

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1001

I had almost forgotten about Ann. For a fleeting moment, I looked at Amy, didn't know how to answer her. After a moment's silence, I said, "Amy, maybe Ann didn't come to the city. She's married."

"No. Ann said she wouldn't marry that idiot. So, she will definitely make an effort to escape. Ms. Stovall, will you help me to find Ann?"

Amy sounded very insistent on finding Ann. It seemed like she was sure that the latter would escape from her husband.

Unwilling to strike Amy with the truths, I nodded in response and replied, "Of course. I will get someone to look for her. And, I will bring her here if I find her."

Amy nodded when she heard my words. "Yay! I don't need to worry that Ann will get lost when she comes to the city anymore," said Amy as though she had gotten a load off her mind.

She was so sensible that it made me feel sorry for her. Holding her in my arms, I said, "Amy, we have to go to your hometown to visit your parents. Can you go with me?"

At that, she looked at me with her eyes wide opened and queried, "Ms. Stovall, are you trying to send me back? Am I not good enough?"

I shook my head. "No. You are not registered as a citizen yet. So, I want to bring you back and ask your parents to help in this matter. After you've registered as a citizen, you can have the surgery legally."

Upon hearing that, Amy nodded with a clueless face. The way she looked at me told me that she couldn't understand much of what I had said. At that, I smiled at her while thinking about Hailey.

The next day.

I had told Cameron that I wanted to drive myself to Amy's house, which was located in the countryside, beforehand, and she was worried after knowing that. In the morning, just as I stepped out of my house, I saw Boris standing beside the car in the yard.

He was an old man, but his appearance was well-maintained, so he looked middle-aged. When he saw me, he flashed me a faint smile and said, "Mr. Moore was worried about you. He wanted me to bring you there."

I shrugged. "I should have known this."

Without giving more thought to it, I got into his car with Amy. When he realized I brought many clothes and shoes, he frowned and queried, "Will we be gone long?"

I shook my head. "No. These are the clothes that Ashton bought for me every season. I rarely wear them. When the season changes, he will ask his men to send them to the recycling centres. So, I am thinking of giving them to Amy's mother so that the clothes won't go to waste."

Then, he started up the car and said, "You're so attentive, but that woman doesn't deserve it."

Upon hearing that, I frowned slightly and asked with a tone of disapproval, "Do you think that she is by no means a good person because she is cruel to her daughter?"

He nodded as he took a peek at Amy and replied, "She treats her children so badly. She is not fit to be a mother."

Sighing slightly, I said, "When I was a kid, I lived in an alley in R Province with my Grandma. In the alley, there was a family of four. The man of the house was very hardworking. At that time, people in R Province relied on farming to make a living. Every day, the man left early for work and returned home late. Maybe because he had overstrained himself and his body became weak, one day, he fainted at the lake that supplied water for farming. That lake was not very deep, but he drowned. After his death, his wife left with their son, leaving their daughter at R Province. Back then, I didn't understand why that woman did this. The little girl was more thoughtful than the little boy, but why didn't that woman bring the former along? After that, the little girl lived with her grandmother. Her grandmother was a harsh person. She always beat and scolded the girl and starve her. I had seen her crying under the bridge a few times. My Grandma always asked me to bring her some food. But, that was not a good idea because sometimes, she would still have nothing to eat.

"One day, she borrowed some money from me. I gave her all the money that I had, just the two coins. I thought she wanted to buy something that she really wanted. But, never would I have expected that she had bought pesticide with it. She brought the pesticide to her father's grave, drank it, and lay in front of the grave. I remember that she said this to me back then, 'Some people are born without a choice. Everyone wants to show their best side to others, but to some people, life itself is a struggle. They can't even make the effort to put on a show.'"

Hearing that, Boris remained silent. However, after we got on the highway, he suddenly spoke up, "Your parents didn't stay by your side these years. Did you hate or blame them before?"

I was shocked when I heard his question because I was under the impression that he wasn't a person who liked to ask about people's internal affairs.

Then, I smiled faintly and replied, "It's impossible that I don't hate them at all. But more than the hatred is gratitude. I'm grateful that I was raised by Grandma, and I'm glad that I can marry Ashton. Although our lives are not the best, I am

willing to strive hard to live. For these reasons, I should thank them for giving birth to me. Humans are no saints. I think they abandoned me for a reason. Maybe they faced some difficulties back then. So, I don't blame them anymore."

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Staring at me, he said with remorse, "I am responsible for the incident that happened back then. I shouldn't keep it from Mr. Moore. If he learned of your existence, maybe he would bring you back to the Moore family."

To me, that was all in the past now. Hence, I let out a faint smile and replied, "Boris, there is no such thing as 'if' in this world."

Smiling, he took a quick glance at Amy, who was sleeping on my legs, and said, "This child will have a different life after encountering you."

I shrugged in response and remained silent. It was too early to jump to conclusions now. No one could tell if this was a good or bad thing.

After about eight hours, we arrived at the village. At that time, all of us were exhausted. Although we departed early in the morning, it was late when we reached the destination.

The cold spell hit the village in December, causing a drastic dip in the temperature. Just as I got out of the car, I shivered because the cold wind blew toward me. After a while, Amy woke up and opened her eyes slowly. Looking at the environment that she was familiar with, she said, "Ms. Stovall, we've arrived."

I gave her a nod and grabbed hold of her as we walked toward her house with the bags. Her house was not too far from our car, but the road was not easy to walk. Luckily, there was no rain recently. The soil was dry and hard, so it wasn't that bad.

By the time we reached Ronald's house, the sky was already dark. Hence, I couldn't find the entrance. Looking at the dark house, I was a little worried. It's already nine! Why there's no one here? Where did they go?

Luckily, Amy was familiar with this place. She stood outside the door and called out to her parents. Not long after, someone opened the door slightly. A meek voice was heard coming from the inside, "Amy, is that you?"

After a short pause, Amy replied happily, "Ava, it's me! Ms. Stovall brings me back." At that, she rushed into the house happily.

There was no light in the house. Hence, Boris turned on the torchlight. When he saw a seven-year-old child, he furrowed his brows unwittingly and queried, "Where are your parents?"

Ava held onto Amy's hand and replied, "They work at the farm and haven't come back yet."

At that time, the light from the torch lit up in the house, and I could see a pot of vegetable stew on the cement floor. The dish looked like it had turned cold. Besides, the fire in the coal stove that provided heat to the house was almost extinguished.

I turned to look at Ava, who was trembling from the coldness, and asked, "It's so cold, and you're only wearing so little? Why don't you burn more coal?"

She tugged on Amy's arms and touched the latter's clothes in envy as she replied, "Mom told me not to waste the coal when they are not home. I just need to cover myself with the blanket to keep warm. I will start the fire after they come home."

Hearing that, I was overwhelmed by an inexplicable feeling. I think that doesn't seem appropriate, but I did not say anything else. Then, I asked Boris to take all the food from the car and bring her a heavy jacket. After putting on the jacket for a while, she took off the jacket and kept it.

I was confounded. "Why don't you wear it? The weather is cold. You'll catch a cold if you don't wear a few more layers."

She shook her head and answered, "I want to save it for Christmas. If I have new clothes for Christmas, no one will make fun of me anymore this year."

At that, Boris stood up and passed her the jacket again, and said in a serious manner, "Just keep it on. Ms. Stovall will give you some new clothes too for Christmas."

Upon hearing that, Ava was excited and put on the jacket as instructed.

About half an hour later, a sound came from outside. Ronald and his wife came back from work. Seeing that, Ava started the fire to heat the dishes up while Amy helped the former to add the firewood.

On the other hand, Boris and I walked out of the house. At the sight of us, Ronald was stunned before he could react. After that, he wore a wide grin and nervous expression on his face and queried, "Ms. Stovall, what makes you come here? Did Amy cause trouble to you? Don't worry. Everything can still be discussed!"

I frowned at what he said. It seemed that to them, the children were always wrong. Looking at him, I said, "Don't think too much. Amy didn't cause any trouble to me. We are here to discuss something with you."

Ronald's wife listened to our conversation as she unloaded the dried grass and radish from the car. The children were helping her too.

Upon hearing my words, she heaved a sigh of relief.

As night had fallen, I didn't tell him the purpose of my visit until the next morning.

The next day, Ronald's wife got up very early.

She brought a huge basket and left the house with her children, saying that she wanted to collect radish at the nearby field.

Ronald knew I had something to discuss with him. So he woke up early too. I said bluntly to him, "It's like this. I knew you haven't register Amy as a citizen. So, I want you to get citizenship for her, and we will pay for the fee. This will definitely bring benefits to you and Amy in the future."

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He was stunned. "Why did you insist on registering Amy as a citizen? Are you planning to use this to threaten me in the future? All the while, the kids who leave our village had never been registered, but their families got paid. I heard if I were to register my child and got forced to sign some agreement, I won't get a cent even if you harm my child! I'm not a fool!" he declared.

I was speechless at how ridiculous his conclusion was. Frowning, I told him in all seriousness, "Don't you worry. I will pay you what you deserve. I want you to register Amy as a citizen for her own future. She's your daughter. You won't want her to stay in the mountains forever, right? Without a proper status, she wouldn't be able to survive out there."

Ronald remained unfazed. "No worries. She will marry someone from the neighboring village. Why would she need to go out there? This is her life, her fate. I won't register her as a citizen. If you disagree, just send her back to us."

I couldn't understand what was going on in his mind. After a brief hesitation, I offered, "If you agree to register Amy's birth, I'll pay you an extra fifty thousand. Your son is in high school, right? I believe you want him to succeed in the future. If he is capable enough, I can offer him a job so he can make your family proud. How does that sound?"

Clearly, my offer caught his attention. He paused before answering. "No. The girls are going to earn money for me. Well..."

"Damn it! I'll teach her a lesson the minute I find her!" someone was cursing outside. Soon, Ronald's wife hurried in frantically. "Frit's family are saying that Ann killed him after a few days! She's missing now. The Wolfsens are coming to our family to demand an explanation!"

Ronald stood up in shock. "Killed him? Who's dead?"

"Who else? Her mentally retarded husband! Hurry, shut the door. They are coming to kick a fuss up!" Ronald's wife locked the door to their house hastily.

Worry spread across Ronald's face. As he sweated profusely, he muttered, "What should we do? She killed him, so they won't forgive us. We've already spent the money. What should we do?"

Seeing how anxious her husband was, tears rolled down the woman's cheeks. "Damn you, Ann Weeder! You're nothing but trouble!"

That piece of news took me by surprise. I thought Ann would give in instead of killing her husband and escaping from that household. Looks like I've underestimated her determination.

As a commotion sounded outside, the villagers gathered around Ronald's house brandishing weapons such as sticks and knives. They yelled, "Ronald Weeder, your daughter killed my son! Come out now! I want my son back! If you don't come out, I'll burn your house down!"

The deceased's parents and the rest started hurling curses at Ronald. As they criticized Ronald's doings, I pieced together bits and pieces of accusations I had overheard.

The deceased's name was Fritz Wolfsen. He was born with an intellectual disability, so he had a low IQ as an adult. As he was in his thirties without a wife, his parents collected and borrowed around one hundred thousand to buy him a wife from the neighboring village—Ann Weeder. The reason they were willing to spend that much on her was so she could give birth to Fritz's offspring, but to their dismay, she kicked up a fuss and even accidentally killed Fritz. Immediately, they hurried to Ann's family to demand an explanation.

Ronald was scared out of his wits. He sat in the chair and bit his filthy fingernails nervously.

Meanwhile, his wife urged, "What should we do? Huh? We've spent all the money they gave us, so there's no way we can pay them back now. That b*tch just spells trouble!"

Ronald had spent a few hundred thousand so his son could go to school in the city.

No wonder he rejected my fifty thousand earlier as it was too little for him. Initially, I wondered why he was so frugal after selling his daughter. It was because he had spent all the money on his son.

I didn't see his son even though I had been here twice. Clearly, he had sent his son away before I even got here. I could understand why, though. Every parent wished only the best for their children. They hoped their children would lead a different life from theirs.

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As the yells grew increasingly impatient outside, Ronald trembled in fear while holding his hands together.

"What should we do? Are they really going to burn our house down?" his wife inquired uneasily.

Ronald was at a loss now. His gaze landed on me as he implored, "Ms. Stovall, please help us!"

I pursed my lips instead of replying at once. Seeing how jumpy he was, I parted my lips and spoke. "I can help you with one condition. Register your kids as citizens of the country. If you agree, I can pay the money at once."

Upon hearing my words, he hesitated. His terrified wife took my arm anxiously, but Boris pried her hand off and furrowed his brows. She staggered back in fear before pleading, "Please, Ms. Stovall. You're our only hope. We have no other choices. Please help us!"

Boris's lips thinned as he shot them a warning glare. "I believe Ms. Stovall has made herself clear. Nothing is free in this world."

Ronald pondered for a while before saying, "Ms. Stovall, we're from different worlds. You might think I'm exploiting my children and destroying their future, but this is their fate for they are born here. No one can change that fact. I can register Amy as a citizen, no problem. But I won't agree to register my other kids' birth. You need to give me your word that you'll pay me in full for Amy after I registered her birth. After that, you can do anything you want. I won't ask questions."

I frowned upon hearing Ronald's answer. Suddenly, it occurred to me that he wasn't as stupid as I thought he was. He seemed like a foolish but greedy man, but actually, he had his own plans. He was playing the innocent card. If it got leaked out, he would be portrayed as a farmer who got tricked by a businessperson. Everyone would pity him.

Ah, I shouldn't have underestimated him. I flashed a slight smile. "Why are you so confident that I would agree to your condition?"

After calming down, he explained, "Rich people like you don't like trouble, so you will agree. A few hundred thousand is nothing for you. People like you are willing to spend money to solve the matter. Even if you refuse to pay, never mind. Mr. Dumphy doesn't know about you coming here to ask me to register Amy's birth, right? If I inform him about your arrival, your daughter's operation might be delayed further. I believe you know it better than I do."

Ha!

I chuckled. He's right. I shouldn't have thought he was a fool. Shrugging, I replied, "Well, looks like you have the perfect plan."

He stared at me. "Ms. Stovall, that's all I have to say. We know what we both want, so we should be honest with each other."

Ronald was right. Alas, he didn't know I hated being strung along. Immediately, I responded, "You're wrong. Yes, Amy's bone marrow is a match for my daughter, but she's not the only choice I have. I can afford to wait for another suitable donor to come along. Your situation is different, though. Trouble is already knocking at your door. If you said nothing and accepted my offer, I wouldn't have said anything. But since you mentioned it, I don't feel like going along with your plan. I'm not the one in hot water, anyway."

The people outside were trying to break in by now. The wooden door, which was originally flimsy, fell to the ground after a few burly men threw themselves against it. The villagers outside promptly rushed in with their weapons.

Ronald's wife almost fell to her knees as she pleaded, "Ms. Stovall, please save us. We have no other choice. If you agree to help us, we will agree to your condition. Please!"

I pursed my lips as I couldn't help but sympathize with her. Boris stopped me and stood in front of me in a protective stance. "She can't help you. Yes, we can afford the money, but your daughter had murdered someone. It's useless to ask for her help."

Realization dawned on me when I heard what Boris said. Ann had killed someone, indeed. If it was something else, I could help them with the compensation. However, someone had died here.

Earlier, Ronald's words caused me to focus on the money instead of the matter itself. Fritz's death couldn't be settled by offering compensation.

The Wolfsens wouldn't give up easily as their son was dead.

I heaved a sigh of relief. If Boris hadn't mentioned it, I would've forgotten about Fritz's death.

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Ronald's expression was grim. "Ms. Stovall, I agree to register my children's birth. I will agree to any condition you state."

With a frown, Boris replied before I could. "No need!"

As we were talking, the crowd scurried into the house. Boris pulled me aside and stood in front of me protectively. As the house was tiny, only a few men stormed in.

"Ronald Weeder, why are you hiding? Your daughter killed someone. Hand her to us before we take action!"

"Let's not waste time. Find that b*tch now so she'll pay for killing Fritz!" With that, the men started ransacking the house.

Soon, the house was in shambles. The farmers couldn't find Ann, so they changed their target to Ronald instead. As Ronald's house was too small, they brought him out.

Immediately, the crowd surrounded Ronald's family and began abusing them verbally. Fritz's mother would've given Ronald a beating if someone hadn't stopped her.

The loud commotion caused the crowd to grow bigger and bigger. Some tried to persuade the Wolfsens to discuss instead of resorting to violence; some supported their decision to avenge their son's death. It was utter chaos. Ronald and his family were slumped on the ground in dejection.

Life was never perfect, but this hurricane rendered me helpless. Ronald knew there was nothing else he could do to turn the situation around, so he said nothing and allowed the crowd to curse and hit him.

Suddenly, someone grabbed my arm. I looked down and realized it was Amy staring at me pitifully.

"Please, Ms. Stovall. Save my parents," she begged.

I knitted my brows. "Amy, I can't."

Kindness was rare nowadays as most people had ulterior motives for doing something. I wasn't far off. Hearing my answer, Boris sighed in relief and said, "You can't interfere. Remember, you're still pregnant. Don't get yourself into trouble."

I knew that well, hence I rejected her without hesitation.

After venting out their anger, the Wolfsens stopped beating the Weeders up. They sat down and demanded arrogantly, "A life for a life. Ronald Weeder, your daughter isn't here, so you should pay us back. We don't need the money back. In return, give me your second daughter."

Ronald's eyes widened as he roared, "Kurt Wolfsen, how dare you?"

Kurt scoffed. "Your daughter killed my son and escaped. I'm being nice cos I didn't kill your entire family to avenge my son. Why would you think I don't have the guts to do so?"

Ronald's wife hurriedly implored, "Kurt, please spare us. You can have my daughters if you want. My husband will find Ann for you so you can avenge your son. Don't hurt him, please."

My brows furrowed up as I could neither understand nor accept the woman's peace offering.

Kurt seemed pleased at her words. "Your second daughter is fourteen, right? My son's dead, so she shall give birth to my children. Find that b*tch for me. Otherwise, I swear I'll kill you, Ronald Weeder."

With that, he stood up and gazed at the girl protecting her siblings. "You're Alma, right? Your parents gave you to me. Come, follow me home and bear me a son."

The girl, who was still a teenager, blanched as she shook her head profusely. She didn't have a clue what was going on, but her instincts told her a more horrible fate would await her at the Wolfsen household.

Alas, Kurt ignored her wishes and dragged her away by the hair. Immediately, she bawled and cried for her parents to save her.

At the sight, my frown deepened. Clearly, they couldn't be bothered about their children.

"Wait a minute!" It was Boris. He looked straight at Kurt and inquired, "How much did you pay them?"

Kurt Wolfsen was a plump and lecherous man in his forties. He eyed Boris suspiciously before answering, "One hundred thousand. What's wrong? Did you take a liking to this girl, too?"

Boris' lips pressed together in disgust. "I'll pay the money. Release her!"

Suddenly, Kurt guffawed before his face contorted. "Oh, you're trying to be the hero here. Mister, my son died. I want this girl so she can pass on my family name. Are you trying to take her away from me? If you took a liking to her, you can have her. But Ronald has other daughters. Do you think you can save them all?"

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This was a tricky matter. Kurt was right. If Boris insisted on saving Alma, Kurt could get another daughter from Ronald. After all, it was Ann who got his son killed.

Boris' frown deepened. He was smarter than me, so he knew he should stay out of this.

I grew frustrated. "You can take her away, no problem. I'll call the cops right now. Ann Weeder killed your son, so the cops will arrest her. But if you take any of the girls away or kill someone here, the cops will arrest you, too. We're not here to interfere in your business, but we can still call the cops."

At once, a murmur erupted in the crowd. Many of the villagers didn't register themselves at birth and were without birth certificates. If the cops were to come, many of them would be forced to register themselves and pay a fine.

Kurt sneered. "Sure, go ahead. I'm not scared of you. I'm the one on the suffering end, anyway."

My threat failed to scare the shameless man. Perhaps he thought I wouldn't dare to call the cops.

I stared at Ronald, who huffed, "You're a bully! Ms. Stovall, call the cops. I'll admit to everything."

His reaction took me by surprise. I didn't know he would come to his senses that quickly. Whipping out my phone, I announced, "Indeed. We shall leave this to the cops."

If the cops were to deal with this, neither side would have the upper hand. Both Kurt and Ronald knew that well. They were considering their own benefits.

Indeed, before the call got through, Kurt spoke. "Well, what do you want? This has nothing to do with you, so I want you to stay out of this."

I smiled and nodded. "Don't worry. I too want to stay out of this. However, just like you, I wish to settle this matter ASAP."

Kurt pursed his lips silently and waited to see what I would say next.

After a brief silence, I continued, "It's illegal to take any of the girls with you as they are underaged and protected by the law."

Kurt narrowed his eyes. "My son's dead, and I spent the money without getting anything in return. Are you asking me to do nothing? Do you think I'm a fool? Or are you too innocent?"

Instead of refuting his words, I offered, "Of course not. If you trust me, why don't you listen to my suggestion?"

"Sure, go ahead." He nodded.

"Death cannot be reversed. Your son's dead, and we cannot bring him back to life. The culprit who killed your son should be punished, but as you said, Ann had escaped. Now, we should sit down and come out with a solution in peace. I think the Weeders should give you back the one hundred thousand you paid them. That's the least they should do."

Kurt scoffed. "I'm not in need of money."

I flashed a grin and added, "That has nothing to do with whether or not you need money. About your son's death, I am in the opinion that you should hand all evidence to the cops so they can arrest the culprit. The Weeders can only offer monetary compensation."

With an ugly scowl, he retorted, "Money? How much can Ronald compensate me? My heir is dead! How should he compensate me? By giving me his son?"

Ronald hung his head low and dared not utter a word. Instead, it was his wife who offered, "If you wish, you can have my daughter. She can bear your son. You're only in your forties, Kurt. My daughter might be able to give birth to your son soon. What do you think?"

I got the shock of my life. After what I said, the woman still hadn't changed her mind about giving her daughter away. It didn't cross my mind that she would willingly let her daughter bear a middle-aged man's child.

Ronald said nothing and appeared to agree silently.

Meanwhile, Kurt glanced at the woman, who had remained silent the whole time by his side. She was glowering at Ronald's wife viciously.

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Suddenly, I realized why Kurt hesitated to take the girl away earlier though he clearly wanted her. He calmed down and listened to me because he was afraid of his wife.

Silence ensued. I thought the woman would disagree, but she uttered, "Sure. My son's dead, so your daughter shall bear Kurt's child. If she gives birth to a son, she shall be free. Otherwise, she needs to stay in our house until she gives birth to a son."

Ronald's wife nodded profusely and offered a smile. "No problem. She can bear children and satisfy your needs."

Her words nearly drove me crazy. I was about to speak when Boris took my hand and stopped me in time. He whispered in my ear, "You can't do anything. The ending will still be the same. The Weeders won't return the money."

Stunned, I glanced at Alma's pale expression as a sense of hopelessness washed over me. No matter what I do, nothing would change their fates.

