

Chapter 751

Hearing that, I almost choked on my food. That man was deliberately hurting Rachel's feelings!

Eventually, I managed to swallow the lump of food and suppress the urge to cough. Forcing a smile, I asked through gritted teeth, "Mr. Fuller, don't you have hands?"

Ashton curled his lips into a smirk, leaving no trace of his usual sobriety. "Well, my hand is occupied."

As he spoke, he even unabashedly picked up the document that he just put aside, raising his brow at me.

I pursed my lips, rendered speechless. Meanwhile, Rachel could take it no more. She rose to her feet and took leave of Ashton, "Mr. Fuller, I'll leave the document to you. There's something I need to take care of, and I'll be going now."

Although disappointed, the young lady managed to put up a good front as she left the yard.

Gazing at Ashton, I was utterly speechless. This man must have done it on purpose!

Sometimes, I couldn't help feeling impressed by Rachel's high tolerance. Since she stepped foot in the villa, the young lady had been plastering a smile despite receiving such humiliation from Ashton.

I didn't know a woman could put up with such humiliation just because she loved a man.

Having lost my appetite, I put down my fork. Gazing at Ashton, I spoke up, "Mr. Fuller, if you don't like her, you should tell her frankly instead of humiliating her. Can't you show some gentlemanly behavior?"

"Well, I'm not a gentleman anyway." Fixing his eyes at me, he uttered, "Besides, I'm married. As a woman, she should stay away from a married man. I don't need to teach her that, do I?"

I pursed my lips, feeling unsettled under his stare. Still, I reminded him, "We're divorced, and you're single now. It's normal for Rachel to like an eligible bachelor like you. You can't blame her for that."

The man sneered, "If I'm eligible, then why did you divorce me?"

Knowing that I couldn't argue with him, I stood up and then gave him a put-off, "Well, you're eligible, but that doesn't mean we're suitable together."

The man, too, rose to his feet. "What do you mean by that? Then who's suitable for you?" he asked, looking at me indifferently.

I thought he was only trying to mess with me, so I decided to end the conversation. "Since Ms. Zimmer has left, I suppose there's nothing much to discuss today. I'm leaving now."

Just then, he grabbed hold of my wrist and stopped me from leaving. I pursed my lips, feeling on edge. Still, I put on a brave front, asking calmly, "Mr. Fuller, what are you trying to do?"

Ashton raised his brow. "I'm the one who took care of you in the hospital after you fell into the pit in Lavelian Village."

As he spoke, he leaned closer to me. "Even if I'm a stranger, don't you think you owe me a thank you for saving you and taking care of you?"

I tensed up at his overbearing aura and said meekly, "Thank you."

The man let out a chuckle. "I saved your life! And you're going to repay my kindness with just a simple thank you?"

"Then how do you want me to thank you?" I knew he was up to no good, yet I couldn't possibly be an ungrateful person. After all, I really owed him big time.

The next moment, I had my back against the wall as the man loomed over me. "If you really want to thank me, move here and take care of my daily meals starting from tomorrow onwards," he said in a deep voice.

With my brows knotted, I rejected without a second thought, "Ashton Fuller, I take care of Armond's daily meal because that's my job. He pays me a salary for that."

Hearing that, he raised his brow. "I can pay you as well."

"That won't do!" Every part of the villa would remind me of the past with him. I was afraid that I might lose my heart to him again.

The man sneered, "I've saved you! Aren't you grateful at all? You said you wanted to thank me, but you can't even agree to my small request?"

Pursing my lips, I avoided his eyes. Soon, I came up with an excuse, "Well, I've already agreed to Armond's request. Besides, I'm now the Murphy Corporation's employee..."

Just then, Ashton interrupted me. "You should go now."

He then let go of my hand, his eyes dimmed with disappointment. "Go. I can't force you if you don't want to. I won't degrade myself to that extent."

Upon noticing the disappointment in his eyes, my heart dropped. At that moment, I was stumped.

After some time, I relented, "I'm not free in the afternoon and night, but I'll come in the morning."

With that, I left the yard and then headed back to Armond's villa.

Since there was no one in the yard, I supposed the two were back in the house.

As soon as I entered the living room, I called out, "Nora, you..."

I trailed off upon seeing Nora and Armond kissing passionately on the couch.

If I didn't barge in, the two would've already hit the second base.

Hearing my voice, Nora instantly pushed Armond off her, her face turned as red as an apple. As for Armond, the man stroked the bridge of his nose while excusing himself, "I'll head to the office now. I'll leave you guys alone."

I could sense awkwardness in the air. Soon, Armond left the villa. Feeling embarrassed, Nora dared not to look at me as she cleared her throat and explained, "Sorry about that. We should find another place."

