makeup on her face, her long hair cascaded down her back in an alluring manner, making her look every bit the muse that incited a man's wildest desires.

Rachel spotted us the same time we did her. Surprise flashed across her face, but it vanished as soon as it came and she regained her composure.

Directing her gaze at Ashton, she plastered a tender smile on her face and greeted, "Mr. Fuller!"

Ashton nodded, then looked at me and jerked his chin. "Open the gate."

Mystified, my brows knitted into a deep frown. "But I don't know your password." How the hell would I know the password to his house?

"It's your birthday," he replied calmly.

Sensing the withering stare Rachel was aiming at me, I couldn't help but feel that Ashton was purposely making my life difficult.

Exasperated, I raised my hand to enter my birth date. When the gate beeped open, Ashton shot Rachel a fleeting glance and said flatly, "Go on in."

## Chapter 750

The yard in the villa was equipped with a pavilion. It was a perfect place for having a conversation when the weather was nice.

Ashton was leading us to the pavilion. Then, he ordered me, "There are some fruits in the fridge. Prepare some fruits and brew us tea."

With my brows knitted, I pointed at myself while asking in disbelief, "Me?"

The man raised his brow. "Do you have a problem with that?"

Of course, I have a problem with that! Aren't I here to discuss the project? What, now I'm your errand girl?

Just then, Rachel put the lunch box down and said smilingly, "Mr. Fuller, let me do it so Ms. Stovall can get some rest. You should eat first; see if the food I brought you suits your liking."

"It's fine. Let her do it. She knows the place better." Ashton cast his gaze at me as he spoke.

Hearing that, my eyes widened. What is he talking about? I know the place better? I have never come to his house since he moved here!

Meanwhile, Rachel's smile stiffened.

I thought Ashton must have said that on purpose so that he could order me around. Reluctant to waste my breath on him, I made my way to the house.

Standing in front of the door, I turned to look at the man sitting in the pavilion and waited for him to tell me the password.

Having developed a good rapport over the years, Ashton raised his brow and answered my unasked question, "Our daughter's birthday."

Hearing that, my heart was overwhelmed with mixed feelings.

The door unlocked as I keyed in Summer's birthday.

The villa was relatively moderate in size, which was about 3200 square feet. Yet, it was definitely a large house in the eyes of the common folks.

Still, the villa was way smaller than all those previous properties that Ashton bought.

Nevertheless, this was the villa that had the homiest and cosiest atmosphere amongst the rest. Instead of having a black-and-white interior decoration style, the villa was painted in light yellow.

The usual leather furniture was replaced by warm-color fabric furniture. Summer and my pictures were everywhere in the living room, many of which I had no idea when Ashton took them.

Some were pictures of Summer and her father, which were probably taken after I left K City. Apart from that, there were also pictures featuring the three of us.

Many of them were pictures of Ashton and me sending Summer to school, taken by someone else.

The sight of those pictures brought a bittersweet feeling to my heart.

My eyes prickled with tears as I retrieved my gaze. Soon, I wiped off the tears that escaped my eyes without me realizing it.

In the kitchen, I boiled water and found the tea leaves. Then, I took the fruits out of the fridge and prepared a fruit platter in no time.

Many of the ornaments and furnishing in the villa were similar to those in the house in K City.

When I was back at the pavilion with freshly brewed tea, Ashton was reading the document. As for Rachel, she was sitting next to the man, wanting to get his attention.

The lunch box on the table was being opened, yet the food was untouched.

At that point, I noticed that Rachel seemed unhappy.

“Tea is ready! I’m not sure of your preferences, so I only prepared Earl Grey.” With that, I placed the two cups of tea before them.

Placing his document aside, Ashton looked up at me and uttered, “There’s juice and milk in the fridge. I have them prepared for you.”

I was slightly bewildered to hear that. Nevertheless, with a faint smile, I nodded. "Thanks."

The man then turned to face Rachel. "The project's design is nice, but there are some problems with the details that you need to fix. I need to discuss the project with the shareholders, and I need you to contact Armond concerning the project in Lavelian Village. After all, this project is related to the Murphy Corporation."

Rachel nodded and replied, "Alright, I got it." Then, she advised, "You've been working since morning, and it's already one o'clock now. You should eat something, or it will take a toll on your stomach."

Ashton nodded perfunctorily. Yet, instead of eating the food, he placed the lunch box before me and said, "Have a taste."

Instantly, my eyes were fixated on the brown and crispy crocchè. They look good!

I tried my best to tear my eyes away from the delicious food. After all, it was prepared by Rachel for Ashton. It would be awkward if I ate it.

Gazing at Ashton, I rejected, "I've eaten something, and I'm not hungry. You eat it."

With a deadpan expression, the man uttered, "Me too. I'm not hungry."

Rachel's face fell as she watched our exchange.

Thinking that it was inappropriate of us to trample on her effort of preparing the food, I asked politely, "Ms. Zimmer, could I have a taste? The crocchè looks delicious!"

Rachel nodded. "Of course!"

I eagerly took a bite of the crocchè. As expected, it was crispy on the outside and creamy on the inside. One must admit that Rachel was a good cook.

As I had eaten her food, I felt like helping the poor lady out. Rachel had prepared the lunch box for Ashton, yet that man didn't even bother to touch the food.

As I turned to look at Ashton, our eyes met. I persuaded, "Mr. Fuller, have a taste! The crocchè tastes delicious!"

Ashton raised his brow. I thought he would either turn me down or have a taste of the food, yet never had I expected the man to say, "Feed me!"