Seeing my reaction, Ronald's wife offered me a polite smile. "Ms. Stovall, thank you for your concern. This is our family's business, so we won't trouble you."

Huh, how rude.

Indeed, I should stay out of their affairs.

In the end, Kurt led a devastated Alma away. Peace was restored in Ronald's household.

I didn't know what to say by then.

"Ms. Stovall, thank you for your help. We can register Amy's birth later, but you need to pay me a hundred thousand first for that. It isn't easy to bring her up. Also, since she's going to extract her bone marrow, her health would be affected, especially her kidney. There are many things she can't touch. She will have difficulties getting around, too. In fact, she'll be useless. For this, I want an extra five hundred thousand. This isn't expensive, and I believe you can afford it," Ronald declared. "Hopefully you can give me the money after I register Amy as a citizen today. Everything you do after this has nothing to do with me."

I fell silent at his selfish statement. I knew he was right in doing so, but that only heightened my distaste for his selfishness.

After a long pause, I replied, "I'll pay you one million to adopt Amy. We shall deal with the adoption process, and Amy will be my daughter. She has nothing to do with you from now on. No matter what she becomes in the future, you aren't allowed to bother her, get it?"

Ronald was taken aback by my request. He let out a sudden laugh. "Sure, no problem. I didn't expect she would be worth this much." He repeated, "Sure, of course. Let's go now."

I thought he would at least hesitate, but contrary to my expectation, he seemed delighted. My gaze landed on Amy. She was still a kid, but she had seen the entire exchange with her sisters. The scar would remain in their hearts forever.

Next, Ronald followed us to the town and dealt with the necessary procedures. "Ms. Stovall, the money," he reminded me once we were done.

I pursed my lips and gestured for Boris to hand him the briefcase full of banknotes. Ronald was clearly excited to see the money and left without looking back.

Amy was standing right beside me as she watched Ronald leaving with his wife on his motorcycle. They didn't even bother saying goodbye to their daughter.

I took her hand and bent down to wipe her tears away. "Amy, you shall stay with us from now on. Is that alright?"

She gazed at me and nodded with a hint of maturity in her expression. "Okay!"

She fell silent after that.

I brought her to my car, and Boris started the engine. Throughout the entire journey, Amy didn't crane her neck to stare at the scenery in wonderment like she used to do. Instead, she sat quietly without showing any emotion.

I parted my lips to comfort her, but the words died in my throat.

Hence, I stayed silent.

After some time, I noticed we hadn't entered the highway yet. Feeling doubtful, I queried, "Boris, did you take the wrong route?"

In response, he glanced at the rearview mirror and explained, "Ms. Stovall, someone seems to be tailing us."

With a frown, I turned at my shoulder and noticed a grey van behind our vehicle. Surprised, I asked, "How long has the van been tailing us?"

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"Since we left the village. I thought it was a coincidence, but they are still behind us even though I took a longer route," revealed Boris.

"Could it be Ronald's family?" I asked though it wasn't likely. Ronald wasn't someone who'd do this.

Boris shook his head. "I don't think so."

After a pause, he sought my approval. "Should I lose them?"

Shaking my head, I replied, "No need. Let's just take the normal route home and see how long they will follow us."

Amy remained silent on the way home. I texted Cameron to ask about Summer's condition. Her reply stated that Summer was fine after undergoing chemotherapy. As Summer was then sent to the disinfection chamber, Cameron could no longer take care of her.

I wanted to call Ashton, but I was feeling nauseous from the long car ride. Hence, I gave up on the thought.

Finally, we arrived in A City at midnight. Boris brought a sleeping Amy to her bed and left some instructions before leaving.

I walked him to the door, where he glanced around carefully and reminded me. "If anything happens tonight, give me a call at once."

Clearly, he was referring to the van which tailed us back then. I nodded and watched as he left. After making sure all the doors were locked, I went to Amy's room and made sure she was still sound asleep.

Back in my room, I was about to call Ashton when a call came in. It was from Ashton. When I answered the call, his voice rang out. "What happened? Why were you unreachable the whole day?"

"Boris and I went to Amy's hometown. The line was bad there, and I've just reached home. What about you?" I explained as I made my way to the balcony.

"Mm, it's a little tricky. Nothing serious, though. Joseph is in A City. You can contact him if any problem arises. I'll be back as soon as I'm done."

I glanced out of the window before closing it. "I've adopted Amy legally. Ashton, I still want Summer to get that surgery in the open."

Ashton fell silent at the other end of the line. I thought he was mad at me, but he spoke. "Scarlett, have you ever thought about this? What is the difference between you, the child's parents, and Armond?"

We were the same. Amy's parents and Armond were after money, while I had my own goals.

I tried to convince him. "I adopted Amy, so she'll be treated as my own. Her future will be different now. Just like Summer, she will have both the Moore family and Fuller family behind her. She will have a better future with us."

His reply took me by surprise. "Mm, sounds great."

I was startled, but he immediately added, "But did you ask the child what she wants?"

Knitting my brows, I felt rage bubbling up inside me. "Ashton, Summer isn't your flesh and blood, so it's normal for you to disregard her. I know you think I shouldn't hurt an innocent child, but sorry. I'm a selfish person. I brought Summer up, so I can't bear to see her in pain. I need to do this."

After a long silence, he sighed and replied, "Scarlett, Summer has always been my daughter. I too want to save her life, but we need to make sure how our decision will affect the future."

He might be right, but I could only place my hope on Amy for now.

Ashton was against the idea of Amy donating her bone marrow, so we were at odds.

The next day, I woke up from a restful slumber.

My pregnancy probably made me sleepy. When I opened my eyes, I could hear someone talking in the yard.

After I pulled the blinds open, I spotted Amy in her pajamas, her hair uncombed. She was talking to Nora, which was outside the door. I hadn't seen Nora for some time.

I was confused to see her. Shouldn't she be in K City with Armond now? Why is she back here? I greeted her through the windows before changing my clothes to go downstairs.

The door could only be unlocked using my fingerprint, so Nora couldn't come in. She only walked in after I unlocked the door, her hands full of breakfast and fruits.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1009

She was rowdy as usual. "Why did you keep putting your phone in silent mode? I've been calling you the whole morning. How are you recently? Do you feel exhausted? You only woke up after ten."

I glanced at my phone in shock. Indeed, it was already half-past ten. "Have you been here for a long time?"

She nodded. "I've waited for a long time. If I hadn't called Ashton who told me you are still living here, I would've thought you moved away. By the way, who is this girl?"

She walked toward the villa and asked about Amy. I helped her with her stuff and answered, "She's Amy, my adopted daughter. I haven't given her a proper name as of now." I asked her, "I thought you went to K City? Why are you back here?"

"It's all Armond's fault!" she complained. "It took me some time to find him in K City, but he told me to come to A City instead. He must be crazy! Is it fun to fool me?"

She opened a box of durians. The smell was too much for her, so she immediately complained, "I can't believe you like durian. It's so smelly."

I was quite surprised. "How did you know I like durian?"

She pouted. "Armond told me you are pregnant, and I was to come to spend time with you. I didn't know what you like, so I asked him. He said you might like durian, so I brought some along."

"Didn't Armond come to A City, too?" I was taken aback.

Nora's lips thinned. "He's here. He said so himself, but the house next to yours is empty. I don't know where he is. Is he that busy? Did something happen to him?"

It was clear that Nora had no clue what was going on. I didn't press on and brought Amy to the bathroom to teach her how to wash herself up. I washed up and sat down to enjoy my breakfast.

Nora must've been bored as she extended an invitation to me. "Are you busy later? If you have time, wanna come shopping with me?"

I shook my head. "I need to go to the hospital. My parents brought Summer here as she needed to be operated on. I'm too busy to go shopping with you."

"Oh, I see," came her disappointed reply. "Alright. We'll see. By the way, have you seen Hailey recently? She won't pick up my calls. What happened to her?"

Shaking my head, I said nothing. Nora differed from me as she was used to leading a comfortable life. She had neither faced any difficulties nor wanted something really bad in life. Perhaps it would be a good idea to be as heartless as her.

As Nora was free, she followed me to the hospital. I had decided to carry on with the surgery even though I would bear the guilt of hurting Amy for my entire life.

Cameron and Zachary were elated to find out that Amy could donate her bone marrow legally. The surgery's date was set for a week later. Amy was too weak, so the doctor wanted her to rest for a few days in advance. Afraid I would be too exhausted, Cameron hired a caregiver to take care of Amy.

There was nothing for me to worry for they would take care of the children well.

On a Sunday midnight, I received a call from Nora.

The background music was deafening, so I guessed she was in a club or something. Her voice came over the line. "Scarlett, can you come to pick me up? I can't drive. My whole body has gone limp."

I hurriedly agreed. "Where are you? Send me your address. I'll be there soon."

She mumbled in response. I hastily got changed and drove out. It took her some time to send me the address—the famous Imperial Hotel in A City.

Nora liked to have fun, so it was normal for her to be in a nightclub. She was usually alert, so I wondered how someone managed to drug her tonight.

When I arrived at Imperial Hotel, Nora was lying in the club's lobby. There were a few attendants by her side. It seemed that someone had ordered them to keep watch on her.

One of the attendants recognized me and hurried over. "Ms. Stovall, you're finally here. Ms. Oberick is about to tear the place down."

After racking my brains, I still couldn't figure out who this woman was. I asked hesitantly, "Do you know me?"

The woman nodded with a polite smile. "Mr. Murphy showed me your photo and told me to wait for you here."

Huh? My confusion deepened. Armond's here? Then why didn't he send her back himself and asked me to come instead? What is he up to?

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1010

I glanced at Nora, who had passed out in her booth. My head was throbbing as I came up with a plan. "There are hotel rooms above, right?"

This was a high-end nightclub, so most of the patrons were rich and powerful. The rooms above were designated so they could continue having fun upstairs in the privacy of their own rooms.

The attendant nodded, but she seemed stumped. "Yes, we have rooms, but they have been reserved in advance. Some of the rooms are prepared for our VIP clients and aren't accessible usually. I'm afraid I can't get a room for you right now."

I pursed my lips. Looks like Armond earns a lot of money here. I pondered slightly before asking, "Does Mr. Murphy have his own room, then?"

"Yes, but..."

I dialed Armond's number, and he answered my call almost immediately. "What's wrong?" came his soft voice. "Are you missing me at night? Do you need me to accompany you?"

Feeling disgusted, I retorted, "I need a room in Imperial Hotel for Nora. It's too late for me to bring her home. I'm still pregnant."

His light chuckle sounded over the line. "Looks like I did the right thing by asking you to pick her up. Let me talk to my staff."

Looking up, I glanced at the attendant before handing the phone to her. "Armond wants to talk to you." She accepted my phone hastily with both hands. "Hello, Mr. Murphy!"

The attendant listened to what Armond had to say attentively. Shortly after, she returned my phone to me. "Ms. Stovall, please follow me!"

She proceeded to order the two other attendants. "Bring Ms. Oberick to No. 2806, the presidential suite on the twenty-eighth floor. I'll help Ms. Stovall check in now."

The two attendants brought Nora into the elevator while I followed the other attendant to the front desk so she could process my check-in. After Armond talked to the lady, she seemed to be extra careful around me.

I wasn't bothered at all. While we were waiting for the elevator to come, a few tipsy men joined us. This was, after all, a nightclub and a hotel in one building.

The attendant seemed to recognize them and greeted them politely. One man took her arm. "You're Rita, right? I heard you're a manager here. Didn't they say there's a virgin here tonight? I didn't see her anywhere. What's wrong? Are you looking down on us?"

The other men chimed in drunkenly. Rita flashed an awkward smile and replied, "You've gotten the wrong information. That girl is here as a waitress. She's just a peasant from the countryside. I'm afraid that you'll despise her."

"Oh?" The man chuckled. "So what if she's from the countryside? Over ten years ago, we lived in the countryside, too. Peasant girls are strong. Don't forget to bring her to our room later so we can have fun together."

Rita nodded hastily. As the doors opened, she bade goodbye to them and led me out.

After bringing me to my room, she flashed a smile and bade farewell to me. I heard her talking to someone on her walkie-talkie. "Logistics, send Ann Weeder to the sixteenth floor. A client just asked for her. Remember to tell her to be obedient."

I was about to close the door when I heard the familiar name. Stopping in my tracks, I looked out, but Rita had already left.

Sixteenth floor?

I entered the room to see Nora sleeping soundly on the bed. She had passed out, and I couldn't wake her up.

As she seemed to be okay, I took the room card and headed to the sixteenth floor.

After I found the room, I stood outside. The rooms on this floor were karaoke rooms. There were girls heading in and out of the rooms. The girls who came out were obviously wounded with stacks of money in their hands, while the girls who headed in were empty-handed.

I couldn't see what was going on inside the room, so I came out with a plan. After getting prepared, I pushed the door open and staggered in. "Friends, come on. Let's drink!" I yelled, pretending to be drunk.

The people in the room froze immediately when I barged in without warning. When they realized I was drunk, someone stood up to chase me out.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1011

I narrowed my gaze and scanned the room carefully. There were around five to six men in their forties accompanied by at least a dozen hostesses.

Ann stood out among the girls. It wasn't because she was pretty. She had lived in the village until a while ago, so her skin was slightly tanned. Her head was lowered as she studied her surroundings anxiously.

Today, she was dressed in a sexy and revealing outfit that seemed too large to be hers. She kept covering her chest and tugging at the short hem of the minidress.

The contrast between Ann's snowy white chest and her tanned neck was too obvious. She was also quite busty. After putting makeup on, she was both innocent and attractive.

"Are you crazy? What are you doing here? Scram!" A man grabbed my arm to tug me out forcefully.

I stood up and grumbled in response. Upon meeting my gaze, Ann's pupils constricted in disbelief. She hurriedly regained her composure and looked down.

I allowed the man to drag me out of the room and slumped down on the ground. The men couldn't be bothered and left me alone. After they closed the door behind them, I took out my phone to call Joseph. I explained everything and sent him the address.

The clients in the nightclub enjoyed thrilling stuff. I stood at the door and watched as a few men brought an enormous fish tank around a meter long into the room. Immediately, my heart sank.

I leaned on the door, but I couldn't hear anything. As the attendants came out, I stopped them and grabbed one of the attendant's arm. "Hello, may I know why you brought the fish tank into the room? It sounds fun. How exactly does that work? My husband enjoys thrilling stuff, too. We are here tonight to have some fun, but couldn't make up our minds. Why don't you give us some recommendations?"

The attendant I stopped was stunned, while the others laughed out loud. "Madam, you're here with your husband? How unusual."

I flashed a shy smile. "Ah, married life is too boring. We're here to spice things up."

The attendants thought I was a loose woman. "The clients inside are wealthy men from A City. They like to play games to abuse people. Madam, this isn't for you. Mr. Hanks likes to see people on the verge of dying. He will ask someone to enter the fish tank. We don't recommend that as it's too dangerous."

Their explanation caught me off guard. Why would someone like to see someone struggling on the brink of death? What kind of fetish is that?

I was still in a daze when the attendants walked away. At once, I pushed the door open and stalked in. The men were standing around the fish tank curiously, so no one noticed my arrival.

A middle-aged man standing beside the fish tank placed a stack of bills on the table. "This is fun. Ladies, will you play a game with me? As long as you please me, you can have one hundred grand."

The girls fell silent as they knew what Dillan was like. The man grew impatient and frowned. "No one? Why are you standing here, then? Imbeciles!"

I knitted my brows at how rude the man was.

Everyone in the private room dared not say a word. Dillan scanned the crowd and noticed Ann, who was cowering behind a few girls. "You! Come here!" he ordered.

At once, everyone stared at Ann. She trembled in fear and went to Dillan meekly.

"Go in there for a while, and the money will be yours. Entertain us while we're in a jovial mood." Dillan placed the money in front of her.

Ann hung her head low. I was standing quite a distance away from her, so I couldn't see her expression though she was obviously shaking. I thought she would cry and asked the man to let her off.

Suddenly, she spoke. "Two hundred thousand!"

"What?" the man responded in shock. Everyone else was also baffled at her reaction.

Ann repeated. "Two hundred thousand. I'll go in if you agree."

After a brief silence, Dillan broke out into laughter. "Interesting. Sure, two hundred thousand. You shall spend five minutes in the tank. Don't worry. If you die, I will give you double the money to pay for your lowly life. That shall be enough."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1012

With that, he took out another stack of bills from his bag.

Ann took one last glance at the money and climbed into the fish tank. The minute she entered the tank, the men shut the lid.

Dillan flopped on the couch and lit a cigarette to enjoy Ann's performance.

The fish tank was only one meter long, so it wasn't that big. Ann cowered and held her breath while someone else started the countdown.

Someone started singing to liven things up. The other ladies came to Dillan and entertained him.

Among them, I was especially conspicuous. Someone spotted me and asked, "When did you come in again? Who are you? Why are you here?"

I grinned and replied, "I'm enjoying myself. This is too exciting not to watch!"

"Please leave!" Dillan uttered icily.

I scurried to him and said, "You must be Dillan, right? I'm so lucky to have run into you. Come, let's drink."

With that, I poured myself a glass and finished it in one gulp.

Initially, the man was confused, but he gradually relaxed. "Oh? You know who I am?"

I nodded profusely. "Of course. You're famous in A City, Dillan. Everyone knows who you are!"

As he was no longer suspicious, I glanced at Ann who was holding her breath in the fish tank. "Dillan, you're so adventurous, huh? I don't think that woman is good at holding her breath. It's too dangerous for her to hold her breath for five whole minutes."

"Ha!" the man scoffed. "I'm not afraid. I've already paid for her life."

Ann was at her limit. Bubbles appeared in the tank as she struggled before opening her lips to breathe in. Alas, she only gulped the water down.

"Pfft, less than two minutes. That's no fun at all," the man uttered disinterestedly. He glanced at Ann and forgot about me.

Seeing how Ann was struggling, I panicked instantly. However, I couldn't find a way to save her. I was pregnant, and any mistake would cause our lives.

If I insisted on saving her alone, I would be dragged into this mess as well.

At that thought, I held my phone tightly and prayed that Joseph would arrive soon.

"I don't think she knows how to swim," a woman sitting beside Dillan spoke worriedly.

Dillan gazed at a struggling Ann, his eyes shining with excitement. He ignored everyone else beside him.

Ann was about to drown, so I couldn't wait any longer. "Dillan, she's about to drown. Should we ask someone to release her?"

Dillan merely glowered at me. "Scram!"

At once, two men grabbed my arms and led me toward the door. I immediately yelled, "Get your hands off me? I called the cops before I came in. They will be here soon!"

Dillan glared at me menacingly. "You called the cops?"

I nodded as I watched Ann gradually going limp in the tank. "You'd better release her now. Otherwise, you'll go to jail!"

The man found my words hilarious and burst out laughing. "Did she say I'll go to jail? Ha! No one has ever warned me that I'll go to jail!"

The rest laughed along as I pursed my lips in confusion.

"Drag the girl in the tank out, then throw this lady into the tank. If the cops come, tell them I'm here. If they refuse to comply, tell them to talk to Derek Watson in the police station."

"Yes!"

When Ann was brought out, she was already unconscious. I dashed over to see how she was doing, but the men took the opportunity to push me into the tank. I immediately choked, but before I could scream for help, they pushed my head into the water.

After swallowing the icy water, my throat was hurting. I had to swallow the water if I wanted to breathe. "H-Help..."

I tried to scream for help, but the burly man holding me captive refused to budge. Soon, my body went limp as my stomach began throbbing dully. My eyes widened at the thought of my child.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1013

“There’s blood! She’s bleeding!” An ear-piercing scream sounded from a side while my head was pounding. My baby...

A man laughed. “How thrilling! I never thought I’ll get to toy with a pregnant woman. This is so exciting!”

The excruciating pain inflicted upon my body made me feel suffocated and I passed out, feeling weak.

Death would always come unannounced. In midst of my coma, I dreamt of a lot of things and met many people. The darkness was endless and I couldn’t find my path. All I could hear were people’s voices around me, but I couldn’t escape from the world I was trapped in.

Finally, I regained my consciousness. Opening my eyes, my vision was blurry as my surroundings were bright. I blinked my eyes and figured out I was in the hospital later on. I tried to glance around, but as soon as I moved, immense pain crept up my body and it felt like my body had fallen apart.

Hiss. I couldn’t hold back my squeals, as it was too painful.

Immediately after, I heard rushed footsteps approaching, while someone was shouting, “She’s awake! Quick! Call the doctor.” The voice was from a stranger.

After getting used to the surroundings, I snapped out of my daze and finally recognized the girl who walked into the room. She was Ann.

When the girl saw me, her eyes were red. “You’re finally awake... Finally.”

I opened my mouth to express my thoughts, but I only felt pain in my throat. Soon after, a group of people came in. They were Cameron, Zachary, and Joseph. I heaved a sigh of relief when I noticed Ashton wasn’t there. Hearing what Ann said, I initially thought I had been in a coma for long.

Cameron's eyes were swollen from crying, and she wore a pain-etched expression looking at me. I reached out to tug on the hem of her shirt and shook my head, assuring her.

Realization dawned on me suddenly, and I thought of my baby. I touched my lower abdomen gently and felt pain spiraling from within. Unsure of what happened to my baby, I looked at the people standing beside me, and asked, "Is my baby... okay?"

Everyone had different reactions, but none of them looked at me in the eyes. Cameron started crying with muffled sobs. Zachary sighed. Ann lowered her head and stayed silent while guilt and sorry were written all over Joseph's face. I was stunned for a moment, but I knew what they meant. My baby's gone.

As the bitter truth sank in, pain washed over my heart like waves of a tsunami. My body started trembling as I felt suffocated. I pursed my lips and tried to hold back my screams, but it only made me look contorted.

Tears rolled down Cameron's cheeks vigorously as she hurriedly took my hands in hers. "She heaved a sigh and pleaded, "My dear, don't be like this, please. Your body hasn't recovered yet, so don't do this to yourself. You'll get better. Please, I beg you. Don't hurt yourself."

My body reacted to the sorrow on its own, so I couldn't control it. I clenched my fists tightly, and my head was throbbing in pain as if it was about to explode.

Overwhelmed by grief, I heard someone screaming, "She's biting her tongue. Quick! Stop her!"

I didn't even notice I was biting my tongue. I couldn't even feel my body. It was just pain all over.

Joseph called the doctor immediately, and a few doctors rushed into the room. When they saw the situation, they panicked. "Hurry! Give her some tranquilizer."

Right when the doctors were busy injecting the tranquilizer, a loud bang could be heard from the entrance and the door was swept open. A figure dashed to me, pushing Cameron and Zachary aside before taking me into his arms. His voice sounded hoarse and low. "Don't be afraid. I'm here. I'm with you."

It was Ashton. The pain in my head started dissipating as I gazed at him in a daze. It seemed he had a lot of work in Moranta, given how he seemed to have lost weight.