Chapter 752

I took a seat next to her and teased, "Well, I understand. When the two of you are madly in love, it's hard to suppress the impulse."

With her face flushed, she gauchely changed the topic, "Where were you and Ashton just now?"

"Next door."

Nora nodded. As the conversation went along, the awkwardness slowly dispersed. "I heard you calling me just now. Is there anything else?" she asked.

I shook my head. "No."

Nora muttered a response. Once again, an awkward silence ensued.

I supposed the shy Nora needed some time alone, so I stood up and excused myself, “Um... I’ll go upstairs and go through the documents.”

In the room, I read the documents for a while, absent-minded. I couldn’t seem to focus with my mind constantly wandering off.

Frustrated, I tossed the documents aside and walked to the balcony to take a break.

The balcony next door was only a wall’s distance away. Ashton was reading on the balcony while enjoying his leisure time.

Upon seeing him, in an instinct, I wanted to get back into my room. Yet, before I could do anything, the man suddenly looked up at me. He then put his book aside while casually gazing at me.

Having no choice, I forced a smile and greeted, “Hi, Mr. Fuller. What a coincidence!”

The man’s gaze darkened. “We live next door. It’s not a coincidence.”

Ugh! This man is really a conversation killer!

With a perfunctory smile, I said, “Well, I’ll leave you then. I’m going back to my room.”

“Do you think you can hide from me forever?” he asked in a deep voice.

I pursed my lips, feeling a little awkward. I then turned around to face him and denied, “You’re thinking too much. I’m not hiding from you, and I really have something to do.”

“We need someone to be in charge of most of the projects of Lavelian Village. Also, the Fuller Corporation’s project will kick off tomorrow. I’m afraid it will be a mess since Linda doesn’t know much about the details of the project.”

I was confused at his words. “But Linda has always been in charge of the projects. I think she does better than me when it comes to paying attention to the details. Mr. Fuller, there is no need to worry.”

With a faint smile, Ashton cast his eyes over at the pots of plants on the balcony. “Well, she might know a lot of the flaws of the Murphy Corporation. Yet, she’s too familiar with the company, and that’s the very reason that she might unconsciously overlook them.”

I mulled over his words. After a while, I reassured him, “I’ll go to the Lavelian Village tomorrow. Mr. Fuller, don’t you worry. Since we have taken over this project, we’ll do our best to make sure everything is perfect.”

The man’s gaze was deep with unfathomable emotion.

I once again reminded myself to stay away from him, or I would lose myself to him again.

The next day, I received a call from Linda. She was gabbling in a panic over the phone, “Scarlett, are you feeling better today? Could you please come to the Lavelian Village?”

I was slightly bewildered, and I had a bad feeling about it. “Sure. But what’s wrong?”

“As you know, we are going to build an AI technology museum in the base. Since the museum is still under construction, we temporarily stored those AI devices and instruments that we got from Fuller Corporation in the Science and Technology

Research Base. Mr. Murphy has even instructed the security guards to guard them. Unfortunately, we found out that someone sneaked into the base last night. Some of the AI instruments were stolen. The policemen are still investigating it. Anyway, I've contacted Mr. Fuller, and he will send someone to help verify the stolen instruments."

Linda was on the verge of crying. "I have checked on those AI instruments before I left yesterday, and I even reminded the security guards to keep an eye on them. I never thought something like this could happen."

There was no use crying over spilled milk. Thus, I instructed, "Don't panic, Linda. The base is equipped with surveillance cameras. I need you to get the policemen to check the surveillance cameras. Everything will be fine. We will find those instruments back."

After a short pause, I added, "I'll be there soon. Stay calm and assist the policemen with their investigation. We need to minimize the loss of the company."

As soon as I hung up the phone, I grabbed my purse and rushed out of the villa.

Meanwhile, Joseph came out of the villa next door, carrying some documents, with panic written all over his face. When the young man saw me, he was slightly relieved. "Mrs. Fuller, are you going to the Lavelian Village? Why don't we give you a ride? It's hard to hail a cab here."

Just then, Ashton walked out of the villa in his black suit. He cast me an indifferent glance before getting into the car.

Joseph was right; It would be difficult to hail a cab around the villa neighborhood, let alone a cab that could take me to Lavelian Village. Thus, I'd better go with them. "Alright then. Thank you."

I opened the door of the passenger seat to find that it was occupied with boxes of documents. Joseph said awkwardly, "Mrs. Fuller, you'll need to sit in the back seat. There are too many documents coming in over the past few days, and the boot is packed."