Perhaps it was because of the tranquilizer that I was getting tired. I wanted to look at the man I had longed for, so I tried to keep my eyes open, but I fell asleep.

The days I was consumed by grief felt like forever to me, but I made peace with it and days went by quickly. It was during this period of recovering from sorrow that I realized nothing lasted forever, and we would lose the things we held dear no matter what. There was an old saying that went, if we could bear losing everything, we wouldn't have any regrets in this life.

The saying was true. After being discharged from the hospital, I looked at the bright sun in A City and started accepting everything calmly.

Ashton parked the car and looked at me. "What would you like to eat? Let's eat something before going back."

I nodded and thought for a while before answering, "Seafood!"

The man furrowed his brows slightly, but nodded soon after.

In the seafood restaurant, I went pale as I stared at the water tanks. Ashton looked at me in concern and asked, "Should we eat something else?"

I shook my head and insisted, "No need. It's great here." Staring at the sea creatures swimming and crawling in the tanks, I turned to Ashton and asked, "Do they serve live food?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1014

Ashton frowned at my question before giving in and nodded. He led me to a table and ordered some live food.

When the food was served, I looked at the fish and crabs on the table and turned to the waiter. "Can you get me a sharp knife and a spoon?"

The waiter looked at me with an odd expression and nodded before giving me what I wanted. I made sure the crab stayed in place before tearing off its legs and shell. Using the knife and spoon, I dug out the flesh bit by bit. The flesh of hairy crabs wasn't that delicious, but it tasted alright.

To enjoy dissecting living creatures was rather extreme. However, Ashton didn't stop me from torturing the sea creatures. Instead, he just watched as I continued eating my meal.

After a while, I grew tired and placed my cutlery down. I looked at Ashton and said, "Back then, I've always thought of sending the people I hate to prison to make them suffer for their sins. Now that I think about it, sending them to prison isn't enough."

Ashton looked at me and asked after a while. "What do you want to do?"

I pursed my lips. "Do you still have him locked up?"

"Yes." The man nodded, and I was truly delighted when I heard his answer.

Smiling faintly, I said, "Ashton, you'll let me do as I please, right?"

He pursed his lips and kept quiet while I smiled and didn't ask him again.

Then, he got up and said, "Come. Let's meet that person."

Ashton drove me back to the villa in the suburbs. After he stopped the car, Joseph came out from the villa and looked at me with guilt written over his face. "Mrs. Fuller, how are you feeling?"

I smiled faintly and nodded. "I'm feeling great. Is he inside?"

Joseph hummed a reply before leading me and Ashton into the villa.

Dillan wasn't a big shot. He only got rich because of his family assets as his family ran coal mines. Later on, his sister married a civil servant. That person was Derek. All these years, he used money to gain his status and power, and since things like this weren't uncommon, so everyone got used to it.

Derek invested a sizable amount of money into building his status, so he got promoted and had a rather high income. While Dillan, a good-for-nothing, could only rely on Derek to live a high life in A City. Just because the man had money, he could carry out his absurd hobby and humiliated many girls.

The man was tied to a chair with his head hung low and his face was beaten to a pulp as blood dripped onto the floor. I clicked my tongue and looked at him. "Dillan, what a coincidence!"

He lifted his head and looked at me. Squinting his eyes, he tried to focus his vision and saw that it was me. Immediately after, he widened his eyes in surprise and pleaded, "I'm sorry. I didn't know you're Mr. Fuller's wife. I'm really sorry. Please spare me, I didn't do it on purpose. If you let me go, I'll give you any amount you want. Please, I beg you."

I scoffed at his disgusting behavior. Looking at the grey sky outside, I smirked and looked at Joseph. "Mr. Campbell, is there an open swimming pool here?"

The man nodded and glanced at Ashton's sullen face. "There is. It's at the rear house."

"That's great!" I spoke as I watched Dillan. "Since we don't see each other that often, let's play together."

With that, I headed toward the rear house. Ashton glanced at me as if he knew what I was going to do. "Keep him alive."

I raised a brow at him and headed toward the swimming pool. I found myself a comfortable place beside the pool to sit and watched as Dillan was dragged toward me. "Dillan, you must like to play with water. How about having fun in the pool now?"

Dillan looked at me in wariness. "What are you planning to do?"

I shrugged. "What can I do? I'm just a woman." With that, I glanced at the two men behind him. They received the signal and dragged him toward the pool before pushing him into the water.

Watching him letting out muffled screams in the water, I was emotionless. He was tied up, so he couldn't save himself from drowning. At some point of seeing him struggling in the water helplessly, I started laughing when I saw his pathetic face.

After a while of struggling in the water, Dillan started sinking to the bottom. Upon seeing this, Joseph advised, "Mrs. Fuller, he's going to die."

I smirked and folded my arms as I looked down at the man in the water. "Yeah, take him out of the water and get a doctor here. After he's awake, throw him into the water again. Make sure he remembers the scent of fluorine and the feeling of being suffocated."

Joseph nodded and gestured for the men to pull him out of the water.

After watching the show, I lost all interest to continue. When I got up, Ashton came to me and blocked my path. "Where are you going?"

I was rather exhausted. "I'll rest here for a bit. Dillan will be awake after a while, so I'm planning to toy with him later."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1015

Ashton frowned slightly, but he didn't say anything.

Ann showing up here was rather a surprise to me. I didn't plan to meet her, but since she came to me, I had no choice but to let her in.

I was slightly taken aback at meeting her this time. She had been visiting me at the hospital, but I didn't really pay attention to her. Now that she was here in front of me, I collected my thoughts and looked at her closely.

How should I phrase this?

She was rather different from the first time I saw her in the cattle sheds. At that time, her eyes were filled with timidness and she looked dazed. However, this time, it seemed her timidness was replaced by determination.

I looked at her and stayed silent for a while before asking, "What's the matter?"

She lifted her gaze at Ashton, and her eyes flickered. I was all too familiar with her gaze. The girl must be stunned to see the handsome man. I knew how attractive Ashton was, so I didn't bother to stop her.

Ann turned to me and pondered for a while. "Ms. Stovall, thank you for saving my life. I'll remember what you did for me, and I'll repay your kindness."

I pursed my lips and waited for her to continue.

As expected, she fell silent for a while before continuing, "Ms. Stovall, I'm grateful to you. I know your daughter is waiting for surgery, and I heard you adopted my sister. I hope you can treat her well and hopefully she can help your daughter."

I frowned as she was beating around the bush. Pursing my lips, I urged, "Stop wasting time and get to the point."

She froze and took a deep breath before kneeling down on the floor. "Ms. Stovall, I know I shouldn't look for you, but I don't have a choice. I don't know who I should find except you."

I furrowed my brows. "Get up. I cannot accept your kneel." To be honest, most people disliked people kneeling down in front of them and begged them for something. I was not one of those lunatics who enjoyed being worshiped by others.

She got up from the floor and said, "Ever since Mr. Fuller cleared the Imperial Hotel, my friend was taken away. I figured he might be sold off, so I went to the police, but they couldn't do anything about it. He had been in the Imperial Hotel for many years, so there's no way they can't find him."

Listening to her vague words, I furrowed my brows slightly in bewilderment. "Aren't you always living in a village? How do you get yourself a friend here so quickly? Didn't you kill Fritz? I think you misunderstood what I meant. Back then, I saved you because I have some questions to ask you. Fritz's body is still in the Wolfsen residence, so your sister could still be tortured. Ann, I don't think I'll help a murderer like you for a second time."

The girl was stunned and was at a loss as she looked at me.

Looking at her, I said, "Tell me. How did you kill Fritz and escape? Plus, how did you go to work at the Imperial Hotel?"

I wasn't that kind-hearted as she thought I was. Back then, I saved her because I had some questions to ask her. Seeing how she was humiliated by Dillan, I couldn't help but pity her. However, I paid the price of losing my baby. I could only blame myself for being foolish.

Ann pressed her lips and told me everything that happened these few days. She was taken away from Ronald's house to the Wolfsen residence and was forced to marry Fritz. She was reluctant, so she tried to commit suicide, but failed.

Then, she was sent to an old doctor's house in the village for treatment. She thought of ways to run away during the treatment period. However, she bumped into Fritz when she was about to escape from the village. He grabbed her while she struggled to break free. In midst of pushing and pulling, she

accidentally pushed him down from the second floor. The man fell down in a head-to-ground position and died.

Ann knew she had to run away. Or else she would be dead. Hiding in the mountains for a few days, she took the offerings from the graves to curb her hunger. Later on, Kurt couldn't find her, so he went to Ronald's house looking for trouble.

Seizing the chance, she escaped from the village. Hidden away in the shadows, she saw everything unfold in front of her eyes. Alma was taken away by Kurt.

I pondered for a while before looking at her. "So, you're in the white van that followed us that day?"

She nodded and explained, "I stole some money from the Wolfsen residence and hired someone to follow you guys. I just wanted to know where Amy was. If I become successful in the future, I can reunite with her."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1016

I frowned slightly and asked, "Why did you think of working in the Imperial Hotel?"

She lowered her head and explained, "I came here alone. All I can do was to fill up my stomach so I can live. I've said it before. Some children who came to the city in the past returned, but some didn't. For those who didn't, they were either dead or became the toys of the customers in Imperial Hotel. I wanted to live, so I had no other choice."

I asked, "What is the name of your friend? How old is he?" How depressing... Could it be that Armond forces them to work in the Imperial Hotel?

The girl said, "He is Jody. Jody was brought to the city at fourteen, as a wealthy family wanted to adopt him. But after meeting him, they felt he was too old, so they refused to take him."

"Does he not have relatives in the village?" I furrowed my brows in confusion. Aren't boys precious in villages? Why is he sent here?

Ann kept her head hung low. "He was sent to the village since he was young. After he grew up, Mr. Dumphy took him back to the city. Most of the girls working in the Imperial Hotel were from the orphanage, following Mr. Dumphy and his men."

I was puzzled. Why is the orphanage involved in this?

I looked at the girl and asked, "So you're asking me to help you look for Jody?"

She nodded. "Jody said that there were many illegal activities in the nightclub, so he wanted to quit the job. I went to look for him, but I couldn't find him anywhere. He must be trapped because he knew many things about Mr. Dumphy and his men. They'll torture him. Please, Ms. Stovall. I beg you. Save him."

The girl was putting her hands together and begging me for help, but I didn't promise her. I glanced at Joseph bringing Dillan, who was on the verge of death into the room, and smirked. "It seems I have some work to do."

Seeing how I didn't give her a response, Ann tugged on the hem of my shirt and started sobbing. "Ms. Stovall, please save him. If he's locked up by them, he'll die. Please, save him."

I furrowed my brows, as I was slowly getting impatient. Lifting my gaze at Ashton, I said, "Ann, have you heard of the law of conservation of mass? Saving your friend doesn't benefit me at all, so stop wasting your time on me."

Her eyes were reddened as she opened her mouth, wanting to say something. However, I didn't spare her any glance and walked toward Dillan. Looking at the pathetic man in front of me, I smirked. "I had always been nice to others, and I tried to help those in need. However, I figured that not only was my kindness useless, it got me into trouble as well. I was finally pregnant, but you took my baby away from me. All these days, I had been thinking of how to torture you to vent my anger."

Dillan looked at me with his fear-filled eyes. "Ms. Stovall, I didn't know you're pregnant. I didn't know you're Mr. Fuller's wife. I'm sorry. Please let me go."

"Haha!" I laughed out loud and raised a brow at him. "Let you go?"

People mustn't be too kind. I learned this after going through all sorts of ups and downs. I looked at him and grinned widely. "Dillan, do you know how it feels to lose the most important thing in your life?"

He shook his head and kept on begging me for mercy. I rolled my eyes as I was reluctant to hear the man's ongoing pleas.

Suddenly, I received a message from Boris. After replying to the message, I turned to Dillan. He was nowhere pitiful in my eyes, as he had to pay for his sins.

About five minutes later, Boris brought a woman into the room. There was a slight bulge in the woman's belly, so I figured she was five or six months pregnant.

When the man saw the woman, he struggled and yelled, "Why are you here? Go back home!"

The woman was startled by his loud yells. Scanning her surroundings, she looked at Dillan in fear and was at a loss. "Dear, what's wrong? What happened? Why are you..."

Suddenly, Dillan glared at me with anger and wore a serious expression. "What are you thinking of doing?"

I felt exhausted to explain everything to him, so I sat on the chair and looked at him coldly. "Your wife should experience what I went through. Besides, I'll give you the chance to experience the pain of losing your unborn child, which you waited expectantly. What do you think?"

The man widened his eyes at me and growled, "No! You guys can't do this. This is illegal. You can't do this."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1017

I felt like laughing. "You did many illegal things too." As I spoke my words, I glanced at Boris. "Boris, there's a pool at the rear house. Take this woman there and throw her into the pool."

Dillan started flailing around madly, but he couldn't do anything as he was pinned onto the ground by Joseph and the others. With his face touching the ground, he could only let out muffled screams in protest.

Boris took the woman to the rear house while the latter was crying and pleading for help from Dillan. Seeing how tears were flowing down Dillan's cheeks as he felt powerless, I didn't know why, but I felt amused as I smirked.

"Scarlett, do you really have to take it this far?" Ashton's voice sounded from behind. His voice was low as usual with a tinge of surprise.

I didn't want to explain, so I gave a brief reply. "He deserves this."

The sound of water splashing and ear-piercing screams of the woman came from the rear house. Upon hearing this, Dillan's eyes reddened with anger. "What do you guys want? Come at me and leave her alone!"

I felt amused as I looked at him. "Then what's up with you laying your hands on those defenseless girls? You were merciless to those girls you drowned in the water tank. Dillan, it's only been a few days, but it seems you've forgotten. Let me remind you. Your aquarium was dyed red with my blood. It's only fair that your wife's going to do the same to my swimming pool."

The man stopped struggling as he collapsed on the ground and broke down in tears. Everyone had a weakness. No one was strong enough to care for only themselves.

He crawled in front of me and begged, "I was wrong. Come at me with whatever you want to do. Please don't hurt my wife. She did nothing wrong. I beg of you, Ms. Stovall. Let my wife and the baby go. They knew nothing. I'll accept everything you do to me. Just spare them."

I pursed my lips and remained unbothered. Ashton glanced at Joseph. It was obvious that he was trying to hint at the latter to save the woman. However, I insisted, "Ashton, leave if you can't agree with my doings, but you can't stop me."

He looked at me with a cold, yet helpless expression. "Scarlett, the pregnant woman is innocent and you know that well. I understand that your hatred and I won't hinder you from doing whatever you want to him. However, I can't sit by and just let you become someone evil like him. Stop now. The pregnant woman did nothing wrong."

I pursed my lips and took in a deep breath. Looking at Dillan with determination, I announced, "Not only do I want your child's life, I'm going to take your wife's too. Everything that I have suffered, I'll make sure you go through them too."

Dillan broke down, while Ashton's eyes narrowed and looked at me with a pain-etched face. "Scarlett, you..."

I interrupted him and continued, "Tell me everything, and I'll think of sparing your wife. Don't think that the person behind you can protect you. You know it well, don't you? The fact that I can find your wife and take her here means that you're just a pawn waiting to be disposed of."

Dillan was stunned by my words. He stopped shouting and looked at me in shock.

I didn't mind how he looked at me, as all I wanted was information. So, I waited for him to tell me.

Ashton was taken aback. He turned to me soon after and asked, "When did you know all this?"

I shrugged. "Ever since I woke up in the hospital. Nora getting drunk, letting me hear about Ann and telling me the number of the private room; these consecutive events are too much of a coincidence."

After I was sent to the hospital, Nora didn't come to visit me. This meant that she was indeed drunk that night. I didn't know if she knew Armond's intention of laying out this trap, but now it seemed she had a vague idea of it.

Depressing screams came from the swimming pool and got more and more miserable as it went. Dillan started panicking as he looked at me with reddened eyes and shouted, "Tell them to stop. I'll tell you everything I know."

I pursed my lips and looked at him coldly. "Don't worry. She won't die that quickly. They'll stop after you're done talking."

Dillan hurriedly blurted out, "Mr. Dumphy's behind all of this. He instructed me to throw you into the water tank. I didn't know you're pregnant and only thought of choking you for a bit. I never thought things would turn out like this."

I glared at him as I was rather unsatisfied with his answer. Then, I sat on the chair and asked, "Who's Mr. Dumphy? I don't know him."

Dillan explained, "He's Brandon Dumphy. The general manager of the Imperial Hotel."

I was rather surprised. It seems Brandon's quite capable. Otherwise, Armond won't leave so many matters to him.

After keeping silent for a bit, I asked, "Do you know who's the boss of the Imperial Hotel?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1018

He nodded. "I know, it's Armond from the Murphys in K City. That being said, he seldom goes to the Imperial Hotel. All of the things in the Imperial Hotel are handled by Brandon."

I nodded. "How much do you know about Brandon?"

He glanced at both Ashton and me before answering, "I don't know much. The reason I helped him was because of the copious amounts of money he offered."

I narrowed my eyes. "Are you still short on money?"

He shook his head. "No, but I don't want to have to depend on my brother-in-law anymore. I needed the money just so I could escape his grasp and finally be free again. My sister has suffered a lot being with him. I've been wanting to take her away from him for a while now."

I pursed my lips and stopped myself from prying more into his current situation. I gazed at Boris, who was standing outside by the pool, before uttering, "Boris, bring her in!"

Dillan let out a sigh of relief as he saw that the woman who was brought in unharmed. Her clothes were not even wet. He paused for a bit and glared at me with a surprised look. "You..."

I pursed my lips. "You can take her and leave now. The people outside must be quite flurried after waiting for so long. However, since I treated your wife with care, I expect you to return the favor by helping me out with something."

He looked at me vacuously and queried, "What do you need my help with?"

"Find a way to retrieve a kid named Jody from Brandon. It should be an easy task for you, right?"

Ann, who looked despondent before, suddenly stared at me with her eyes lit up. I took a glance at her before directing my eyes back to Dillan as I waited for his response.

Dillan nodded and replied, "Okay, I'll find a way to get that kid into your hands."

I nodded. "Okay, you may leave now!"

Dillan, who was all beaten up, took his wife and strode carefully toward the exit. Ashton walked to my side and wrapped his arm around my waist. "You should go back home and rest if you're tired."

I nodded and leaned on him as we walked out of the villa. After exiting the villa, Ashton stopped and turned around to gaze at Ann. "What do you plan to do with her?" he asked.

"Just let her be!" She can follow us if she wants to.

On the car, Joseph was driving while I was resting on Ashton's shoulder. I uttered softly, "Ashton, do you blame me?"

Our first child's death was an inevitable accident. However, our second child's death was caused by my negligence and incompetence. Even though I knew that it was perilous to go into the private room, I did it anyway. I was jejune enough to think that I could help Ann when I couldn't even protect myself.

He embraced me and gave me a few pats on the back to ease my emotions. "You don't need to blame yourself too much. A lot of things are predetermined by fate. Not to mention, this was all because of my inability to protect you. How can I pin the blame on you?"

I sighed as I knew that he was only trying to console me. Having pondered for a while, I uttered, "What is Armond planning to do exactly?"

He went quiet for a while before responding, "He wants the management right of the ports in Moranta."

I was confused. "I can't believe he would deign to do such a thing just to earn more money. Why is he so obstinate about this?"

He lowered his head to give me a kiss on the forehead before replying, "The profitability of the ports isn't the tempting aspect to own the ports. It's the authority to manage the ports that makes it so tempting. With full authority over the ports, he'll have more freedom to do what he wants."

I drew my lips together. It's true that the ports are the gateways for exports and imports. If they are managed well, the profitable aspect wouldn't only limit to the ports themselves anymore. That's why Armond is targeting Ashton. If anything happens to Ashton, the Fuller Corporation will crumble. He would then achieve his goal.

No wonder he would make such a bold move. He's waiting for us to take the bait.

Out of the blue, the phone rang. Seeing that the caller was Cameron, I quickly picked up the phone. "Scarlett, where are you guys? Summer's illness is exacerbating. The doctor said that the cancer cells are spreading rampantly and so she needs to undergo surgery immediately. You guys must get back here now."

I was stupefied for a while before directing my eyes at Ashton. Ashton immediately turned to Joseph and instructed, "Go to the hospital now!"

My hand was shaking as I responded, "Mom, there's no need to be so agitated. We'll be there in a sec. In the meantime, you must keep Amy by your side. And also, help me ask the doctor about Amy's health report. Ask him what I need to do to make sure the two of them are safe."

Cameron nodded profusely on the other end of the call as she was still in a panic.

After hanging up the phone, I was in a bit of distress. Ashton grabbed my arm and comforted, "Don't worry, everything will be fine."

I glared at him and murmured, "I'm sorry for making the precipitous decision to adopt Amy all by myself. I know I should've discuss with you first, but I didn't want to drag the Moore family into this."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1019

He nodded. Since things have already escalated up to this point, we can't turn back anymore. I'll do my best to make it up to Amy once Summer's life has been spared.

Having arrived at the hospital, Zachary rushed toward us and asked, "Did you guys see Amy?"

My heart skipped a beat. "Amy? I thought I told Mom to make sure she stays beside her. What happened?"

Zachary was getting flustered. "Just now, the doctor asked your Mom to do the necessary paperwork in order for Amy to stay in the hospital. When she came back, the kid was missing. I arrived at the hospital not long ago to look for her, but to no avail."

I was stunned in place. It must be Armond who took Amy away. He took advantage of the fact that we were too busy to look after her. Damn him!

Ashton glared at Joseph, who was catching up to us, and ordered with gravitas, "Use whatever means necessary to seal off the highways in and out of A City. Also, hack the hospital's surveillance cameras and see if you can locate the kid's whereabouts."

He then went silent for a while before aligning his eyes with Zachary's. "Summer's surgery should proceed as planned," he uttered.

I was tensed up after hearing his statement. I stared at him uttered, "Ashton, without the bone marrow and the kidney, Summer's surgery will have no probability of succeeding. We must find Amy first, or else..."

Zachary interrupted me, "Don't worry, Scarlett. We know what we're doing. It'll be fine."

How can I not be worried?

I shook my head as my face turned pale, “No, this is way too risky. I’ve already lost my own kids. I can’t afford to lose Summer too.”

I tried to stop Joseph but Ashton was holding me back. He gazed at me consolingly. “Don’t worry, Summer will be fine, and so will Amy. Trust me on this, okay?”

I stared at him doubtfully. “You...”

“Just trust me, okay?” he insisted.

I stayed quiet and nodded.

Thus, Joseph hastily went to hack the surveillance cameras. Meanwhile, Zachary seemed like he had made preparations of his own. He made a certain phone call and uttered, “Do it!”

After hanging up the phone, he glanced at me and said, “I’m going upstairs to see your Mom!”

When it was just me and Ashton left in the lobby, I blurted out asking, “Did you know beforehand that Amy was going to be abducted?”

He embraced me and helped me to a nearby bench to rest. “Don’t worry. All the pain that you’ve suffered, I’m going to pay them back twofold.”

When Joseph came back, he took a few glances at me but was reticent to say anything. Perhaps it was something that he couldn’t say in front of me.

I gazed at Ashton and uttered, “I’m going for a walk outside!”

I got up and headed toward the exit of the hospital. On my way out of the hospital, I saw an ambulance dropped off a patient who was severely wounded at the emergency area. The nurse beside the patient

shouted, "It was a car accident. He suffered a serious concussion. The nerves connecting his legs are damaged."

A group of nurses and doctors rushed to the patient and took him to the ER immediately. It seemed like his injury was rather serious.

I then overheard two men talking about the incident. "There was an accident on the Sunny Highway. A black passenger car flew off the highway and crashed under the bridge. A family of three was on the car. Unfortunately, the mother didn't survive. The kid on the other hand, only suffered a minor injury thanks to his father protecting him."

"God can be cruel and callous. Look at what happened to a nice family like them!"

Out of curiosity, I opened my phone to look at the news. There was indeed news about a car accident. I roughly went through the news article and noticed that the black car in the accident was a Mercedes-Benz.

The number plate of the car was way too familiar to me. No one else uses a pair of the same number "eight" as their number plate other than Brandon. Back then when I went to Amy's house, I inadvertently saw his number plate. I only thought that he was an ostentatious person upon seeing it and didn't pay much attention to it then. That being said, I didn't expect to see it again in this manner.

So were Brandon and his family the ones who got into a car accident?

Thinking back, Joseph did try to hide something from me. Could it be? Without thinking too much, I dashed back inside the hospital. Ashton was still talking with Joseph in the lobby. Upon seeing me, Joseph immediately stopped talking.

I glared at Ashton and blurted out, "Does the car accident that happened to Brandon has anything to do with you?"

Unperturbed by my question, he gazed at Joseph and instructed, "Go and deal with the aftermath."

After Joseph left, I stared at Ashton intently as I waited for his response. He dragged me over to him and sat me down by his side. "You were just discharged from the hospital recently, so you must take it easy, okay? Originally, you weren't even supposed to get out of the house. But since you're already out here, promise me that you won't think too much, okay? You must take care of your body."

I scowled as I retorted, "Ashton, you're changing the topic!"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1020

He was feeling helpless. "What do you mean? I'm just worried about you."

Peeved, I furrowed my eyebrows. "Did you hurt Brandon and his family?" This couldn't have been a coincidence.

He narrowed his eyes and remained taciturn.

My heart was aching as I looked at him and uttered, "Ashton, I know that Brandon is the one who hurt me. Honestly, I want him to suffer as much as you do. However, what you're doing is too dangerous. If you were to get caught, you'd be put in prison."

He glanced at me and replied, "His wife's bone marrow is compatible with Summer's."

I was stunned in place after hearing what he said. "You..." The news said that his wife died on the scene. Does that mean...

The atmosphere was engulfed in silence for a while until he uttered, "Summer's illness will recover. The kid that you've adopted will also be fine. Our whole family will be fine. Trust me."

My eyes turned red as I gazed at him. "Ashton, do you even realize the consequences of doing such a thing?"

If he gets caught, he'll be put behind bars. I'm cognizant that he's being discreet about all of this. However, since he was brought up in an army, I know for a fact that he'll get the impulse to kill his enemies. Although Brandon is indeed an abhorrent man, killing him is still too much for Ashton to bear. He'll be haunted by this forever.

Seeing as my face was pale, he let out a faint smile and embraced me. "Don't worry, I'm acutely aware of what I'm doing."

Zachary, who had just come down the stairs, informed us, "Summer's bone marrow is confirmed to be compatible with a deceased woman's. With that, there's hope for Summer to recover now. You guys don't have to worry anymore."

Pursing my lips, I felt as though my heart was suffocating. After my incident, I was relieved to see that Ashton didn't do anything. He could've just succumbed to his anger and torture those who have hurt me, but he refrained from doing so, which I'm glad about.

That being said, I'm different from him. I'm inherently a bad person. Even if I've killed a person, I won't feel bad about it. But that's not the case for Ashton. He has always lived his life by abiding to the law and his responsibilities. No matter what happens, he'll choose a gentler approach to the problem. That's his belief.

But this time, he was willing to break his own code of living. Because of me, he set up an accident to hurt Brandon and even had the impulse to kill him. This is not the Ashton that I wanted to see. They say that lovers help each other to grow and improve, yet I'm only impinging on him...

Joseph came back again and he seemed rather impatient. Instead of avoiding me like last time, he directly reported, "Mr. Fuller, there's an issue pertaining to the port in Moranta. Illegal drugs and military weapons were found among the imported items there. The local police are starting to take action."

Ashton frowned and replied, "I understand!"

Zachary paused for a bit before saying, "Seems like the Murphys are making their move. I'll handle all the things here. You should head to Moranta as soon as possible. This war will be an onerous one to win."

Ashton turned toward me and embraced me before he murmured, "No matter the circumstances, your own safety comes first. Understand?"

I nodded and hugged him tighter for I didn't want to let him go.

Seeing he was about to leave, I offered, "Let me see you off!" Although we had parted ways before, but I really didn't want to see him go this time.

Seeing as I followed him, he smiled and pulled me onto the car. "Why are you behaving like a child?" he teased me.

I paid no heed to his teasing and embraced him tightly and said, "I don't want to see you go. After the mess in Moranta is dealt with, promise me you'll spend more time with me, okay?"

He smiled and caressed my hair. "Okay, you have my word. In return, promise me you'll take good care of yourself."

I nodded while still clinging on to him.

Time does tend to pass faster when we are saying goodbye to someone. In the blink of an eye, we were already at the airport. Joseph had sorted everything out in advance so that they were able to leave immediately. I couldn't help but hug Ashton again before he boarded the plane.

He hugged me back and exhorted me to take good care of myself in a gentle voice. He told me to eat at regular intervals, to close the windows before I sleep, to not stay up late, to not eat or drink anything cold...

As he was rambling on, I hugged him even tighter than before. As time was running out, Joseph called out to Ashton. Then, I let him go reluctantly.

Watching him walking further and further away from me, tears started flowing out of my eyes. "Ashton, you better come back soon. I'll be waiting at home for you!" I exclaimed.

He turned around and gave me a soothing smile.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1021

It's written in a book that we must be serious when we part ways with someone. That's because we won't know if we'll ever get to reunite with that person again. So, does this mean that without separation, there'll be no purpose to wait anymore?

Summer's surgery was very successful. In merely six hours, his surgery was done. As for Amy, she was brought back to us together with her sister, Ann.

Staring at the two sisters, I smiled, "Since you've already made your choice, I guess it's time for us to say our goodbyes!" It was totally understandable for Ann to take her away. Since Amy is still a child, it probably was best to not let her undergo surgery at such a young age. Anyhow, everything still turned out well in the end.

Ann grabbed Amy's hand and gave me a bow to express their gratitude before uttering, "Ms. Stovall, I know that you've helped us a lot, and we are very grateful for that. Although we can't ask for your forgiveness, maybe we can pay you back in different ways. If possible, you guys should go to the basement of the Imperial Hotel. There might be something of your interest there. Besides that, you need to know that Brandon's boss is the real mastermind behind all of this. That person must be eradicated before more kids become his victims and end up like us."

After finishing her sentence, she took Amy and left. I didn't bother asking where they were headed as I knew that a smart girl like Ann would be able to take care of both Amy and herself.

After putting Summer in Cameron's care, I headed over to the Imperial Hotel together with Zachary. The nightclub here belongs to Armond. If anything goes awry here, I'll be in trouble.

The Imperial Hotel looked like a desolated building during the day. There were only a few employees, who were on the day shift, standing at the front desk. Upon seeing the two of us, two girls walked up to us and asked about our purpose here.

At this moment, I signaled Zachary to make a distraction. He then proceeded to feign illness in front of the girls. Out of concern, two of them went up to help him.

“Miss, if I’m not mistaken, there’s a hotel upstairs right? My father and I are here on a business trip and we can’t seem to find a suitable hotel for us to stay in. And because of the long trip, my father is exhausted. Can you get us two rooms to rest for the time being?”

The two of them pondered for a while before answering, “Okay. However, since we also have a nightclub here, it’ll be quite noisy at night. Are you two okay with that?”

I nodded and replied, “Yes, it’s no big deal. Now, can you help my father up to the toom first while I check in?”

One of the girls helped Zachary up the stairs while the other one helped me with check in.

Bang!

Suddenly, there was a loud noise outside. I went with the girl to check out the noise. Glancing out the window, our jaws dropped. The girl turned to me and apologized, “Sorry, please wait here for a moment.”

She then rushed outside to deal with the person who had just broken one of the glass windows. In the meantime, I scrutinized the lobby with my eyes, trying to find the entrance to the basement.

If what Ann said was true, then where did she find the entrance?

Having thought about it for a while, my guess was that it was hidden in Brandon’s office. At this time of the day, there shouldn’t be any people in the office area. Then, I went on to notify the receptionist just now that I was heading upstairs first.

As she was still busy dealing with the commotion outside, she only gave me a terse response. I took a glance at the person who broke the glass window before heading toward the elevator.

According to Ann, Brandon’s office was situated on the top floor. I was rather perplexed when I first heard it from her. Under normal circumstances, shouldn’t the big boss of the nightclub be the one who gets the office on the top floor? Why did a manager like him gets to have the office instead?

Without thinking too much about it, I took the elevator to the top floor. To my surprise, there wasn't any office on the top floor. Instead, there was another floor above the supposedly top floor.

"Mrs. Fuller!"

Joseph, who suddenly appeared out of nowhere, almost gave me a heart attack. Seeing him standing at the elevator entrance on the floor above, I was a bit baffled. "What's the matter?" I queried.

He frowned and replied, "This elevator here might be our way into the basement. However, this elevator needs a specific fingerprint in order to access it. We can't seem to find a way to open it."

I paused for a second. "Then, how did Ann find the way to get in?"

After pondering for a while, I came to an answer. The kid named Jody who was always wandering around at the Imperial Hotel must've told Ann about the secret entrance. Since Jody has been here for so many years, he would've known about it unequivocally!

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1022

“We should head outside first!”

Joseph looked confused. “We’re leaving already?”

I nodded. “Armond is currently in Moranta while Brandon is still occupied with the death of his wife. At a time like this, our main priority should be to locate Jody as soon as possible. Contact Dillan. He should have some information for us by now.”

Joseph nodded and left without any questions.

I then met up with Zachary in his hotel room. Using the noisy environment as an excuse, we checked out of the hotel and quickly left.

When we returned back to the hospital, Summer’s surgery was done. Cameron was accompanying her during her recovery in the hospital. Fortunately, everything went smoothly.

Meanwhile, I went to find Ann and Amy. They settled down in an urban village in A City. The environment they lived in seemed a bit vile and dirty. When Ann saw my face, she didn’t look surprised at all. She then continued on nonchalantly with her cooking using the induction cooker. Since there was no ventilation, the whole room was engulfed in smoke.

“The environment here isn’t that good. Apologies!” She coughed a few times as she was saying that. After helping to set up the food on the small table, Amy sat on the bench beside the table and waited.

Although their living conditions wasn’t that good, the two of them seemed happy together nonetheless. Cutting to the chase, I directly stated, “I’ve promised you that I’ll help you find Jody. In return, I’d like you to convince him to go with us to the Imperial Hotel.”

She lowered her head and continued washing the pots. “You guys want him to lead you to the basement right?”

“Yes,” I answered truthfully.

She glared at me and uttered, “You do know that there’s no need for you guys to confirm personally right? You can just call the police. Since they don’t have time to move the goods now, they’ll be forced to wait when the police do an investigation as the elevator is the only exit.”

I smiled and responded, “I’ll consider it. That being said, I still need you to convince Jody.”

She went silent for a bit before replying, “I’m not sure if I could convince him. Have you guys found him?”

I shook my head. “Not yet!”

“I see.” She walked to the table and sat down. “Do you want to have some?” she asked.

I shook my head. I then waited quietly on the side for her to finish her food before I added, “I used to think that what I did was right. But looking back at it now, I realized how daft and juvenile I really was. That’s what I get for being so dumb.”

Confused, she raised her eyebrows. “Ms. Stovall, what are you...”

“It’s nothing. I’m just blabbering. Okay then, I should probably go now. I’ll contact you again once I’ve located Jody.”

After that, I got up and left their small and narrow house.

As I got on to the car, Joseph reported, “Mrs. Fuller, I’ve received word from Dillan regarding Jody.”

I nodded and instructed, “Get some of your men to keep an eye on the Imperial Hotel. I want to know every vehicle that enters or leaves the place.”

He nodded in response.

However, there was still this uneasiness in me that I couldn't seem to get rid of. Is Ann's existence part of Armond's plan all along? The timing of her appearance seemed rather contrived.

I decided to give Nora a call. Unlike her usual exuberant self, she seemed aloof when she answered the phone. "You have finally decided to call."

"Let's meet up at the café!" I suggested.

"Okay!" she nodded.

After that, Joseph and I headed over to the café.

When we arrived, Nora was already there. Something about her seemed different from when I last saw her. She was acting furtively.

Upon seeing me, she acted distant and let out a faint smile. "You're here. Take a sit!"

I sat down and stared at her quietly.

After a while, she broke the silence between us and asked, "When did you realize that he loves you?"

She was referring to Armond.

I pursed my lips and answered honestly, "When he was in Moranta, he wanted to get his hands on the management right there. In order to achieve his goal, he locked Ashton up in a refrigerating chamber. We barely escaped death."

She pursed her lips. "I won't pry too much into your personal matters. I'm truly sorry about what you've gone through. That being said, we can't be friends anymore."

I shrugged and replied apathetically, "I know. I respect your choice. We can put this whole thing about the Imperial Hotel behind us now. With that said, I'm not here for your apology. You know that, right?"

She asked instead, "What do you want then?"

I stayed silent for a while before answering, "Do not bring the Oberick family into this. Armond has done a lot of bad things. From trading human organs to smuggling kyanine, a lot of lives were lost because of him. He'll be thrown behind bars once he gets caught. Nora, Mr. Oberick's good name will be smeared by Armond when that happens. You can't put the Oberick family at stake because of a crude man like him."

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She looked at me with reddened eyes as she clasped her hands tightly together. "Scarlett, I can't turn back anymore. I won't involve Grandpa's men in this, but as long as he's connected to it, I'll do whatever I can to protect him.

I frowned but understood her obsession and calmly replied, "Okay. As long as you think it's worth it."

This marked the end of our friendship.

There was no use talking about it anymore.

As soon as we left the café and got into the car, Joseph said, "There're a few trucks below Imperial Hotel. Apparently, they're cleaning out the hotel's junk. They're moving stuff right now."

Taken aback, I hesitated for a while before I replied, "Let's go there now!"

He nodded and started up the car.

When we reached Imperial Hotel, four or five trucks were parked by the entrance, and there were several men moving things into the trucks. Thus, Joseph parked the car outside.

"Why are they suddenly moving all these? Where are they bringing them to?"

After watching them for a while, I noticed that they were bringing out tables, chairs, cardboard boxes, and white quilts. They seemed to be old items that the hotel did not want.

As I stared at the white quilts that had been loaded into the truck, I pondered for a moment before I asked, "Can you do something to make the truck with the quilts catch fire?"

Joseph was stunned for a moment, probably because he was thinking the same thing as I was. Then, he nodded. "I can!"

Subsequently, he called made a call and arranged for someone to tamper with the car.

Soon, a noise came from inside. We watched from our car as the truck started to catch fire, emitting smoke. "Make use of this messy situation and get someone to see if there's anything wrapped in the quilts."

Joseph nodded and spoke into his headset. Shortly after, he looked at me and replied, "There're weapons wrapped inside!"

"Call the police and the fire department. Also, get some men to surround the area. Don't let anyone get out." As long as this succeeded, Armond would be called to come back, therefore leaving him no time to deal with Ashton.

Shortly after that, I heard police sirens and the fire engines then arrived. As I watched the horde of men rush into the hotel, I was able to breathe a sigh of relief.

I turned to Joseph and said, "Come on, let's go and meet Dillan!"

However, Joseph did not drive and simply looked toward the front of the car. Following his gaze, I was stunned when I saw that familiar face. "Abe? Didn't he die in Moranta?"

Joseph was also taken aback and frowned.

Seeing that man hurriedly enter Imperial Hotel, I was about to get off and follow him in before Joseph stopped me. "Mrs. Fuller, wait in the car while I go down to check on the situation. Don't get out of the car no matter what!"

I furrowed my brows, but as soon as I thought of Ashton's words, I simply nodded and waited in the car.

However, not long after Joseph went in, I heard gunshots from inside the building. I instantly tensed up. What's going on? They're actually acting so savagely in this country?

I dialed Joseph's number, but it would not connect. Just as I wanted to get off the car, I hesitated. If I get down now, not only would I be unable to do anything, I'd also be putting myself in danger. But if I don't get off now, I wouldn't know anything about Joseph's situation.

In the end, I could only sit in the car and wait. Feeling helpless, I gave Boris a call for help.

His background seemed to be very noisy. As soon as he picked up, he asked, "What's wrong, Ms. Stovall?"

Listening to the flustered voice on the other end of the line, I suddenly had a bad feeling. "Boris, are you okay?"

He coughed for a while before he replied, "Mr. Moore and I were tricked by Dillan. We're trapped in his villa now, and the house is on fire. Mr. Moore has lung disease and the situation isn't looking too good right now!"

Panicked, I hurriedly replied, "I'll call for help right away. You should call the police!"

After I hung up, I got out of the car and hid beside it. I wanted to enter the hotel to search for Joseph, but there were constant sounds of fighting coming from inside. Since Abe was a fugitive, naturally, human life would not mean anything to him.

Before I even entered the hotel, I noticed two dead bodies beside the truck that was on fire. They appeared to be the drivers of the truck, which was still burning and could accidentally explode.

Luckily, not many people were around this area. When I still did not see Joseph, I started to get anxious. I wanted to give him a call, but again, the call did not get through. Soon, special forces soldiers had surrounded Imperial Hotel, which only made me more anxious. If they arrested Joseph, things would become troublesome.

However, if I entered then, I would be shot right away. I tried to call him again, and it finally got through this time. Joseph said anxiously, "Mrs. Fuller, are you okay?"

"I'm fine. Hurry and come back out. There're special forces outside Imperial Hotel now. My dad and Boris were tricked by Dillan and are trapped there right now, so we have to hurry over."

"Okay, but I can't get out right now. Imperial Hotel has a back door, so you should drive away first, and I'll come out to meet you." As soon as he was done, he hung up.

As I studied my surroundings, I noticed that the special forces were closing in on Imperial Hotel and quickly ran back to the car and started the engine. Suddenly, a man appeared and blocked the car. I barely stepped on the brakes in time before I hit him.

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When I raised my head to look at the person, I was stunned for a moment. "Danny, why are you..."

He hurriedly got into the car while bleeding and said, "Go now!"

Without thinking too much, I quickly drove out of the area and left the scene. Then, I looked at him and asked, "Why are you here? Are you still working with Abe?"

Due to the injury on his arm, he frowned as he looked at me. I continued, "I'll send you to the hospital!"

"You can't!" he shouted. He was already pale because of the pain.

A while later, I realized that if he went to the hospital then, the police would question him very soon. Since there was a shooting case in Imperial Hotel that day, even if Danny said he was not at the scene, his gunshot wound would still arouse suspicion.

Thus, my only option was to take him to meet Joseph first.

As soon as he saw Danny, Joseph's expression instantly darkened. The only thing he did not do was to take a knife straight to Danny's neck and ask him what exactly was going on.

Without too much delay, I gave Joseph a brief explanation then drove straight to Dillan's villa. The firefighters were already there when we reached, and Zachary had just been carried into the ambulance.

I looked at Boris and asked, "What exactly happened? Dillan actually set fire to such a huge villa?"

Despite it being in the suburbs, the villa was still worth tens of millions. What was he planning when he set it on fire?

Boris sighed and replied, "You head to the hospital to check on your father first. I'll take care of the rest."

We were indeed surrounded by many people, making it inconvenient for me to continue asking him questions. Thus, we headed to the hospital together as Boris suggested. The doctor concluded that Zachary had inhaled too much smoke but would be okay after resting for a while.

Joseph had to settle the matter with Imperial Hotel, and Boris was handling the issue with Dillan.

Meanwhile, Danny and I sat on the seats along the corridor for ages. After a long while, I said, "I know you are with Abe, so I won't ask too many questions. But considering that I have helped you today, can you tell me why Abe isn't dead?"

Danny's injury had already been treated by a doctor, and he was sitting beside me silently the whole time.

After a long while, he replied, "The man who died in Moranta wasn't Abe. Imperial Hotel is jointly operated by Abe and Armond, and the operating room in that factory you went to is also theirs. However, Armond had transferred everything over to Abe these past few days."

I frowned. "What do you mean?"

He looked at me as he said, "I know you've been trying to find evidence of Armond's illegal activities. Armond knows it too, so when you went to the village to find that family, he made a deal with Abe. They'd been doing business for so long that many of their things were old and damaged. Armond was worried since there was no way to openly get rid of them, but you gave him an opportunity. The things you managed to find out are all true. Armond wanted you to make them public since Abe would be punished in the end, not him."

I was taken aback for a moment, then asked, "Why does he think he can use Abe as he pleases?" They were both proud men, so things were definitely not as simple as just shifting blame.

"You probably don't understand Abe as a person. It's true that he's cruel and only thinks about profiting, but he actually treats his men very sincerely. After the issue in Venria was revealed, we were at a dead-end. We came over because Abe wanted to work with Armond so that his men could settle down. He would then help Armond clean up his mess."

I froze. "So right from the beginning, Armond purposely led me on to investigate this matter just so that when I finally exposed everything, it would put an end to all these dirty businesses."

He nodded in reply.

There was an unexplainable feeling of shock in me. From the beginning, everything that Armond did was to lead me to this point. He had taken the initiative to call me, revealed that there was an organ trade going on in A City, and even gave me his name card. His ultimate motive was to let me discover those dirty secrets and expose them.

I hesitated for a long while before I replied, "Was he also the one who planned everything that had happened to me at Imperial Hotel?"

Danny nodded. "He purposely used the child to provoke you so that you would become determined to take action on Imperial Hotel."

Does it mean he has planned the whole thing step by step, just waiting to lead me into his trap and eventually making me the person who would help him succeed in his plan?

At that moment, I did not know if I should laugh or cry. After all this time, I was just someone's puppet?

Noticing my grim expression, Danny pursed his lips slightly as he apologized. "Sorry!"

I shook my head, feeling a little tired. After dealing with the matter for so long, everything just turned out to be a well-planned conspiracy.

Just then, I thought of Ashton and widened my eyes as I said, "Danny, have you left Abe?"

He frowned slightly but did not answer me.

Without knowing his answer, I continued, "Can you head to Moranta and help me protect Ashton in secret? Since Armond had planned such a huge trap, there must be something else waiting for Ashton. Can you do that for me?"