I nodded. Although it would be awkward, I had no choice but to sit in the back seat with Ashton.

Soon the car drove off. Joseph struck up a conversation with me, "Mrs. Fuller, have you heard about what happened in Lavelian Village?"

I nodded and replied, "Yes. Linda called just now. It's Murphy Corporation's mistake and negligence. We're very sorry for what happened."

Since the stolen instruments concerned the Fuller Corporation's artificial intelligence high-tech research, I asked, "Is Ms. Zimmer going to Lavelian Village as well?"

Chapter 753

Joseph answered in the affirmative, "Yes. Since she is the director of the development team, she will need to verify the lost instruments. Rachel and the team have spent two years doing the research, and those instruments for the exhibition are their successful inventions. It is a pity that some of them are stolen."

I fell into silence. We could only have a clearer picture of the losses suffered when we arrive at the base.

Rachel was already there by the time we arrived. An air of despondency surrounded her as she looked at the damaged instruments.

Meanwhile, Armond was speaking with a policeman. Upon Ashton's arrival, he went over to him and apologized, "I'm sorry for the losses suffered by Fuller Corporation. We will get to the bottom of this incident and give you an explanation for this."

Hearing that, Ashton nodded. He cast his eyes over the crime scene before asking, "Have you verified the lost items?"

"Mm-hmm," Armond uttered a response. "Ms. Zimmer is currently verifying them."

Just then, Linda trotted toward us. Steeped in guilt, she apologized, "I'm sorry. This is all my fault. Actually, there are twelve security guards responsible for looking after the AI instruments. I came here last night and decided to stay a little longer since I found the AI instruments interesting, so I asked them to leave for their dinner. The head of the security guards has reminded me to lock the door when I leave, but I forgot about it."

There was a total of four lines of defence to access the technology museum. Apart from the main door, the remaining three doors were all equipped with password locks and infrared sensors. Linda turned off the infrared sensors yesterday before she entered the museum. Since prolonged infrared exposure was harmful to the human body, they would usually turn the sensors off when there were visitors. Even without the infrared sensors, the security was tight as there would always be security guards on guard.

Unfortunately, the instruments were stolen at night, so the thief had more than enough time to bring those instruments out of the museum.

Just then, Rachel stomped out of the base, her face purple with rage. “Do you know how much money and effort it costs us to invent the instruments? I have worked days and nights for this project. Your apology means nothing!”

Seething in anger, she turned to face Armond. “Mr. Murphy, you must give us an explanation for this and hold the negligent employees accountable. I hope you won’t cover up for any of your employees. Please do not disappoint us.”

Armond nodded firmly. “Ms. Zimmer, I will investigate this incident thoroughly and give the Fuller Corporation an explanation.”

Then, Rachel shifted her fiery gaze to me. “Ms. Stovall, you are the person in charge of this project. Such a disaster has happened. Aren’t you going to say or do anything about it?”

Hearing that, I couldn’t help furrowing my brows. I knew Rachel had always disliked me. Yet, it was understandable that she was now in a bad mood after losing those inventions.

Thus, I softened my voice while reassuring her, “Don’t worry, Ms. Zimmer. I will take responsibility, and I’m willing to receive any penalties from the company, but that’s not the important thing now. What we need to do is to try to minimize the losses.”

“Minimize the losses?” Rachel snorted, “Almost all instruments are damaged, and they are unusable. The project is officially launched, and the inauguration is scheduled a month from now. What are we going to show in the museum? How are the visitors going to think of the Fuller Corporation?”

Just then, Linda spoke up, “We all know about the consequences. Ms. Zimmer, you’re too caught up with your emotions. Losing your temper won’t help solve the problem; it

will only make the matter worse. Fuller Corporation is not the only one that suffered losses, but Murphy Corporation as well. We are in the same boat, and you're not the only one who is worried about the project."

Rachel let out a snicker. "The two companies are now paying the prices for your negligence. How could you still behave in such a brazen manner? I am truly impressed by your brazenness. The Murphy Corporation is indeed full of talented people."

Linda was already eaten up by guilt for what happened. Hearing Rachel's sarcastic and spiteful remarks, her face turned as pale as a ghost.

"Ms. Zimmer, there is no need for you to keep rubbing salt in her wound. No one wanted this to happen. Linda has admitted her mistake, so why do you keep picking on her? Should she kill herself to show how remorseful she is? Is that what you wanted?"

"You..." Rachel was at a loss for words, glowering at me.

Ashton called out, "That's enough!" Facing Rachel, he asked, "Have you calculated the losses?"

Rachel nodded. "Yes."