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Danny looked at me with a slight frown on his face and replied helplessly, "Sorry, I can't leave A City right now. Now that Mr. Abe's been arrested, Dante and I will be too. The police should be looking for me everywhere, so I can only hide around the city now and can't head to Moranta."

I laughed bitterly.

Everything was destined. I could not change anything as it was all already arranged for.

Ten days later, Abe had been sentenced to death as Imperial Hotel was found to have hidden weapons and had participated in the organ trade.

Brandon was also charged for being Abe's accomplice.

Cameron and Zachary had brought Summer back to K City, and Dillan's family seemed to have disappeared without a trace. There was no way we could find them.

Although things seemed to be over, I was not as happy as expected and was still angry. After toying with me, Armond had hastily ended everything just like that. I had lost my child due to my own stupidity, yet he was able to gain something and even managed to walk away unscathed.

However, I was no angel and would not just leave it at that.

On Thursday, I headed to the mall.

As an apology for not attending Tabitha's wedding while I was busy in K City, I had asked her and Laurel out to go shopping together.

Having not seen her in such a long time, Tabitha seemed to have put on some weight. After some careful questioning, I found out that she was pregnant.

Laurel joked, "It's indeed different when you become a mother. Your gaze has become so gentle. By the way, the customers have been asking when you'll be back for work ever since you stopped going to work. Isn't it a bit too early to be taking time off when you're only two months pregnant?"

Tabitha smiled slightly. "It's mainly my husband who's feeling uneasy about it. If I go to work, he'll be worried the whole day and will want to find me at work. In the end, he'll be distracted from his own job. Seeing that, I quit my job and stay at home, his parents will be there to take care of me, and that's a load off him."

Laurel's gaze was full of envy as she looked at Tabitha. "You're so lucky. Your husband's gentle and caring, and your in-laws are willing to take care of you. Look at me. I've been married for six years now, but it feels like I'm a widow. I've been raising my son alone too. Although my mother-in-law helps to take care of him, she always picks a fight with me. You don't understand how annoying things are for me at home."

Tabitha replied comfortingly, "As you said previously, you just have to accept life as it is! Your husband's starting his business now, so it'll definitely be tough on him. Aren't you also taking care of your son while you work for the sake of your family? If you persevere, I'm sure you'll be able to enjoy life later on. My husband's the same. He has it tough, so we try to understand each other and compromise. You can't just focus on the unhappy parts of your marriage and ignore the good part."

Laurel sighed as she looked at me. "How about you, Scarlett? How have you been these few months? Your husband's both rich and handsome, so you should be the happiest among us. Nora called me to complain some time ago, saying that Armond seemed to be ignoring her. You guys are already so rich, so why do you still work so hard to make money? You're not short on it anyway."

I smiled slightly and replied, "A lot has happened recently but I asked you guys out as soon as I had some free time. By the way, have you guys seen Tessa recently? I haven't seen her in a long time. I wonder how she's doing."

Laurel replied, "I met her some time ago. I heard she has adopted a five or six-year-old kid, so she's probably not intending to get married. Tessa's already thirty-six or seven, so it seems like she wants to live alone with the child in the future. But the last time I saw her, she was driving a Mercedes-Benz S-Class. Apparently, she also bought a house a few days ago. Didn't she say that she was poor? Why's she suddenly able to buy a car and a house. Do you guys know what kind of business she's doing recently?"

Tabitha shook her head. "No, I don't really contact her. I'm not that interested in her affairs, so I don't really bother checking on whatever she bought or did."

Laurel paused for a moment, then said, "Tabby, you don't seem to like Tessa very much?"

Tabitha was a straightforward person who wore her heart on her sleeve. Thus, she shrugged and replied indifferently, "I neither like nor dislike her since we're just acquaintances. Anyway, we don't belong in the same world as her. I'm sure you know that she's overly ambitious. She probably sees us as mere passers-by who aren't significant enough."

I laughed lightly as I listened to their conversation. "It's okay, we're just having a casual chat and sharing some gossip. If you guys don't like something, you don't need to talk about it. I was just a little curious about where Tessa's adopted child came from. Is it even legally possible for an unmarried woman to adopt a child now?"

Laurel nodded. "I think it's possible as long as you meet the requirements. Apparently, a woman between thirty and forty who's unmarried and is doing okay financially is qualified. I think Tessa also mentioned that the child isn't an orphan. The child's mother died in a car accident and his father was sentenced to death because of some severe offense. Therefore, the child was trusted upon her."

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Death sentence?

I spent the rest of the afternoon chatting with Laurel and Tabitha, then returned to the villa.

I arrived to see Nora in the midst of moving out of the villa next door, much to my astonishment. She'd hired a bunch of professional movers who streamed in and out of the doorway toting boxes of various sizes.

Nora stood just outside the door supervising them, occasionally reminding them to be careful with her things.

I stood rooted to the spot in the yard, watching her. Nora saw me out of the corner of her eye and turned in my direction. Our eyes met, and I could see that hers were swollen and red with crying even at that distance.

What on earth has happened?

I hadn't much of a clue what had transpired and didn't suppose it was a suitable time to ask. I smiled at Nora embarrassedly, then stepped into the villa. Ashton was still stuck at Moranta fighting Armond. Cameron had originally extended an invitation to Summer and me to return to K City in the meantime. However, I was busy resenting Armond for having deceived me and in no mood for socializing.

I was vexed but was determined to try and accomplish something.

Back at the villa, I collapsed onto a chair in fatigue. At that moment, the doorbell rang.

I strolled over and peered out of the window. Nora was standing outside, patiently waiting for me beyond the gate of my yard.

I hastily walked out to the yard and beckoned her. "Do you want to come in?"

Nora shook her head. She replied glumly, "It's all right. I came over to return this to you." Having thus declared, Nora wriggled the bracelet that she was wearing off her arm, then handed it to me. Channing had originally given me a matching set of bracelets. I'd given one to Nora and kept one for myself. They weren't worth much, but they were a significant token of my and Nora's friendship.

I looked down at the bracelet lying in Nora's outstretched palm, then looked back at Nora. "This bracelet belonged to your grandmother. If you're here to ask for it back, I'll return it to you. There's no need for you to return anything to me. I gave the bracelet to you in the first place because of the relationship between our families and because I believed that our friendship was genuine. I never thought that anything could ever come between us. I see now that perhaps I was wrong. Even if that's the case, I don't want your bracelet. I gave it wholeheartedly to you back then, and I don't intend to ask for it back even though things have turned sour between us. You can do whatever you like with it. Throw it away if you wish."

I turned to shut the gate without waiting for her reply.

Nora, however, stopped the gate with one swift motion. She paused, then said in a trembling voice, "Thank you, Scarlett."

I smiled faintly but said nothing. I had a rather accepting attitude towards friendships and whichever winding paths they ultimately took. I had never pursued anyone, accepting the eventual end of any relationship stoically. In the three years that I'd spent waiting for Ashton, I knew that despite how much I loved him, I would never fight for our relationship if he'd decided to give it up.

If I wasn't even ready to strive for the person I'd loved wholeheartedly, I won't be willing to chase after a friendship. Nora was presently entangled in her own difficulties, and I thought the best course of action would be to retreat and respect whatever decision she made.

Since Nora had evidently made her choice to part ways with me, there was no point dwelling any further. I thus chose to flash a bright smile at her and replied, "There's no need to thank me. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors."

It was an absolutely meaningless, patronizing phrase that I'd always loathed. I now uttered it with absolute sincerity, however. I did hope that Nora and I would each come to find our own happiness eventually.

It was truly goodbye. I would no longer continue journeying through life with Nora, but I hoped that my well-wishes would remain with her when I could not.

The metal gate closed with a steely clang. I exhaled, then walked slowly back into my villa. Just as I was about to head into the room to sleep, the doorbell rang a second time. I opened it to see Nora still standing outside.

Staring fixedly at me, she muttered, "Whether you believe me or not, I have to tell you that I was drunk that night at the Imperial Hotel. If I had known that he would have turned out to be so violent, I would never have dreamt of calling you. I never wanted to cause you any harm, not even once."

I looked at her and smiled as it was a relief. "I know. I never once thought of blaming you. Don't worry. Go on back."

I had indeed never blamed Nora for anything that had happened. I was merely wary that Armond had been using Nora as a pawn all along.

I was on the verge of swinging the gate back shut when Nora piped up. "Brandon's woman was bought over by Tessa. You should be careful. It's not safe for you to stay here alone."

I looked at Nora, bewildered at her sudden revelation. "Got it, thank you," I hesitated then added, "I'll be sure to take care of myself."

Nora hung her head, then turned and walked back to her villa.

I looked at her departing figure with a twinge of regret. Nora was never malicious. She'd simply made the mistake of falling in love with the wrong man.

...

It had never occurred to me to spy on Tessa. I'd initially planned on meeting her in person but was worried about alarming her. If I confronted Tessa directly, there was a possibility that she would reveal everything to Armond. He would then make a move against Brandon who was vulnerable and at his mercy now. The truth was Armond had no weaknesses so far. At the same time, he was cold-blooded and poisons filled his veins. Thus, he would want to ensure complete secrecy by sending Brandon to his maker to seal his mouth forever.

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Hence, I was resolved not to tell Tessa anything for fear that the information would simply be passed on to Armond. I was afraid that before I could even get around to persuading Brandon, he would already have died under suspicious circumstances in prison.

It wasn't difficult to uncover news about Tessa. We moved about in the same circles, after all. One could easily obtain any desired information with some effort. Nuthana Gardens was a newly-developed piece of property. Not long after it was completed, its prices skyrocketed, and it was now sold for at least ten thousand per square foot. An apartment of a thousand and five hundred square feet was worth around fifteen million. Tessa had neither a stable job nor a steady source of income and had no projects on hand. Her sudden wealth had naturally raised queries in both Tabitha and Laurel's minds. How could a village girl have acquired enough to buy both a posh apartment and a luxury car in just a few months?

Armond was clearly rewarding Tessa handsomely. What is Tessa doing for him that warrants such a hefty sum? I wondered. Armond wasn't a spendthrift character. I thought of what had happened in Moranta. A niggling thought arose within my mind. Has Tessa been part of Armond's numerous evil schemes?

I had no access to the residential area at Nuthana Gardens. It boasted tight security, and external visitors had no way of entering without permission from a resident. I could thus only observe discreetly from one of its exits.

It was the only method available but also the most labor-intensive. I waited an entire afternoon before Tessa's car pulled up at the entrance around four in the late afternoon. She drove a black Mercedes-Benz that was the latest model.

I watched as the car entered the basement carpark, then fished out my phone to call Laurel. I had intended on inviting her out along with Tessa. Before I could dial her number, however, my phone rang with a call from Ashton.

I picked up the phone. Ashton immediately demanded, "Why were you sitting out there for the entire day? Did anything happen?"

I was baffled for a moment. Then, I suddenly recalled that Ashton had arranged for a bodyguard to watch over me from afar. I giggled sheepishly. "It's nothing! I wanted to snoop on Tessa a little, so I waited outside her residence to see when she came back. The security here at Nuthana Gardens is way too tight, and I have no way of entering. So sitting out here was the best I could do."

Ashton was silent on the other end of the line for a while. When he next spoke, there was a note of resignation in his tone. "Scarlett, when will you finally remember that your husband isn't a poor man?"

Sensing my confusion, Ashton continued, "Nuthana Gardens' developer gave me a few units within the residence when it had been completed. I'm sending the key over to you right now. What are you investigating Tessa for, though?"

"She has adopted Brandon's child. I wanted to see if there was anything there I could use to win Brandon over," I replied. I'd already reasoned that Brandon's testimony would be the most damning weapon against Armond.

Ashton was silent for a while. Then, he said slowly, "Scarlett, don't interfere anymore in this matter. I've already made plans to handle this. Go back to K City and take care of yourself. If you're bored of that place, come over to Moranta."

I could detect undercurrents of meaning rippling beneath Ashton's casual manner. He seemed unwilling to tell me just what he'd planned. Exasperated, I fumed, "I'm going to stay in A City. Armond took all of us for a ride from the start. If I don't get to witness his conviction and imprisonment, I won't be able to rest."

Ashton sounded helpless. In a patient voice, he soothed, "It's not time yet. Don't rush into things. Just leave everything to me."

I bit my lip in frustration. Ashton was once again treating me with the same patronizing manner as he would a child. It made my blood boil.

I hung up the phone. Someone arrived shortly thereafter with the keys. I was still harboring resentment towards Ashton for his condescension earlier. I was in no mood to continue with the investigation any further that day.

With that, I turned and headed back to the villa.

I headed into the bedroom and flopped onto the bed, ruminating over the events that had occurred. I felt as if everything I'd done had been rendered worthless and grew even more infuriated.

Just then, a phone call came from Hannah, reminding me that I had to go to K City to attend her wedding. Amidst my busyness, I'd totally forgotten about it. I hurriedly replied to Hannah that I would definitely be there.

The wedding had been scheduled for two days later.

After much deliberation, I decided to head back to K City first. After Hannah's wedding, I'd immediately return to continue scrutinizing Tessa. I thus booked my tickets for the flight to K City.

...

Hannah's wedding was to be held at Chandler's childhood home. The house was situated rather near K City's suburbs. It wasn't much of a drive away at all. Hannah had familiarized herself with the customs there. She had no intention of being caught by surprise by any rituals she hadn't prepared herself for in advance.

As she sat in a cafe in the city center, Hannah's radiant smile nearly filled the room. When she caught sight of me entering, Hannah looked overwhelmed with elation. She greeted me enthusiastically, then fired, "Why did you stay in A City for so long? Chandler has been clinging to me so much lately. I haven't even been able to tear myself away to go shopping!"

I listened to Hannah's rapid prattle in amusement. "Wouldn't you want him to stay by your side every day? What's so annoying about that?"

Hannah pursed her lips. She grandly got to her feet and did a small pirouette. Noticing that all eyes in the cafe had immediately fastened themselves upon her, Hannah immediately sat down bashfully once again. "Did you see how fat I am now? I think Chandler's been stuffing me too much food!"

I guffawed, then stopped at the sight of Hannah's sober face. "Don't you think you look beautiful now? Even as another woman, I can't take my eyes off you!"

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Hannah rolled her eyes dramatically, then wailed, “You’re not serious, are you? My wedding’s happening in a couple of days! What if I can’t fit into my dress? I can’t possibly ask his mother to alter it on the spot, can I? The dress was custom-made and embroidered by hand! It cost an absolute fortune! I’m on the verge of moving out. I have to lose weight, or there’ll definitely be a problem.”

Hannah’s noisy complaining could not hide the traces of a smile hovering over her lips. I grinned at that. If a little weight gain was all that Hannah had to worry about for the rest of her marriage, she’d have many blissful years ahead of her.

Hannah’s endless rambling was finally put to a stop by an incoming call from Chandler. She answered the phone only to redirect her flood of words into the mouthpiece. On the other end, Chandler just absorbed everything patiently.

I suddenly found myself very much an outsider in this romantic display of affection. I surveyed around the cafe casually. Abruptly, a familiar face popped up within the field of my vision. I froze.

I was slightly myopic, so I couldn’t be certain that the figure was indeed who I’d taken it to be. I squinted as hard as I could in that direction, but to no avail. I thus reached out and tugged on Hannah’s sleeve, gesturing subtly in that direction.

Hannah paused and looked over. She was similarly taken aback. Hannah quickly mumbled into the phone, “Chandler, I just saw someone I know. I’m hanging up!”

After she’d ended the call, Hannah hauled me out of the cafe. When we’d gotten outside, she immediately shrieked, “That woman was Rebecca, wasn’t she?”

I wavered, unable to say for sure.

We didn’t approach her, however, but merely continued observing from a distance.

K City was a bustling, modern city. Life here was fast-paced, and it was common to see people dashing from place to place. Nobody paid any heed to the sight of a woman pulling on a man and shamelessly begging him for money.

Hannah glanced at her watch, then looked at me with a horrified expression. "It's only seven in the evening! It's not even midnight yet. Is she doing what I think she's doing?"

I bit my lip and continued gazing in Rebecca's direction. She had on a thick layer of makeup and wore a revealing dress that exposed various areas of her body with utter disregard for the winter cold. She looked as indecent as she was legally permitted to be.

Rebecca had a gorgeous face and a lovely figure. It was usually sufficient for attracting stares anywhere she went. If the scene unfolding before our eyes had played out anywhere else, I would never have given it a second thought.

Where we were presently standing was K City's most notorious red-light district. Vice oozed out of every pore of her. Rebecca's scantily-clad self, placed against this surrounding, made our suspicions perfectly reasonable.

Hannah dragged me closer to take a better look. We could hear the sound of Rebecca's cries now, clear as a bell. "Mr. Tuffin, you promised that as long as I agreed, you'd give me the money! Now that I've done it, how can you go back on your word? You can't do that!"

The man looked visibly irked by Rebecca's constant pleas. He fished out a couple of bills from his wallet and flung them roughly at Rebecca, vehemently cursing her all the while.

I was dumbfounded. Did we just witness Rebecca selling herself? How can this be?

Even if Ashton no longer cared for Rebecca, Joe clearly worshipped her. He would never have sanctioned this degradation of Rebecca's dignity.

Rebecca stooped to pick up the bills, utterly focused on counting them while shivering helplessly from the bitter cold. Clutching herself to preserve what little bit of warmth she had, Rebecca scampered off and disappeared into the nightclub behind her.

Hannah's stupefied expression mirrored mine exactly. We were stunned while we looked at each other as if to confirm what we'd just beheld. Haltingly, Hannah asked, "That was Ms. Larson, wasn't it?"

I craned my neck in the direction that Rebecca had slipped off to, then nodded reluctantly. "I think so."

"What happened to her? How did she end up that way? Wasn't she so glamorous previously? How did she suddenly end up like this? What in the world happened?" Hannah asked urgently. She was evidently still in shock. I could see the cogs in Hannah's mind turning as she struggled to process what she had just seen.

I didn't have the answers to Hannah's questions and said so frankly. "I don't know what just happened either. I think Ashton gave her an apartment and a car that we never asked her to return. Joe has also given her lots of money. There's really no logical reason as to why Rebecca would be so desperate for money that she'd need to sell her body!"

Hannah bit her lip. Soberly, she said, "Come on, let's go over and take a look!"

The incident at the Imperial Hotel had left me with a lingering uneasiness. I hesitated, then shook my head. "I don't really want to. It's too chaotic over there and isn't safe."

Hannah was insistent, however. She pouted, then wheedled, "It's not. I'm going in with you. Don't worry. As long as we don't cause any trouble, nothing will happen to us. Don't worry!"

Without waiting for my consent, Hannah dragged me across. Upon entry, the dance floor rose to meet us, packed with teenagers wearing the barest slips of clothing. The DJ's hollers were deafening over the speakers, and the drunk partygoers gyrated to the pulsing music without a care in the world.

Hannah burst out, "What's wrong with all of these people? Have they gone insane?"

She tightened her grip on my arm as we move through the crowd, searching for Rebecca. But, she seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth. Hannah puzzled, "Why isn't Rebecca on the dance floor?"

I pondered this, then realized, "She's in terrible need of money, isn't she? She should be hard at work right now."

Hannah smacked her forehead exaggeratedly. "That's right! Why didn't I think of it?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1029

We eventually located the front counter of the nightclub but were promptly ignored by the staff. While we were there, we heard a patron making enquiries if there were girls available to spend the night with. The staff member merely handed him a card. It was all rather cloak-and-dagger.

Rather naively, I whispered to Hannah, "What's that?"

Hannah explained, "It's a card with a number on it. It's the same in other bars or clubs. Due to the wide variety of characters that flow through sordid places like these, the nightclub caters to a similarly wide range of demands. That guy we just saw at the front counter should have been a new patron. He may have come from overseas, been here on business, or was simply here to try something new. There was a phone number on the card. I'm guessing that there's a woman waiting upstairs for the customer to call the number on her card. I suppose it's pretty much self-service from then on."

I didn't understand. "What do you mean? What will he do upstairs?"

Hannah said patiently, "The units above this nightclub are all apartments occupied by women. The staff at the nightclub connect these women with their clientele. Plainly put, it's a brothel."

I frowned. "Surely Rebecca can't be in such pressing need for money, can she?"

Hannah shrugged listlessly. "I wouldn't have thought so, but after what we just witnessed outside, it's hard to say for sure. One thing we can be certain about is that she's no longer in contact with Mr. Quinn. He's getting married to a K City socialite named Jordyn Bloom. I heard that she's a sophisticated woman who just returned from studying in Granatano. She's only in her early twenties and is a young and pretty lady. It's a pity that her parents pushed her to marry so quickly. Who knows how it'll turn out!"

"Joe?" I asked doubtfully. "Is he really engaged to a socialite?"

Perceiving my skepticism, Hannah replied, "It happened a few months ago. You were occupied with taking care of Summer, so I didn't want to bother you with this frivolous gossip. Apparently, after Jordyn found out about Joe's playboy ways, she made a fuss and wanted to terminate the engagement. Jordyn only went ahead with it begrudgingly because her parents pressured her into it."

All sorts of conflicting emotions stirred uneasily within me. I'd been jealous of Rebecca ever since I came to know Ashton. I could not deny that I'd been incredibly anxious about which one of us Ashton would choose, Rebecca or me. Even though I had defeated her, I could not find it in me to rejoice after seeing Rebecca's predicament. Perhaps I had also never really believed that Ashton would leave me for Rebecca. Besides, my identity as a member of the Moore family had already cemented my superiority to her.

It was peculiar how one's family background could make such a vital difference to one's bearing and attitude towards life. Anyone who possessed any sort of self-confidence or boldness usually had the backing of a strong heritage and family status.

Hannah looked determined to continue hunting down Rebecca. Unwilling, I tugged at her, saying, "Let's go back! There's nothing much for us to look at here. No matter what caused such desperate straits to befall her, it's none of our business either. Let's leave this place quickly!"

Hannah frowned, then egged me on, "Aren't you curious at all to see how Rebecca's faring?"

I shook my head firmly. "Nope. There's no point in doing that anyway."

What was the point in witnessing Rebecca's debasement? What would I gain from gloating over it? No matter what Rebecca was doing now, wasn't my business with her already entirely relegated to the past?

Seeing my obstinate expression, Hannah decided not to pursue the matter. "Fine. It doesn't matter anyway. Let's go, then!"

There was a small alley just behind the nightclub. Hannah seemed to be in a particularly daring mood today. She was usually rather meek and timid, but today she was exhibiting a wildly uncharacteristic side of her. She was spontaneous and seemed to be especially seeking out a challenge.

I wondered if it had anything to do with Chandler. Now that Hannah knew there would always be someone supporting her unconditionally, she felt absolutely liberated to act without fear of the consequence.

I, however, hung back slightly and trod rather fearfully behind her a little way, Noticing that the last dregs of daylight were fast fading, I shimmied closer to Hannah, urging, "Hannah, shouldn't we be turning back already?"

Hannah turned to me with a mischievous grin on her face. "Chandler's still out of town, and Xavier's staying with Uncle Louis. I'm so bored staying home all alone. Let's just take a stroll together! I'm going to get married in a few days' time and will be under Chandler's thumb for the rest of my life. He won't let me out to play, I'm sure! The thought of it is dull enough."

Hannah's pout belied the warmth in her tone. I smiled at her obvious happiness. Romance was a truly lovely thing. It could utterly rejuvenate and transform anyone.

Unable to resist Hannah's cheerful enthusiasm, I thus continued down the gloomy alley with her. Nervously, I joked, "Why are we taking a stroll here? Wouldn't a mall be more suitable?"

Hannah turned to me and pressed a finger to her lips. As if she were sharing a delightful secret, Hannah whispered, "I've been hearing about this place for the longest time. Apparently it's a gathering place for all sorts of characters at night. I wanted to take a look to satisfy my curiosity."

I gaped at Hannah, aghast. "What are you so curious about nothing for? All we'll meet are probably hardened criminals! Shouldn't we be fleeing instead of charging straight into their den?"

Hannah sniggered. Gleefully, she declared, "I wrote a book recently and was considering adding some scenes set in the city's underworld. All the true crimes I've ever heard were paltry drug sellers earning a few quick bucks, though. I've never seen the real deal, you know? K City is rife with all sorts of shady characters. I really wanted to come here after all I'd heard about it and see for myself, hoping to gain some material for my writing."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1030

I groaned inwardly. This woman is crazy!

I reluctantly trailed after Hannah. We hadn't proceeded much further, however, when we came to a halt.

K City's underworld was equally as squalid as how vibrant the city was. Beneath streetlamps so dim, there was barely a glow in the oppressive dark sat a few men. Some were leaning against the wall while others perched on top of it. Some looked haggard, skeletal, and barely sustained by the occasional meals from good Samaritans.

Others were dressed in flashy outfits, clutching thick wads of cash in their hands. Revolted by the grimy, seedy appearance of the place, I grabbed Hannah and yanked at her frantically, indicating that we should leave right away.

Hannah was evidently terrified as well. She took one glance and turned on her heels, ready to leave with me. Before we could escape, we ironically crashed headlong into the one person we'd come here to meet. It was Rebecca! In the flickering light cast by the streetlamps, Rebecca's face looked absolutely ghastly.

Rebecca's eyes widened first in shock, then in recognition. She instinctively recoiled, her eyes darting nervously from side to side. Realizing that there was nowhere for her to hide or run, she faced me squarely, her eyes blazing in fury and despair. "Scarlett? Why are you here?" she asked.

My gaze shifted to the object that Rebecca wielded in her hand, then jumped in fright. "You..."

Rebecca glanced down at the sealed plastic sachet in her hand. The corners of her mouth curved up into a sinister smile. "What? Do you want to try some? It's good stuff. Once you've had some, you'll find yourself craving for more the rest of your life."

I staggered slightly in horror and gawped at Rebecca. "Did you use the money from all your dirty deeds to purchase this?"

Rebecca narrowed her eyes, then abruptly burst into peals of high, piercing laughter that sounded almost like a shriek. "So it was indeed the two of you I saw just now! I'd thought I was hallucinating," Rebecca admitted dizzily. She stuck a fingertip into the powder in her hand, then waved it in front of us. "Come on, I got lots of extras today. I can spare you a little. Why don't you try a bit to see what it feels like? How about that? Just a little."

"Get away from us!" Hannah struck out, shoving Rebecca aside. She bellowed, "Rebecca, no one cares if you become an addict. But you'd better keep your distance from us! We don't want to end up like you."

Hannah's words seemed to trigger something in Rebecca. Scowling, Rebecca snarled, "Mrs. Fuller, you're already married to Ashton, aren't you? What are you doing all the way out here, then? Why are you suddenly so interested in addicts like us? Aren't you afraid that someone will kidnap you and demand a ransom of millions from Mr. Fuller?"

"Enough of your nonsense!" Hannah snapped back in return. "You've already been reduced to such a state, yet you're criticizing others? Let me tell you honestly then, we came here to look at you!"

Hannah pulled my arm again, but Rebecca stood adamantly in our way. Raising her voice, she addressed the group of men standing behind us. "Everyone, listen up! She's the wife of the president of Fuller Corporation! If you manage to get her, you should be able to easily get a cool hundred thousand from Mr. Fuller at the very least."

Does Rebecca intend to incite my kidnapping and threaten Ashton? I pondered.

Hannah was speechless. "Rebecca, have you gone crazy? How can you bring yourself to stoop so low?"

Busy reveling in her loathing of me, Rebecca seemed unfazed by either Hannah's derision or the cold wind. One could say that Rebecca was my nemesis, perhaps, but amongst all the possible endings to our rivalry, I'd never imagined this one. There was no light at all in Rebecca's dull eyes. She looked as if she had utterly given up on herself and life.

I had no intention of squabbling with Rebecca. This wasn't an ideal environment, and the sooner we got away from here, the better. Besides, I wasn't invested enough in her to care. We were merely two individuals whose paths had crossed at one point in time but had diverged thereafter. I thus saw no purpose in further engaging with her antics.

I briskly pushed Rebecca aside, dragging Hannah close behind me. But, Rebecca stopped us with one hand. "Scarlett, do you really think I'm going to let you get away so easily?" Rebecca sneered.

Having said that, she howled towards the men behind us with a vengeance. "Inject her with the stuff! I'll give my entire stash to anyone who succeeds. Quickly!"

I froze. Hannah lunged forward to restrain Rebecca but was pushed aside. Rebecca's eyes were blazing. "Move aside if you don't want me to kill you as well!"

I struggled, but Rebecca seemed possessed with an inhuman strength. I was totally incapacitated by her strong grip.

The audience behind us in the alley sprang into action. I highly doubted that they cared about the legality of their actions. Rebecca's proclamation seemed to unleash the demons within them. They scrambled and sprinted over in their eagerness to inject me.

At the sight of those needles pointing towards me, I stood rooted to the spot, petrified. My mind raced and I panicked. These needles are all probably infected with something or another! I'm dead if they touch me!

Rebecca laughed maniacally. "Scarlett, I never thought I'd live to see you like this!"

Just then, a miraculous burst of energy surged through me. I wrenched my arm out of Rebecca's strong grip and hurled her towards the incoming needles. Without a second thought, I grabbed Hannah. We sprinted for our lives towards the exit of the alley.

Fortunately for us, it wasn't a long way off. The addicts, probably lethargic, didn't have enough of an interest to hunt us down.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1031

Unfortunately, Rebecca had given chase. Bemused, Hannah exclaimed with a short laugh, "This woman is really something!"

I found Hannah's utterance rather abrupt. Before I could respond, I caught sight of Rebecca standing just behind us, staring at us somewhat unsteadily.

Realization dawned upon me when I saw the car parked right outside the alley. Hannah's irrational calmness now made complete sense.

By the time Rebecca recovered her wits, it was far too late. The policemen were already converging on her and caught up within a few steps.

"What are you doing? What right do you have to arrest me?" Rebecca shrieked. Her cries fell on deaf ears as she was handcuffed and thrown into the car.

Hannah pointed back to the alley in the direction from whence we came. "Officers, there's still a whole crowd waiting inside! Get them quickly!" she cried.

Seeing that her shouts of abuse had no effect on the implacable policemen, Rebecca turned the full brunt of her rage towards me. "Scarlett, I won't forget this! Watch out! I won't let you get away with this!"

Hannah and I merely turned onto another path and went on our way. Rebecca's yells of abuse faded gradually into the distance. I shook my head in amazement, then turned to Hannah and asked, "Did you already have the police on standby since the beginning?"

Hannah nodded with a look of satisfaction. "Prevention is always better than cure when dealing with nasty matters like these. It was dangerous enough to drag you along with me. If I hadn't headed in with my guard up and anything had happened to you, I wouldn't be able to live with myself."

I marveled at the intricacies of Hannah's planning. I was about to continue, but Chandler's car pulled up beside us. I didn't think it would be right to retain Hannah with me when the lovebirds had clearly reunited, so I merely waved goodbye to her and headed back to the villa.

Summer was just shakily getting back on her feet after the illness. Cameron fussed over Summer like a mother hen, so she was insistent on having her. She had intended to become Summer's sole caretaker. Ashton, meanwhile, was still in Moranta. I wanted to pop by the villa to grab a couple of things before making my way over to the Moore Residence. When I'd gotten out of the car, I stopped short at the sight of Ashton driving out of the garage.

After more than ten days of being apart, I took a double-take when I saw Ashton. He got out of the car and flashed a disarming smile at me. "Did you go shopping?" he asked casually, glancing at the snacks I held in my hand.

I froze for a second, then ran into his waiting arms. I pressed my cheeks, raw from the cold, onto his warm chest, saying hoarsely, "Why did you come back all of a sudden? When did you arrive in K City? Why didn't you tell me? I would have come to fetch you!"

Ashton patted me tenderly. In a low voice, he murmured, "It's too cold outside. I didn't want you to freeze to death." He disentangled himself, then pulled me towards the car. "Let's make a trip to the police department!"

Ashton lightly planted a kiss on my forehead, then bundled me into the car. In the warmth that filled the car, I opened my bag of snacks and offered one to Ashton, asking, "Have you eaten anything?"

Before I'd finished, I'd borne the snack towards his mouth. Ashton glanced at the snack hovering threateningly near his lips, then at my eager expression. Chuckling, he opened his mouth and ate the snack dutifully. As he ate, he replied, "Hannah's wedding is in a few days. I was afraid that you'll be lonely going by yourself."

"Did you come back to be my plus one, then?" I asked, feeding myself. I didn't usually have much of an appetite when I was around, but was strangely invigorated by Ashton's presence.

Ashton smiled. "Yep!" he said. Then he continued concernedly, "Didn't you eat dinner?"

I laughed genially. "I did! I just wasn't hungry at the time, so I bought some snacks to eat on the way home. I only bought these snacks because they're so delicious."

Ashton looked helplessly at me. "Snacks aren't good for your health. You should... Oh!" As he was speaking, I stuffed another snack into his mouth to forbid him from continuing. "I know snacks aren't healthy! I don't eat them usually. It's my first time in a long while, so don't worry, Mr. Fuller!"

Ashton sighed dramatically. "I've only been gone a few days, and you've stopped taking care of yourself! You've lost weight."

I tilted my head and stared him down. "Right, when are you planning on going to Moranta? How's it going over there? Are we going to leave that matter with Armond just like that?"

Ashton gaze was focused intently on the road ahead. His brow wrinkled ever so slightly as he replied, "I'll head back after Hannah's wedding is over. You stay in K City and take care of yourself."

I chewed on my lip. Ashton seemed to have cultivated a borderline obsession with my health. Every interaction we had was sure to consist of an order to take care of my health like how Ashton had just emphasized.

The car sped towards the police department. Looking out of the window, I felt tremendously unsettled. The baby lay like a solid, invisible presence between Ashton and me. He'd wanted a child with all his heart, desperately. But all the desire in the world could not and would not bring our baby back.

We screeched to a halt at the entrance of the police department. Ashton looked at me, then ordered, "Stay in the car where it's warm. I'm going in to deal with a couple of things and will be out in a while. Stay right here, OK?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1032

Before I could ask Ashton what pressing affairs he was attending to, he'd already gotten out of the car and shut the door behind him. I reclined in my seat, feeling the warmth of the radiator suffuse the car.

Memories of the baby and what had happened then crowded my mind, and Ashton's business at the police department was set aside. After a while, I picked up my phone and dialed Cameron's number.

She picked up almost immediately. "Scarlett, didn't you say you were coming back soon? Why aren't you back yet? Where are you? I'll get your Dad to go over and pick you up," she answered anxiously.

"There's no need! I'm with Ashton. I don't think I'll be heading back tonight," I replied.

Cameron grunted in acknowledgment, then asked, "Why did he suddenly come back? How are things going in Moranta? Zachary said that Boris was getting news about the Murphys and how difficult they were to handle. Why did Ashton come back at this crucial point in time?"

I sucked in a breath of warm air and felt it settle in my lungs before exhaling gently. I then said uneasily, "Hannah's getting married. Ashton was worried that I wouldn't be comfortable going alone and came along to accompany me. He was needlessly worried."

"That's good! I was thinking anyway that if you could come over a little later, I'd whip up a light supper for you. I can't rest easy not knowing if you've been taking good care of yourself nowadays," Cameron fretted.

There was no malice in Cameron's tone, merely an infinite supply of concern and tenderness.

I knew what she was thinking and replied slowly, "Mom, did the doctor say whether I would still be able to conceive?"

Cameron was flabbergasted. She hesitated for a long while before saying, "My dear, Summer is doing fine now. She'll recover with enough care. Mr. Fuller treats you well. When he's back from Moranta, the three of you can be reunited as a family again and take care of each other..."

"Mom, did the doctor say I won't be able to conceive ever again?" I repeated doggedly. I already knew what the answer was but had to hear it spoken out loud. My hope for a miracle had gradually faded along with each day that passed.

The other end of the line was dead silent for a long time. At last, Cameron said kindly, "Don't worry too much about being able to have babies. Your womb was

the only thing that was affected. With technology being so advanced these days, you can still opt for in vitro fertilization. Don't let not being able to conceive get you down! Everything will be all right."

In vitro fertilization?

A thought sprang to mind. I quickly said into the phone, "Mom, there's something I have to do. I'll be hanging up first!"

I ended the call, breathing rapidly. My mind raced feverishly. Gazing at the police department entrance where Ashton had vanished into and I wondered. Would Ashton be willing to try?

I cracked open the car door slightly. The frosty wind immediately gnawed at my exposed face. Shivering slightly, I kept my arms tucked tightly against my chest as I hurried into the police department.

Police officers were milling about the main lobby inside. I looked around cautiously but saw no sign of Ashton. I'd approached the front desk and was about to ask for him when I heard a loud roar from behind the metal screen. "I don't want to stay here, Ash! I didn't do it! Please don't leave me here! I didn't do it!"

The high voice sounded oddly familiar. Rebecca?

I walked closer to where the shouts were emitting from. The guard sitting in front of the door jumped up hastily, barricading my way. "Miss, you are not authorized to enter."

I smiled at him politely, then informed him, "My husband's in there. He came in without me just now."

Ashton must somehow have heard my voice from amidst the surrounding ruckus, and opened the door. He looked thunderous. When he caught sight of me, his tense features instantly softened. "What's wrong? Isn't it cold outside?" he asked worriedly.

Rebecca was sitting on a chair in the room just behind Ashton, looking utterly disgraced. I didn't think it was possible for her to be more humiliated than she had been, but I was clearly wrong. "What's she doing here?" I inquired, gesturing towards Rebecca.

It felt a little cruel of me to ask when I knew perfectly well what had happened to Rebecca.

Rebecca indeed gave me a look of tremendous indignation. She practically spat, "Scarlett, stop being so hypocritical! You know more clearly than anyone else what I'm doing here. You landed me here! I didn't do anything at all. You're evil!"

"You'd better shut your mouth," Ashton growled. Frightened by the harshness with which he'd issued the threat, Rebecca's face turned ashen, and she fell silent.

I, too, was not exempt from the solemn effect that warning had, even though it had not been directed to me. My heart pounded in my chest.

A sudden hush descended upon the room. Ashton glowered at Rebecca, saying distinctly, "Nobody forced you to make those choices you made. I've given you what you were due, so don't come to me using your brother's name anymore. I am not obliged to you. Since you've committed a crime, then do your time. When you're released, don't come and bother me any further. I don't have the time to spend on people like you who I have absolutely no business with."

Ashton spoke these utterly brutal words with a leer that revealed the extent to which he despised Rebecca.

Rebecca's eyes had gone red. Stammering, she said, "Am I a nobody to you then? Someone who's merely a waste of your time and who you have no business with?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1033

Ashton frowned with disgust. "I appreciate people who have self-respect and who know right from wrong. You're none of these. I didn't come here today to help or visit you, but to tell you not to ever call me again.

I had never seen Ashton behave so brutally to anyone. Rebecca looked equally thunderstruck. She gazed at Ashton in dismay and disbelief.

Rebecca remained that way for a long time. Unfortunately, Ashton was unmoved, he just grabbed hold of me and stormed out of the room.

The officer in charge of the investigation followed us hurriedly. With a nervous smile on his face, he stuttered, "Mr. Fuller, about Ms. Larson..."

"Do what you have to do. Don't contact me about anything regarding her ever again. I'll pay for her this once, but I'm not interested in hearing about her, whether she is alive or dead," Ashton replied coldly. I shuddered. It seemed like Rebecca was already dead to him at that moment.

The policeman gaped at Ashton speechlessly. However, he maintained his professional veneer and ushered us out courteously.

When we'd gotten back into the car, Ashton reached out and took my hand in his. He gave a short sigh, then remarked, "Your hand feels so cold. How could you have been so disobedient?"

Ashton's words stemmed more from concern than reproach. I raised my head and met his gaze. "I didn't mean it. I just thought of something that I wanted to discuss with you right away, so I headed straight in. I didn't think that you'd gone in to meet Rebecca!"

I said this with a twinge of regret. If I'd known Rebecca would be there, I wouldn't have gone in to subject myself to her verbal abuse.

Ashton transferred my hands onto his stomach. Beneath his shirt, I could feel his firm, taut muscles. I reeled. What is Ashton doing? I wondered, startled.

Ashton laughed gently at my baffled face. "Do you feel warmer?"

Of course! My heart raced. We'd been married for years, but I suddenly felt shyness overcome me.

Ashton continued gazing at me. In a mellow voice, he urged, "What did you want to discuss with me just now? Was it about something interesting that happened?"

He looked at me expectantly. I rehearsed my opening in my mind once, then thought better of it. "After Hannah's wedding is over, can you accompany me to the doctor's for a visit?"

Ashton furrowed his brow. "What's wrong? Did something happen? Are you feeling unwell?" he demanded.

I shook my head. "No, it's... I would like to do a checkup. Don't you always remind me to take care of my body?" I retorted.

Ashton gazed at me intently, then agreed. "OK!"

After feeling that my hands were sufficiently warmed, I withdrew my hand. Flustered, Ashton asked, "Is something wrong?"

"I'm warm enough. Let's go home now," I replied. "We can't sit here forever, can we?"

Ashton smiled, then started the car.

The car flew past multiple homes, their warm lights forming many beacons in the dark. I pressed my lips together in a thin line, resolving not to raise the matter regarding in vitro fertilization with Ashton just yet. We'd been married for so many years now and had gone through so much together. I was lucky enough to be married to Ashton. Having a child was merely the icing on the top of the cake. After the multiple mishaps that had occurred, I didn't think I had the courage to carry another child. More accurately, I didn't believe either that I would be able to conceive ever again. Hence, in vitro fertilization would be the most feasible way for Ashton and me to have a baby of our own.

A smile flitted across my face at the thought. It was a procedure I'd never actually given much consideration to before.

...

Hannah had no family but only a few friends in K City, so Chandler's house was more than enough to accommodate her guests. Chandler's house was situated at the outskirts of K City in a village that hadn't yet been touched by the rapid development the rest of the city had been subjected to.

Hannah called me over to the hotel the very first night. She insisted on me doing her makeup the first thing the very next morning when we'd have to wake up at the crack of dawn to start getting her ready to be a bride.

Ashton, however, felt apprehensive about me leaving his side. Like a chaperone, he escorted me to the hotel. I'd already set aside the dress I intended to wear for the wedding, having already agreed to be Hannah's bridesmaid.

The next morning, Hannah donned a phoenix coronet as her bridal headpiece, and I was tasked with matching her makeup to the grandeur of her outfit. Hannah, however, constantly distracted me with her constant protests about the tightness of her dress.

Ashton appeared after a while when his video conference had ended. He stood in the doorway, gaping at us for a while, then exclaimed, "You look fantastic!"

Hannah tossed her head. "Of course, she looks fantastic! Scarlett has such a perfect face, with those refined features of hers. She's the very picture of a classical beauty! She looks like absolute royalty in that dress of hers. Anyone might have mistaken her for a princess all dressed up for her debutante ball. If I were a man, I'd have fallen in love with her at the first sight," Hannah declared, sighing enviously.

I was embarrassed by Hannah's generous compliments. Smiling at Ashton, I said modestly, "The dress is pretty cumbersome. It's a little difficult to walk around in."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1034

Ashton smiled as he took my hand in his and said, "Don't worry, I'm by your side and I'll carry you if you can't walk anymore."

Hannah shot him a look and said, "Quit it with the public display of affection."

Ashton and I exchanged glances with a smile.

Hannah and Chandler's wedding were a little extraordinary as they wanted to jazz up their wedding. With everything prepared, Chandler and his entourage, entered the hotel and headed to Hannah's hotel room. The groom knocked politely on the door three times and announced, "My dear wife, I'm here."

His terms of endearment caused everyone to burst out laughing. Hannah couldn't help but cover her mouth with her hand and chuckled too. The bridesmaids were standing by the door and proceeded to play some wedding door games with the groom to challenge his love for the bride.

The merriment lasted a few minutes before the bridesmaids agreed to open the door. As soon as the door opened, the groom and groomsmen rushed into the room together. The groomsmen quickly whipped out red envelopes to divert the attention of the bridesmaids as the groom headed straight for the bride. Chandler, who was holding a bouquet of fresh red flowers, strode fast to Hannah's side. He was supposed to kneel on one knee to present the bouquet to the bride, but in his excitement, he knelt on both knees.

His blunder caused another burst of laughter in the room.

Hannah, who was sitting on the edge of the bed, wore a stunning wedding gown. At the sound of the crowd's laughter, she curiously moved the veil to the side. She couldn't help but burst out laughing at the sight of Chandler on both knees.

One of the groomsmen hollered, "Hurry! Claim your bride!"

"That's right!"

After being prompted by his groomsmen, the nervous Chandler looked at Hannah. He blushed and stuttered, "M-My dear wife, let's go home."

Having said that, he sheepishly handed the bouquet to Hannah with both hands. As Hannah took the bouquet from him, the bridesmaids teased, "The bride is so quick to accept. But we're not done grilling with the groom yet."

Hannah smiled and looked at Chandler with gentleness in her eyes. "It hasn't been easy for him ever since our paths crossed. So that's enough of tormenting him."

After hearing that, I instinctively turned and looked at Ashton. Subconsciously, I leaned into his chest and was lost in thought. It had not been easy for us too. For us to be together, life had thrown us curve balls and tough challenges.

Chandler crouched by the bed, and then Hannah got up from the bed and leaned her upper body onto his back. Amid the blessings in the room, I overheard the inarticulate Chandler saying as he carried her on his back, "My dear wife, let's go home."

Oh, such sweet words!

And then, we followed Chandler and Hannah and made our way out of the hotel. Right at the entrance of the hotel, a dozen red Audi cars parked behind the wedding car. The wedding car was red too, and there was a woven of fresh flowers in a big heart-shaped decorated on the car's bonnet.