"I need a detailed list of the losses. Also, get K City's AI Department to produce the next batch of templates. Get someone to communicate with the press not to publish anything about yesterday's incident. Make sure to keep everything that happened in the base confidential. We'll stick to our original plan." Then, he turned to face Joseph and instructed, "You'll need to communicate with the Murphy Corporation's Finance Department with regards to the exact number of losses."

Joseph complied as he took the documents from Rachel and entered the base.

Just then, Armond said to me, "You will have to stay here and liaise with Mr. Fuller."

Then, he shifted his gaze to Linda. "Be more careful when you're handling the project. I don't want this to happen again."

Chapter 754

Both Linda and I nodded compliantly. As Armond and Ashton were busy discussing the countermeasures, we decided to go and have a look at the base.

"The company has suffered up to hundreds of millions of losses. I can't imagine how much I am going to pay for compensation," Linda spoke as we made our way to the base.

A negligent employee would have to bear a part of the losses caused by his or her negligence. According to the law, Linda would be assuming thirty percent of the losses while I, the project manager, would bear twenty percent. As for the remaining fifty percent of losses, that would be the company's responsibility.

Regardless, anyone who lacked a strong heart would've broken down in the face of such great losses.

I let out a sigh. "Let's check the base out. Perhaps the policemen can find the culprit soon and trace all those stolen AI instruments."

“I hope so,” she muttered and then heaved a sigh of despondency.

Everyone busied themselves in the base until late at night. None of us had the time to take a break. When the losses assessment was completed, all of us gathered in the hotel’s conference room to have a meeting.

Joseph handed each of us a document before he spoke, “This is the total amount of losses. Please have a look at it.”

Linda quickly flipped open the document. She drew a sharp breath the moment her eyes met the figure. “Three hundred million?!” she cried out.

Joseph cast a glance at her and nodded. “Most of the stolen instruments are related to the company’s core technologies. We can’t rule out the possibility that our rival company is the one behind this incident. Hence, we need to include the possible risks as part of the losses. If any party lays their hands on Fuller Corporation’s core technology, they might patent our invention.”

Rachel added, “That means to say that all of our efforts over the past two years will go to waste. Ms. Linda, as a mere employee, it’s normal that you have no idea how important our core technology is. Well, I guess now you’ll know since you need to pay millions of compensations.” Her words oozed with sarcasm.

Hearing that, Linda’s face turned ashen. After finished reading the document, Armond uttered, “Since the losses have been ascertained, I’ll inform my lawyer as soon as possible so that we can get this over with.”

“Mr. Murphy, you’re very decisive, unlike your employees.” Rachel cast her eyes at me as she spoke.

It was not the time to bother about Rachel’s sarcastic remark. After the meeting, I went after Ashton as he left the room.

Yet, when I walked past Rachel, I almost tripped over her foot and fell.

Fortunately, as I lurched at Ashton, I grabbed hold of his shirt and steadied myself.

After I regained balance, I hurriedly apologized to him.

The man’s eyes darkened as he glanced coldly at Rachel. Being caught in the act, the latter lowered her head and soon left.

Soon after, Ashton asked, “Is there anything else?”

“Do you have time? We need to talk,” I said while still catching my breath.

“Sure.” With that, Ashton turned and left the conference room.

I followed suit. When there was no one around, I spoke up, “The incident is still under investigation, and the policemen are still trying to trace the lost AI instruments. Could we only talk about the compensation after the investigation comes to an end?”

I couldn’t see Ashton’s expression. The man continued walking forward while not giving me any response.

Abruptly, he came to a halt, causing me to bump into his back and hurting my nose.

He turned around, his brows knotted. "Are you trying to seduce me?"

What's wrong with him? I couldn't understand how this man's mind worked.

I backed off to maintain a safe distance between us. Disregarding his bizarre remark, I said seriously, "Ashton, give my words some thought. We can deal with this matter fairly."

He didn't say anything but took out his room card from his pocket. That was when I realized that I had followed him to his room.

He opened the door and entered the room while not bothering to answer me.

Without a second thought, I followed suit and closed the door behind me.

Gazing at him, I continued by saying, "I know our negligence has caused Fuller Corporation to suffer great losses... Arghh-"

I never thought he would take off his shirt after removing his suit. The man was now half-naked, showing his rock-hard abs.

My face flushed a scarlet, and my heart fluttered. I turned my back at him and grumbled, "Ashton Fuller, why did you take off your shirt?"

“To take my shower and then go to bed,” was his reply.

I pursed my lips. The next moment, the sound of the man unbuckling and removing his belt rang out. Uncontrollably, my mind ran wild, and I could feel my cheeks burning. “Ashton Fuller, are you a flasher? How could you take off your clothes whenever you want, especially in front of a lady? You...”