It was about forty minutes' drive from the hotel to Chandler's house. As arranged, Ashton and I sat in one of the convoy cars behind the wedding car. Just when we were about to reach Chandler's house, there were red balloons and ribbons decorated on both sides of the asphalt road that served as a guide to the house.

When the car came to a stop, the groomsman in the driver's seat turned around and looked at us. "We're not far from the groom's house. The groom's family has prepared a palanquin for the bride to enter the house in it, and she's going to ride in it from here."

I was taken aback for a moment and got out of the car as everyone else. There was an air of novelty in the decorations of red heart-shaped balloons and ribbons on both sides of the road. Further up along the road, there were decorations of bouquets of red flowers instead of red balloons. And since fresh flowers were expensive in the winter, they used hand-woven flowers instead.

I was right behind Hannah when she stared at the decoration of red flowers on both sides of the road. She was caught by surprise and turned towards Chandler. "These flowers..."

Chandler smiled and said, "My parents handmade them. They began weaving two months before the wedding. Initially, they wanted to use these all the way, but they couldn't weave sufficient flowers on time. That's why we only use it for this section of the road."

Hannah was stunned, and then she blushed. "Why didn't you tell me earlier? We could have helped out and eased the burden of Mr. and Mrs. Coleman. They're getting old, and this kind of work is very tiring for them."

Chandler ruffled his hair and said with a smile, "Why are you still calling them Mr. and Mrs. Coleman? You'll have to address them as Mom and Dad from now on."

A blush spread across Hannah's cheeks when she heard that.

I studied the beautiful hand-woven flowers decorated on both sides of the road. Although these flowers were artificial, each of these flowers was hand-woven with love and respect for Hannah. There was nothing more important than love and respect for one another between two people. These small details in the decorations were enough to touch our hearts.

Hannah got into the palanquin and was carried into Chandler's house at a distance of nearly a kilometer.

The palanquin-bearers lifted the palanquin carefully and slowly followed Chandler, who was riding on a horse in front of them. The handsome horse trotted to the sound of beating drums and gongs as they headed towards Chandler's house.

The big group of bridesmaids and groomsmen followed behind the palanquin and cheered. The joyful commotion caused those in the neighborhood to come out of their houses and watched the wedding celebration.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1035

A wedding ceremony is a symbol of two souls joining together as one. The committed couple will live together under the same roof and share life fully. Marriage is more than a wedding ceremony and rings. Love, respect, and kindness are the ingredients to a happy marriage. It's about committing to a life of loving faithfulness to one another.

Life is a journey filled with lessons, hardships, heartaches, joys, celebrations, the people we meet, and special moments that will ultimately lead us to our destination—our purpose in life.

I used to think that Hannah would never be able to love someone else after being so deeply in love with John, but I was wrong. Even though she had left John for good, he had a special place in her heart. But it didn't stop her from giving her heart wholly to Chandler.

Her past relationship with John was nothing more than just a memory. She had moved on and fell in love with Chandler, and that was all that mattered.

Their wedding was an unforgettable one.

One fine day she would look back at their wedding day with no regrets.

The palanquin stopped in front of Chandler's house, which was situated in the suburbs. It was a detached house with a red main door, and there was classic wedding decor on the exterior. Chandler's parents were already waiting by the gate to welcome the bride.

They came forward and greeted everyone with twinkles in their eyes and a joyous smile on their faces.

The guests and the master of ceremonies spread out and stood on both sides of the gate. With a loud voice, the emcee announced the official start of the wedding ceremony.

It was followed by the loud sound of gongs before the master of ceremonies went on to extend wedding wishes to the couple.

Next, the matchmaker guided the groom to help the bride to get off the palanquin. As the bride and groom held hands, they both crossed over a fire plate. As I took in the novelty of the wedding ceremony, I turned to Ashton and said, "I didn't know that there are so many etiquettes at a wedding."

He chuckled and leaned closer to me to explain, "Crossing over the fire plate signifies getting rid of the unhappiness of the past, and it's supposed to bring good luck to the bride."

I smiled and teased him, "How do you know that?"

Instead of answering my question, he asked, "Then what kind of wedding would you like?"

I answered with a smile, "When it's Summer's turn to get married, I'll have to think hard about the perfect kind of wedding to arrange for her."

As parents, it was what we hoped for.

He lifted his hand to my forehead and asked, "I was asking about you. What kind of wedding would you prefer?"

Seeing that he was serious, I answered with an embarrassed smile, "A grand wedding then, if I were to remarry."

I recalled that on our wedding day, Grandpa had actually ensured the wedding decorations were perfect. My emotions were running high that day, and I was completely focused on being a happy bride.

When I saw him brooding, I couldn't help but ask, "What are you thinking?"

He raised his eyebrows and motioned me to look at Hannah.

Hannah had crossed over the fire plate and was about to hold some oranges in her hands, which symbolized good luck. I turned to look at him and asked, "Is there any difference between the wedding customs in J City and K City?"

"Yes." He nodded in reply.

I had wanted to question further, but it was my turn as the bridesmaid to hold the bridal umbrella for the bride. It was customary for the bridesmaid to open the umbrella for the bride as it symbolized the bride bringing many descendants to the groom's family.

After a series of rituals and customs, I helped Hannah through the front door. There was a courtyard in Chandler's house and was surrounded by beautifully decorated white walls. The wedding ceremony was to take place in the living hall.

To welcome the bride, a red carpet was rolled out in the hall. When we entered the living hall, I handed Hannah's hand to Chandler.

Hannah leaned closer to me and whispered in my ear, "Scarlett, I think I left my phone in the bridal car. Can you help me to get it now before the bridal car leaves?"

I nodded and went out to retrieve the phone from the bridal car. Just when I was about to head back into the house with the phone, I caught sight of a familiar black Bentley.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1036

It's John!

I was not surprised to see him, but I was not expecting to see him either.

His luxurious car was especially conspicuous. I walked to the car, raised my hand, and tapped on the window. Not long after, the window lowered.

He seemed to have lost some weight since we last met, and there were dark circles under his tired eyes.

"Don't you want to go in?" I asked as I studied his pale face.

He shook his head and pressed his lips together. Then he asked, "Does he love her very much?"

I shrugged and said, "They're perfect for each other. By the way, Uncle Louis is here too. I saw him go in together with Kiki. Why don't you go in? You're practically part of her family now."

He looked uncomfortable as he stared at the door. "I'd better not go in. She looks beautiful. Please convey my message to her, and I wish her well. I blew my chance with her, and if we were to meet again..."

"I don't think she ever wants to see you again. You blew it, and there's no point crying over spilled milk now. You're my brother, and I do wish that you will live a happy life. If you really want to settle down and have a family, you'll have to find the right partner. Yvonne is not the right one for you. It has nothing to do with her family background. If you think that you can't heed my advice, then I'll suggest you consult Uncle Louis about her. The answer is deep in your heart."

Having said that, I walked off with the phone in my hand. I wasn't going to stick around and chat with him. I had to get back inside to resume my role as the bridesmaid and join in with the toast.

Back in the living hall, I handed the phone to Hannah and went to stand next to Ashton. He looked at me and asked, "Saw someone you know?"

I was taken aback and nodded. "John's outside."

Just then, the master of ceremonies announced the commencement of the tea ceremony for the bride and groom to pay their respects and show their gratitude towards their parents.

Chandler's parents went to sit on the chairs at the center of the living hall, and the bridesmaids and groomsmen stood on both sides of the chairs. It was a lively atmosphere as the house was full of guests.

The master of ceremonies started off the tea ceremony with good wishes to the married couple.

I had attended other weddings before, but none like that. So naturally, I was filled with curiosity about their customs and watched in awe as Hannah and Chandler paid their respects to their parents.

Hannah was blessed to have met someone who truly loved her.

I saw the twinkle in Hannah's eyes as she smiled up at Chandler and said to myself, "John really blew his chance."

As they exchanged rings, I felt a little sorry for John. On the other hand, I was very happy for Hannah to have met the right one.

After the tea ceremony ended, I accompanied Hannah to the newlywed's room on the second floor. The room was huge and the interior was beautifully decorated, giving off a unique and intimate atmosphere. The couple's bed was set with fresh sheets. There were a few children who were curious about the bride.

They gathered outside the door and were asking for sweets. Fortunately, Hannah came prepared and took out a bag of sweets. After she had distributed the sweets to those children, they went away merrily. Catching her breath, she took out a cocktail gown from the wardrobe and said with a grin, "I didn't know it could be this tiring. Thank goodness I will only marry once. Otherwise..."

I quickly interrupted her and said, "Shush! It's your big day—only good vibes."

She looked at me and burst out laughing. "I did not expect that from you at all, Scarlett. By the way, where's Mr. Fuller? He must not like it to be in such a lively environment."

I chuckled. "He's out there with Uncle Louis. Don't let his cool appearance fool you. I think he's probably enjoying the celebration."

Otherwise, why would he be so focused on observing Chandler and Hannah's tea ceremony?

Suddenly, there was a sound of knocking on the door. I got up to open the door. It was Chandler's mother, and she was holding a platter of assorted food. She looked at me with a smile and said, "Hi, you must be Ms. Stovall. I'm Chandler's mom. Chandler is busy attending to the guests, and he's afraid that you girls might be hungry. So I've brought you some food. Please have something to eat before the toasting session. It's not good to drink on an empty stomach."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1037

I quickly stepped aside and said with a smile, "Come on in, Mrs. Coleman."

Chandler's mother was nearing fifty years old. I heard from Hannah that Mrs. Coleman was well-known for her profession of embroidery. She had a pleasing, submissive, gentle air about her.

She placed the food on the table and reminded us to fill our tummies before she left the room.

Hannah, who was starving, wolfed down a few bites of the food after changing into her cocktail gown. Before she could finish her food, a red-faced Chandler came to the room and tugged her away for the toasting session.

When I got out of the room, I saw Ashton leaning against the wall with his arms crossed. He must have been waiting for me. When he saw that I had changed into a different set of clothes, he raised a brow and asked, "Why have you changed your clothes?"

"It's not easy to walk in that dress." I didn't want to get stepped on all night.

I was confused as he stared at me. "Were you expecting me to keep wearing that?"

He chuckled softly and didn't say anything further. Chandler, who had gotten himself a little drunk after a few glasses of wine, blurted out, "Mr. Fuller wanted you to look beautiful..."

"That's enough. Let's go. You haven't eaten, so let's go get something to eat." Ashton took my hand and made our way out. Chandler looked stunned at being cut off in mid-sentence.

Chandler and Hannah proceeded to the first floor for toasting. Louis, together with Kiki, had their stomach filled, and he seemed to be in a good mood today. It was obvious he had a little to drink.

He looked at me and asked, "What was it like when you got married to Mr. Fuller?"

I was taken aback for a moment before answering with a smile, "It was Grandpa who arranged it, and it was a beautiful wedding."

Louis stared at Ashton and said, "I'll say, Mr. Fuller, should you give her a wedding? Or maybe a wedding anniversary celebration? Isn't that what all girls want?"

Ashton chuckled and answered, "Do you have any suggestions, Uncle Louis?"

I watched them banter back and forth like children before saying with a laugh, "We've been married for many years. There's no need for another wedding."

"You can't say that." Louis continued, "As husband and wife, other than caring for and loving each other, you have to spice things up a little."

Ashton nodded with a smile and said, "You're right, Uncle Louis." Then, he looked at me with his dark eyes and said with a smirk, "Let's get acquainted all over again, Ms. Stovall. I'm Ashton Fuller."

I frowned and let out a smile involuntarily. "What are you up to?"

"He's proposing to you. Can't you tell?" Louis said loudly, waving his glass of wine about for emphasis.

I was dumbfounded. Suddenly, I saw Ashton moved the chair away from him, and with a ring in his hand, he got down on one knee.

This was completely unexpected and a little too sudden. Initially, there was a picture of Hannah and Chandler on the stage's big screen. But it was replaced with a photo of a young woman.

Isn't that picture taken when I first entered J University? I was only eighteen years old at that time. That picture was taken at the entrance of J University's library, and I was holding a book that I just borrowed from the library.

"Some people are destined to be together at first sight." Ashton's voice resonated. "That year, you were eighteen years old, and I had just taken over Fuller Corporation at the age of twenty-three. You were a fresh-faced and gentle girl. You weren't my type at all, but that first sight of you was etched deep in my mind. Joe took that photo of you unintentionally, and I've grown attached to it for many years."

I looked back at the man who was kneeling in front of me. At that moment, my heart began to flutter.

The hall grew quiet as the guests listened to Ashton. "When I saw you for the second time, it was in the Fullers' living room. You begged my grandfather to treat your grandmother's illness. He then asked you if you would marry me. At that time, you nodded and agreed. I knew you didn't want to marry someone you didn't know, but I felt relieved knowing that you were going to marry me. Marriage was useless to me, so it didn't matter who I was going to marry. But I was kind of excited when I got to know that I was going to marry you. It was not my original intention to force you to marry me. That was unfair to you. So after getting married, I was hardly home. It's not that I didn't want to see you, but I was worried that you would be uncomfortable being around someone like me who doesn't show affection. I told you before that you can divorce me when you meet someone else that you love. The Fullers will not mistreat you. But I never thought that you would stay in the Fullers for three years. The funny thing was, the longer

you stayed in the Fullers, the harder it became for me to keep my feelings to myself. You have no idea how happy I was the night when I found out that you were pregnant. I knew then, with a child, our bond would be unbreakable. That's why I thought of many ways to keep you by my side."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1038

Listening to him reminisce about the past, I was suddenly transported back to the day I received my ultrasound report and found out I was six weeks pregnant. It was years ago, but I felt like it only happened yesterday.

He continued speaking, "I almost lost it when I found out that you privately aborted the child, but thank God Dr. Ludwick said you were alright and that you actually lied to me." He sighed in fond exasperation before moving on, "You really are a naughty girl, you know that? I didn't call you out on your lie. I thought that as long as we had a child, you wouldn't leave and everything would turn out fine. I thought we could live happily as a family, and that's why I made a decision I'll never be able to forgive myself for. All these years, I've unintentionally hurt you and failed to give you a sense of security. I didn't love you enough and hurt you more times than I can count. Scarlett, I... Even though I'm not exactly a thoughtful or gentle guy, are you still willing to spend the rest of your life with me?"

Staring at the ring he was holding out in front of me, I pursed my lips. "Ashton, you seriously suck at sweet-talking—even your proposal is so sad and pathetic. You're lucky I like you, or I wouldn't be bothered listening to your nonsense."

The crowd erupted with laughter and Hannah's teasing voice sounded. "Yeah. You know he's bad at everything. Yet, he's the only one you want. Ms. Stovall, just quit the act and say yes to your dear Mr. Fuller!"

Following that, everyone else unanimously urged, "Say yes!"

I studied Ashton in front of me, my lips twitching slightly. "You're proposing to me with only a ring? What's worse, this is Hannah and Chandler's wedding. Are you here to give them your blessing or crash their wedding?"

The crowd burst into laughter again. One of the guests' children even brought over the flower basket Chandler's parents weaved, placing it beside Ashton. It was obvious that it was to replace a bouquet of flowers.

Without missing a beat, Ashton took the flower basket. Perhaps he felt that it wasn't fitting that I carried a flower basket in my hands, he stood to his feet and left the venue. Everyone in the hall was momentarily stunned by his abrupt departure.

Fortunately, he returned several minutes later with a large bouquet of bright red roses in hand. As a handsome and captivating man, he painted an arresting sight while holding a large bouquet of flowers.

He walked to my side, got down on one knee, and gazed at me with passion in his eyes. "Scarlett, I'm an idiot, but you're the only one that I want in life. I will love you in my own way and also in yours. We still have decades left to live. Are you still willing to continue this decades-long journey hand in hand with this idiot?"

Stifling my smile, I watched this man, who had always been apathetic and stingy with his words, suddenly saying so much in one go. I bet it wouldn't be too far-fetched to claim that this was probably the most he had said in one breath in his entire life.

"What are you waiting for, Scarlett? Put your hand out for him to slip the ring on!" Hannah impatiently urged beside me. Before I could react, she grabbed my hand and pushed it forward.

The ring, warm from Ashton's grip, was smoothly slipped onto my finger. Our mini-interlude enlivened the already blissful occasion and everyone applauded to offer us their blessings.

The wedding was very lively and joyous.

Only when the sky darkened did the guests disperse. Hannah tugged on my arm as she tried to persuade me to stay in the suburbs for the night. Although Ashton didn't say a word, from the way he kept a tight hold on my hand, I could tell that he wasn't accustomed to living in such conditions.

After politely refusing, Hannah sent me to the door and we chatted briefly. Before leaving, I hesitated slightly and decided to say, "Hannah, John came today. He wanted me to offer you his blessings. He said thank you for taking care of him for so many years and that he was lucky to have known you."

Hannah looked dazed for a moment and her eyes dimmed slightly. After some time, she replied, "I do resent him, but I have to thank him too. If I didn't meet him, I wouldn't be who I am today. I'm grateful to him for allowing me to become who I am now. If he hadn't brought me to K City, perhaps I would've lived on the border all my life just like those war-torn women. I'd either be a corpse left in the wilderness or made into an object for man to violate however they liked. Scarlett, thank him for me. I don't regret meeting him, and I certainly don't regret falling in love with him. I sincerely hope that in the future, someone can build a warm and beautiful home with him."

I took in a deep breath and nodded with a smile. "I'll definitely pass on your blessing to him. You have to live happily too, alright?"

After bidding her farewell, I got into the car and noticed that Joseph was at the wheel. Glancing to my side to look at Ashton, I suddenly felt the palpable changes in our lives.

Without realizing it, we no longer spoke of dreams or hobbies. Instead, it was home, stability, and an ordinary life that we sought.

I wondered if this was what happened when people reached a certain stage in life.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1039

"Penny for your thoughts?" Ashton took my hand in his, breaking me out of my daze. His palm was pleasantly warm and I couldn't help but look up at him with a content smile. "I was wondering whether my hubby is getting old."

In between words, I lifted my free hand to the corner of one of his eyes and gently touched the smile lines there.

"Call me that again, hmm?" He raised the front seat barrier before cupping my face with both hands. His obsidian eyes flickered alluringly as he spoke in a deep and sultry voice.

I was stunned for a moment before asking in confusion, "Call you what?"

He pressed his lips against the corner of my mouth and said in a husky voice, "Don't you know how you should call me, honey?"

My cheeks flushed a crimson red due to the way he addressed me. It was clearly a very common form of address between married couples, but somehow, it sounded so seductive coming from him. My thoughts were scrambled and I felt a tingle run down my spine, forming goosebumps all over my skin.

Being pressed against his body, I could smell the faint fragrance of his shower gel. Realizing that he was about to smash his lips against mine, my eyes widened and I quickly evaded him.

Laying in his arms, I chastised, "Stop it, Ashton. Joseph is driving."

He hugged me close and rested his chin on my shoulder. "Mm. Then, call me again," he demanded in a deep voice.

I blinked in bewilderment and called out, "Hubby."

He didn't release me but tightened his arms around me instead. "Mm, again."

I was speechless but gave in to his request anyway. To my chagrin, he kept this childish act up.

After calling him over and over again throughout the ride, I leaned against his shoulder, slightly tired. "Ashton, why did you propose to me all of a sudden? And why did you buy such a big ring? It's so flashy."

He reached out to touch my ring and smiled. "Joe said that girls like rings—the bigger the better. I asked him to get pink diamonds from Smealand. I didn't know what you liked but wanted to give you a surprise, so I left it to the design team. Don't you like it?"

I studied the diamond on my finger and smiled. "It's very flashy. I'd look like the daughter-in-law of a crazy rich woman whenever I wear it out."

The corners of his lips arched upward. "As long as you like it, it doesn't matter what others think."

The car pulled to a stop in front of our villa. After a whole day of activity, I was quite exhausted. Sprawled in Ashton's embrace, I was reluctant to get up. Hence, he carried me down the car and into the villa after giving Joseph some instructions pertaining to Moranta.

As soon as we entered the foyer, he pressed me against him and started kissing my neck. Caught off guard, I only started pushing him away after several seconds. "Ashton, stop..."

His breathing came in short and heavy pants. "When was the last time we had sex, mm?" Why does he sound like he's complaining?

For a moment, I couldn't find the words to refute him. He took advantage of my surprise to seal my lips with his, backing me from the foyer toward the living room. Suddenly, a faint scent of alcohol invaded my senses, which got me suspicious. "Ashton, did you drink today?"

Deeply absorbed in our kissing session, he uttered in a slurred voice, "No. I was with you the whole time. You kept telling me not to drink, right? I'm a good boy. If you don't allow me to drink, then I won't."

With that, he started to behave like a beast out of its cage, kissing me all over. Although I was shrouded in a haze of passion, my mind still registered the smell of alcohol in the room.

Sensing something amiss, I spoke up once again. "Ashton, do you smell alcohol? It's really strong. Is there something wrong with the wine cellar at home?"

It was obvious that Ashton was losing control of himself as he groped me and whispered hoarsely, "Not likely."

I raised my hands to push him away and emphasized, "I really do smell alcohol. Let's go check the wine cellar—"

Before I could finish my sentence, a voice sounded in the dark living room. "There's no need for that. I'm the one who's drinking. You both go ahead and don't mind me."

I shrieked in fright as my heart almost leaped out of my chest.

Luckily, Ashton reacted quickly and switched on the lights. In the spacious living room, a red-faced John was holding a bottle of half-drunk whiskey in his hand while sprawled on the edge of the sofa. From his unfocused eyes, it was apparent that he was completely wasted.

"John!" I snapped back to my senses and felt my racing heartbeat gradually returning to normal. Restraining my anger, I said through gritted teeth, "Why are you here? Are you crazy? What the hell are you doing here so late at night?"

Ashton was also slightly baffled at the sight of this inebriated intruder. Glancing at the man on the ground, he asked, "What's wrong? Why did you drink so much?"

I pursed my lips and grumbled, "Why else? He feels miserable because Hannah got married today." Peering at him, I didn't bother suppressing my temper as I yelled, "But seriously, if you feel miserable and need to drown in your sorrows, couldn't you have done it somewhere else? Why the hell did you come here?"

Perhaps he was triggered by my words, John raised his gaze to me and croaked out in an aggrieved tone, "Letty, are you scolding me too? Do you think I deserve this too? I think I do, but the pain in my heart is so unbearable I can hardly breathe. I never want it to end this way. I just... I just didn't know how to make her stay!"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1040

This man, who was over thirty and stood at five-feet-nine, started crying as he spoke, looking so aggrieved and pitiful. "You think I don't know I should've cherished her well? But since I was a kid, no one taught me how to love. I thought that giving her the best living environment and materialistic life was enough. She knew that I didn't approach any of those women and they were the ones who threw themselves at me. I..."

I watched as his tears and snot dirtied the sofa and the floor. Sighing helplessly, I softened my tone and said, "Alright, I know how much you're hurting now and I also know that you never wanted things to turn out this way, but this is all in the past. She's found her home now and gets to live the life she's always wanted.