“This is my room. Why can’t I take off my clothes?” he retorted, his voice deep and low. “Do you have anything else to say? If not, you should leave because I’d like to rest now.”

Still having my back at him, I continued to persuade him, “Ashton, about what I said just now, please give it some consideration. The police are still investigating the incident. It is unfair for the Murphy Corporation to pay the compensation if, in the end, the police manage to find the lost instruments.”

I waited for a while, yet I heard nothing but silence.

Chapter 755

As I turned around, my eyes widened the moment they met Ashton’s naked body. The man was now wearing nothing but a black boxer.

Once again, I turned my back at him, saying helplessly, “Mr. Fuller, could you wear your clothes and put your shower off for later?”

“It seems like you’re unhappy with the outcome of our meeting just now. Well, if you’re here talking to me as the secretary of the Murphy Corporation’s president, I can tell you

that your words carry no weight. I will only talk directly with Armond. So, Scarlett, are you here talking to me as my wife or Armond's secretary?"

I was at a loss for words. After hesitating for a while, I answered, "As your wife."

Hearing that, the man smiled, his expression softened. "There are clothes for you in the wardrobe. It's late now. Take your shower and have an early night."

Before I could say anything, the man had made his way toward the washroom.

We were all adults; I knew what my answer meant and what would happen that night.

Back in the conference room just now, I saw Linda's terrible expression when Joseph told her of the amount of compensation. Although she earned good money in Murphy Corporation over the past few years, still, she would have to drain her savings and even be indebted to pay the compensation.

As for me, I couldn't even pay a million, let alone a few million. Besides, I had transferred ownership of the bank card with HiTech's annual revenues to Ashton after he found out that I had lent money to Marcus without his knowledge.

Apart from the properties in J City and R Province, I had no other assets.

Thus, my only way out was to persuade Ashton to change his mind. Since the incident was still under investigation, perhaps things might take a different turn. Besides, my gut feeling told me that this was not an ordinary burglary.

I sat quietly on the couch, zoning out. After some time, I walked toward the wardrobe and opened it to see some branded nightwear inside. Ashton has them prepared beforehand. It is as if he knew I would eventually give in.

Just then, the washroom door opened, and out came Ashton with a towel wrapped around his waist. The man looked singularly sexy under the dim light as water droplets trickled down his torso.

I reacted swiftly in looking away. "I'll go take my shower."

Wiping his hair dry, the man replied nonchalantly, "Okay."

Since we're married for years, we had had intimacy countless times. Yet, this time, it felt different.

Actually, I didn't really feel lowly or pathetic staying for the night. I knew if I wanted to leave, Ashton wouldn't force me to stay.

It was just that this time, it felt like we were not doing it out of love.

When I finished my shower, Ashton had dried his hair and was now leaning against the headboard. He had the silk blanket covering his lower abdomen while exposing his chest.

He cast his indifferent gaze at me. Then, he straightened up and patted the bedside. "Come here."

Pursing my lips, I went to sit on the bed, my heart filled with conflicted emotions. The next moment, the man took the towel from me and helped me wipe my hair dry. “Scarlet, we have a long future ahead of us. Let’s take things slowly.”

I felt complicated hearing that.

After that, none of us said a word as he wiped my hair.

It was a comfortable silence instead of an awkward one.

Soon, Ashton tossed the towel aside and said, “Let’s sleep now.”

Instantly, I tensed up, knowing very well what was going to happen next.

I turned my head to find that the man had lain down on the bed.

After some hesitation, I decided to go all out and climbed onto him. For the first time, although a little clumsy, I took the initiative to kiss him.

Startled, he opened his eyes, looking at me in shock.

Although I was married for many years, I still hadn’t learned how to tease a man.

“Scarlett!” the man called out in a hoarse voice.

“Mm,” I murmured as my lips lingered on his cheeks. The man had just shaved his beard. His stubbles sent a tingling sensation, yet it was tolerable.

“What are you doing?” His voice was hoarse and trembling as he tried to suppress his desire. Even though I was not a good kisser, still, I could easily turn him on.

I didn't bother to answer him. Slowly, I traced my lips down his torso all the way to his groin.

The man groaned.

He furrowed his brows, and the emotions in his dark gaze were inscrutable.

“Don't you like it?” I asked.

Instead of answering me, he asked, “What are we after tonight?”

I was at a loss, unconsciously loosening my grip on his manhood.

Ashton sneered at my abrupt movement. He shoved me aside and then pulled the blanket over his lower abdomen.

“If you're doing this because of the compensation, you don't need to do so,” he said with suppressed emotions.