No one is blaming you, John. But since there's no way to change any of this, stop torturing yourself. When you meet another woman whom you love again, just make sure you tell her and give her a sense of security. Don't be caring one moment and distant the next."

"There won't be another woman!" He lay limp on the floor and bawled like a child. In a choked voice, he said, "There won't be another woman who'd spend a decade with me for nothing just like she did! I brought this upon myself, Scarlett! I deserve this!"

For a while, I couldn't think of the right words to comfort him. He was crying so hard that his body shook from it. After some hesitation, I decided to relay Hannah's words to him. "John, the stupidest thing a person can do is realizing someone's worth after they're gone because it is completely meaningless. Regardless of how sad and regretful you are, you should know that you don't always get second chances. Hannah is now married to someone who loves her dearly. You should do the same; start your own life and live how you want to. You shouldn't destroy your future by dwelling on the past "

I had said everything that I could. Despite not knowing if these words could get through to him, but it was really time that he moved on.

His unexpected appearance left Ashton and me in a bind. He was so drunk that he could barely walk, so allowing him to go back at this hour was out of the question. Hence, we could only let him rest here for the night.

Ashton supported him to the guest room while I poured a glass of warm water for him. After making sure he drank a few sips, I finally breathed out a sigh of relief. Noticing that his phone kept ringing, I inadvertently glanced at the caller ID—it was Yvonne.

This woman was really persistent. Pursing my lips, I picked up the phone and swiped to answer. A gentle and saccharine voice immediately drifted over the phone. "Mr. Stovall, where are you? Why didn't you answer my call earlier? I'm

really worried about you. I went to your house and rang the doorbell a few times, but you didn't answer. Is something wrong? Are you okay?"

If it weren't for the unusual sound of breathing on the other end of the line, I would have actually believed that this woman genuinely cared about John. I spoke into the phone in a flat voice, "Yvonne, you've leeches off quite a lot from my brother, but enough is enough. He'll never marry you. The Stovall family will also never accept you. Greed is the downfall of men."

"Ms. Stovall?" On the other end of the line, there was shock in Yvonne's voice. "Are you with Mr. Stovall? I don't understand what you just said. Is Mr. Stovall okay?"

"Let's get on with it. How much money do you want?" I didn't have much patience for a woman like her and it was apparent from the bite in my voice.

The line was silent for a while before Yvonne feigned confusion. "Ms. Stovall, do all rich people like using money to insult a person's dignity?"

I chuckled humorlessly. "Of course I'd never use money to insult a person with dignity. The question is, do you possess dignity, Yvonne? You've been hounding my brother these days and I bet you've spent quite a lot of his money. He doesn't really care much about money and has always been generous to women.

I think you've benefited quite a lot from him. Since that's the case, you should be smart enough to know that it's time to pack up and get lost. Stop hanging around him. You should know, I'm not a very nice person. If you insist on waiting until I step in, then the consequences might be worse than you could imagine."

It was clear that Yvonne was displeased on the other end of the line. "Ms. Stovall, what's the meaning of this? Mr. Stovall and I sincerely love each other. All of you look down on me, but none of you can interfere in Mr. Stovall's marriage. It's his own business and he's the one who gets to make the decision. To put it bluntly, you're just a b*stard child. Who are you to make decisions for Mr. Stovall?"

"What is the reaction of the man lying next to you after hearing you say all this?" I taunted. Glancing at the passed-out John on the bed, I couldn't help but feel upset for him. "Yvonne, I'm a woman myself. I know exactly what you want. I could also tell at first glance what kind of person you are. As long as I want to, I can dig out every single detail of that messy private life of yours.

The only reason I didn't lay a finger on you is that you were there for John recently, but that's where my gratitude stops. It's important to know your limits. If you don't give up your greedy ambitions and force me to show my hand, then please prepare yourself for what's to come.

I won't just force you to leave John without getting a single cent from him, I'll also make you return everything he's given you since day one. So Ms. Wilde, you better watch your back."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1041

"Scarlett, how dare you threaten me? Who do you think you are? What right do you have to boss me around and meddle in my life..." Countless life experiences taught me not to waste my breath on quarreling with b*tches as I would only be degrading myself by doing that.

After hanging up the call, I turned off John's phone and turned around to go back to the bedroom. That was when I saw Ashton leaning against the door frame, looking at me. His arms were folded across his chest and there was a smile playing on his lips. "It seems like you really went easy on Rebecca back then."

I rolled my eyes at him and said indignantly, "Were you eavesdropping on me? Mr. Fuller, since when have you stooped so low?"

He cracked a grin at me and walked to my side. Draping a muscled arm over my shoulders, he led me out of the guest room and into our bedroom. Then, he pressed me on the bed and stared at me fervently. "Shall we continue where we left off?"

I looked at the clock on the wall and reminded him, "It's already well past midnight, Mr. Fuller. Don't forget how much work you have to do tomorrow!"

He raised his brows and leaned forward. His warm breath tickled my ear as he continued seducing me. "But if I don't settle things now, I'm afraid I won't be able to concentrate on anything tomorrow."

This man!

I found myself unable to resist his temptation and relented, "I need to shower first. I'm all sticky with sweat after going out the whole day."

He didn't object, but after pulling me up from the bed, he looked at me with a devilish glint in his eyes. "Let's shower together, hmm?"

I was rendered speechless, but knowing his temperament, there was no way he would allow me to refuse.

...

When I woke up the next day, Ashton wasn't in the villa anymore.

There were too many matters he had to settle at Fuller Corporation, so it was expected that he would leave early.

However, what I never expected was seeing John—a wealthy and influential man—making breakfast in the kitchen with an apron wrapped around his waist so early in the morning.

It took me quite some time to snap out of my daze and formulate a sentence. "Mr. Stovall, it seems like you've been dealt quite a heavy blow, huh?"

Hearing my voice, he looked over his shoulder at me. Perhaps it was because he had slept his hair the previous night, a section of it was curled up at a funny angle on the back of his head. Compared to his usual cold temperament, he looked a lot softer around the edges right then.

"Go wash up first, then come and eat breakfast," he instructed with a spatula in one hand, seemingly in the middle of frying some eggs.

I was initially going to say something, but seeing the look he was giving me, I glanced down and realized that I was still in my nightdress. Hence, I quietly turned around to go upstairs and change my clothes.

By the time I came downstairs again, he was already done making a breakfast consisting of toast, bacon, and eggs. I had to admit that he did quite a good job.

"Try some and see if it matches your taste," he urged, adding another egg to my plate.

I bowed my head and took a bite, seriously savoring the taste. Then, I looked at him and sincerely expressed my appreciation. "Wow. It's really delicious. Do you make eggs often?"

He shook his head and I noticed the hint of sorrow in his eyes. "I learned it just recently. When Hannah was pregnant, she always said that she wanted me to try my fried eggs, but I didn't know how to fry eggs. Later on, I managed to learn it, but I didn't get the chance to cook for her. So I thought I might as well cook for you today. Anyway, eat up."

I sighed and looked at him. "She said she doesn't hate you but is very grateful to you. You were the one who gave her a different life and she doesn't regret meeting you."

He nodded. "I know."

Seeing his lonely and sad figure, I pressed my lips together and added as an afterthought, "Yvonne called you last night. I answered it for you. You're not actually planning to marry her, are you?"

He nodded indifferently and responded, "Mm."

Faced with his lukewarm response, I couldn't help from prodding further. "You're not really going to marry her, right?"

He grunted nonchalantly again, as though he didn't care about this matter whatsoever.

Bang! I slammed down my cutlery and pinned him a stern stare. “John, I don’t care why you want to marry Yvonne. I will never agree to it. You obviously know how scheming and manipulative she is. If you let her marry into the Stovall family, how are you going to face Kiki in the future? Marriage isn’t something to take lightly. I’m not against you marrying another woman. You should consider properly what kind of woman you want to build a family with. Not to mention, you have a son—a son whom you share with Hannah. If you marry a woman just for the sake of marrying, have you ever thought about how it’d impact Kiki’s life?”

Taken aback by my abrupt outburst, he met my gaze. “It doesn’t matter who I marry. It makes no difference!”

“Yes, it makes no difference, but if you bring back a conniving woman like her into the Stovall family, when Uncle Louis gets older in his years, can you really feel at ease placing Kiki in Yvonne’s care? Can you guarantee that she won’t find ways to get herself knocked up and do something malicious to Kiki? Even if you want to get married, at least think about what kind of woman you need in your life. Don’t just settle with whatever is convenient. All I can say is that you cannot marry Yvonne. I won’t allow it and if you insist, then this is the end of our sibling relationship.”

Seeing me getting all worked up, he released a chuckle and sighed helplessly. “Fine, I won’t marry her. Don’t worry about it. It’s so rare to see you this concerned about my personal life. From now on, Kiki will be under your care and guidance. I’ll just stay unmarried.”

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1042

Now he's just taking it too far. I was left speechless by his statement and wanted to advise him against that. However, after some deliberation, I decided to just let it be. Hence, silence stretched between us for a while. "Don't contact Yvonne again from now on. We don't even know how many men she's slept with. It'd be troublesome if you get down with something because of her."

When I picked up the call the previous night, I could clearly make out the sound of a man's breathing on the other end of the line. I wasn't an ignorant child or a brainless fool. Of course, I knew what was going on.

I can't believe she had the audacity to call John when there was another man right beside her. Does she take John as a fool? Or does she think she's some kind of hot stuff everybody wants a piece of even after being used over and over again?

Noticing the fury on my face, John sighed again and said, "Alright, alright. I'll listen to everything you say from now on, okay? You can stop worrying now. I'll make sure that woman stays far, far away from me."

Observing that he wasn't all that concerned about Yvonne, I released a sigh of relief and continued eating my food. He still had work to do at his company, so he left soon after.

I dropped by the hospital to visit Summer. Although the surgery was a success, it was a major surgery after all. Hence, I had to go to the hospital every other day to observe her post-operation recovery.

"She's recovering well. Let's try our best to maintain the progress. If she doesn't have a relapse within the next five years, she can be considered in the clear. Just be mindful to maintain a healthy daily routine, and she'll be fine."

The doctor gave a few simple instructions after examining Summer and left soon after. Cameron and Zachary sighed in relief. These days, everyone had their hearts in their throats, afraid that something undesirable might happen.

Seeing as Summer was out of danger, we gradually felt our nerves loosen.

"Scarlett, Nick is in K City. He wanted to meet up with you both if you have the time. Although the two of you aren't related by blood, you're still siblings in name and friends as well. Since you haven't been in contact for such a long time, you should invite him to your place for a meal and hang out with him more often." Cameron tugged me toward the door to the ward and spoke in a hushed voice.

I was surprised and asked, "He's in K City? Is he here for work?" Indeed, we haven't seen each other in a very long time. So many things had happened in the past few years that we gradually lost contact.

“Okay, mom. I’ll contact him.” There would be a lot of catching up to do. It also got me wondering if Jackson followed him here. After so many years, I had no idea how the two of them were faring.

John called me to invite Ashton and me for lunch later, saying that he wanted to thank us for taking him in the previous night. I immediately refused him, but like a child, he pulled the family card on me.

Helpless, I ended up accepting his invitation. Done with her checkup, Summer went back with Cameron and the others. After seeing them off, I made my way back into the hospital and went to the washroom. When I came out, I accidentally bumped into someone and hurriedly bowed my head to apologize, “Sorry, I didn’t look where I was going. Are you—”

When I looked up to see Kristina, I was visibly stunned and blurted out, “What are you... Are you sick?”

My eyes traveled to the medical report in her hand and I blinked in surprise.

She pursed her lips and shot me an indifferent glance before entering the washroom with a frosty expression, seemingly disinclined to talk to me.

Out of curiosity, I checked the department on this floor and furrowed my brows in perplexity. Internal medicine? What kind of illness does she have? After hesitating briefly, I didn’t give the matter any further thought and prepared to leave.

I was so done with John. He offered to buy us lunch but asked Ashton and me to wait for him at his company, saying that his car was hit by someone and he needed to hitch a ride with us.

Well, I didn’t believe him, not even for one second. God knows how many cars were in his villa’s basement parking and could easily pick one. He’s a nutjob.

Fortunately, Fuller Corporation wasn’t very far from his company. Ashton and I drove there and waited for him in the driveway. After giving him a call, I recounted the encounter with Kristina at the hospital. Ashton wasn’t interested in such things, but he still listened attentively and replied, “I don’t find it that odd. Maybe she was down with gastric or something.”

I gnawed on my bottom lip and mused, “She looked really pale and vomited pretty badly too. It seemed like she was pregnant, but not really either. If I’m not mistaken, she’s Dr. Ludwick’s niece and comes from quite an impressive background. Oddly, she looked like she was really short of money.”

He frowned slightly and glanced at me. “That’s her own business. You don’t need to concern yourself over it.”

I twisted my lips together and eyed him. “Ashton, are you finding me a nuisance already? So much so you don’t even wanna make casual talk with me?”

He squinted at me with an amused smile playing on his lips. "Am I not talking to you now?"

That was how women were. We liked to make casual talk about other people's lives, just for the fun of it. I gave him a sidelong glance and retorted, "Are you really? You're giving me half-assed replies and you're not even trying to hide it."

He stifled his smile and was contemplating what to say next, but my attention was drawn to the scantily-clad woman at the entrance to John's company. Although she was wearing a fox fur sweater, it barely covered her body. She was so exposed that if one didn't know any better, one might think she was from a brothel.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1043

"Is she looking for John?" I pursed my lips in displeasure.

Ashton placed his hand on the steering wheel and raised his brows. "Seems like it."

Things were about to get interesting.

"C'mon. Let's go watch the show!" I got out of the car and strode toward the company's lobby, going after the skimpily dressed Yvonne. Even if she was here to see John, she should at least have the decency to dress properly. But the way she was dressed right then seemed out of character, even for her.

"Miss, do you have an appointment?" Yvonne was stopped by the front desk.

"I'm looking for John. Don't even try to stop me." Yvonne seemed slightly off and everything the front desk personnel said to her fell on deaf ears as she rushed in.

However, she seemed to have overlooked the fact that there were security guards here. She was hauled out of the lobby by them and politely warned against trespassing. Otherwise, they would have no choice but to get physical with her.

However, Yvonne remained undeterred. Even the security guards' stern warning failed to get through to her and once again, she charged into the lobby like a madwoman. The guards were startled but quickly formed a barricade outside the entrance.

Seeing that there was no way to enter, Yvonne panicked and started yelling hysterically, "John! I want to see John! How dare you stop me? When I see him, I'll make sure he fires all of you!"

The guards remained unmoved. Ashton and I watched for a while longer and grew bored. I simply took out my phone and dialed for John. The call was connected very soon.

"Hey, Letty. Are you guys here already? I just got out of a meeting. Give me a minute. I'll be down soon," John said over the phone and I could vaguely hear another voice beside him, probably his secretary reporting to him about work.

I hummed a response, not surprised that he assumed I was calling to rush him, when in fact, I wanted to ask him about Yvonne. Hence, I cut straight to the chase. "Someone's looking for you downstairs. She seems very desperate."

He was quiet for a moment before querying, "Yvonne's downstairs?"

I didn't give him a direct answer. "It's getting late and I'm starting to feel hungry. You should come down as soon as possible."

He didn't probe further, only giving me a perfunctory response before ending the call.

Never one to be interested in such matters, Ashton was looking at his phone with an impassive expression.

Meanwhile, Yvonne was still shouting at the entrance, but no one paid any attention to her. I surmised all the employees were given prior notice not to entertain her.

John came down shortly after, looking very flamboyant with a black coat over his suit. As the president of the company, he certainly looked his part with his cold and domineering presence.

Spotting me, he immediately walked in my direction and completely ignored Yvonne who was still shrieking at the top of her lungs by the entrance. He looked at me with a faint smile. "Did you wait long? I hope you're not too hungry."

I shrugged my shoulders, then pointed at Yvonne instead of answering his question. "Aren't you going to deal with that? You're not worried that it might damage your reputation?"

He narrowed his eyes at Yvonne beyond the entrance with a look of disgust in his eyes. Turning back his gaze to me, he said blandly, "This woman is stepping more and more out of line. It's quite annoying, to be honest."

With that, he walked toward the entrance, stopping in front of Yvonne to look at her with a stony expression.

When Yvonne saw him, she immediately ran toward him but was stopped by the security guards. Vexed, she yelled at them angrily, "Are all of you blind? I know Mr. Stovall! Why the hell are you stopping me? Get out of my way!"

The guards were unfazed, looking at her dispassionately while maintaining their stance.

Seeing this, she looked at John and said aggrievedly, "John, look at them. How can they bully me like this? You have to fire them later and teach them a lesson."

John sneered at her, "Teach them a lesson? Why should I?"

"They're bullying me. Shouldn't you do something about it?" Yvonne replied matter-of-factly.

John scoffed in response, "So what if they're bullying you? What does it have to do with me?"

Yvonne stiffened slightly from embarrassment. "John, what are you talking about? We're going to get married soon. Why are you saying all this?"

Impatience lined John's features and he said in a clipped tone, "I thought I've made things clear. It looks like I was not clear enough. Fine, I'll say it one more time. If you still don't understand, then I'll have to do something to make you do."

Without waiting for her reply, he raised his brows and continued, "Don't show up in front of me ever again. This is my last warning to you. I've already given you what there is to give. You can consider it a reward for the past few days—I don't really care. Now take the money and get lost from my sight. Permanently."

Yvonne's eyes reddened all of a sudden. "Why? I didn't do anything wrong. I listened to you and did everything you wanted. You said you'd marry me. Do you think you can kick me to the curb with just a few words? How dare you?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1044

John's lips curled in distaste. "It seems like you're not aware, but I, John Stovall, always do whatever I like. These are my final words to you. Don't ever appear before me. If I see you coming to the Stovall residence or my company again, don't expect to get away unscathed. I can get really creative when it comes to tormenting people, so you better do as I say."

Tears rolled down Yvonne's cheeks as she stared at John pitifully. "John, I don't know what I did wrong, but don't force me to leave. Just tell me what I did wrong and I'll immediately change. As long as you don't make me leave, I'll do whatever you ask me to do!"

Irritated by her persistence, John sneered, "Are you sure you'll do whatever I ask you to do?"

Yvonne nodded profusely. "Yes! As long as you don't force me to leave!"

"Then just die," John ordered, behaving like a ruffian. He was never one to think before speaking. Hence, he had said that to her on a whim.

Thinking he was being serious, Yvonne peered at him expectantly. "Does this mean I can stay by your side as long I die?" She looked like she was actually taking his words seriously.

John nodded and cocked a brow. "Yes. Go on, then."

With that, he looked past her at Ashton and me. "Let's go. I'm starving."

Before we could respond, a loud noise came from the pond outside Stovall Corporation, and following that, we saw the water inside splash a few meters high.

I realized with a start that it was Yvonne. Whipping my head toward John, I exclaimed, "I think she jumped in!"

John glanced back fleetingly but remained aloof as he replied blandly, "Mm, I guess so. C'mon, let's go for lunch now."

Then, he walked out without a care in the world. Ashton didn't even bat an eyelash. Meanwhile, I was flabbergasted.

Similar to me, the security guards outside and the front desk personnel were taken aback. Looking dumbly at the pond, one of them cautiously asked, "Mr. Stovall, how should we deal with this?"

John's brows knitted together in annoyance. "Deal with it as you see fit, of course. Send her to the hospital if she doesn't die and if she does, call the funeral

home to take her away. Make sure to make it a grand funeral. I think she'd like that very much."

Without faltering in his steps, he directly got into my car.

The security guards and I were wearing similarly stunned expressions.

But none of us protested. Instead, we looked toward the pond to see Yvonne struggling pathetically in the water. The weather was so cold and I couldn't imagine how she brought herself to jump into the pond like that. In short, I just couldn't wrap my mind around the whole thing.

It must be freezing in there!

In the car, I couldn't stop myself from glancing at John. "You—"

He suddenly looked at me and cut me off, "Uncle Louis arranged a blind date for me. It's this afternoon. Help me assess her later. If she's suitable, I'll get someone to prepare for the wedding."

I was taken aback and stared at him blankly for a while. After recovering from my surprise, I asked, "You're going on a blind date later?"

He nodded curtly. "It's a friend of Uncle Louis'. She's almost the same age as you. Married and divorced. No kids. Uncle Louis asked me to meet her."

I was utterly floored by this revelation and scowled at him. "Why the hell are you bringing us along for your blind date?" I really thought that he genuinely wanted to buy us lunch, but it turned out that he was taking Ashton and me along to be his third wheel.

He shrugged nonchalantly. "You know I'm not into all these things. Besides, I'm a bad judge of character, so I need your help. If you think she makes the cut, I'll prepare for the wedding. Anyway, we're of equal social standings, that's for sure."

I felt like he had completely given up on satisfying his emotional needs. All he wanted right then was to find someone suitable to be his wife in name.

After giving it some thought, I looked at him again and said, "John, you can wait until you're more emotionally stable to think about what kind of wife you want, then only go on blind dates. By doing this, you're not only being irresponsible to yourself but that woman as well."

He frowned at that. "You're so weird. You don't like Yvonne, but now you're saying I'm being irresponsible to another woman by going on a blind date with her. What exactly do you want me to do? I've already lost a good relationship. Do you still think there's a chance for me to find love again?"

I mirrored his frown and was slightly stunned because I detected a hint of accusation in his tone. "So are you saying I shouldn't interfere in your life?"

He pressed his lips together as pain flashed across his eyes. Gazing at me with an anguished look on his face, he apologized, "Sorry, I didn't mean what I said, but I just really don't know what I should do. I'm completely lost now. I've lost the most important thing to me and I'm a complete mess now."

Sighing, I felt my heart clench painfully while seeing the agonized state he was in. I shot a helpless glance at Ashton and he coincidentally looked at me reassuringly before comforting me in a steady voice, "Let's just go with the flow. Many times, people appear in our lives for a reason. It's all fate, so let's allow fate to take its course."

Since when did this guy become so religious?

However, there was indeed some truth in his words. Hence, we could only think this way for the time being.

After regaining control of my emotions, I glanced back at John and advised, "John, since Uncle Louis arranged this date for you, you should take it seriously. When we get there later, treat her respectfully and politely, regardless of what you think about her. Don't be distant or cold. It doesn't matter whether you like her or not, make sure you behave yourself."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1045

He nodded and leaned back in his seat. Sighing, he closed his eyes with exhaustion. A relationship can really take an emotional toll on a person.

As the car came to a stop in front of our destination, we got out of the car, and John stood nonchalantly at the side. Seeing the unconcerned look on his face, I nudged him with my elbow and said, "No matter what, you need to treat this seriously, okay? You're not a child anymore. Since you've promised Uncle Louis, you need to respect yourself and your date later."

"I know." He looked at me expectantly. "Are you coming with me?"

I shook my head and held Ashton's hand. "Nope. My husband and I will sit at the side while you talk with the lady. If I see you disrespect her, I will not bother to care about your matters anymore. You can do whatever you like."

He pouted and nodded obediently. "Okay."

John was about to head to the table that Uncle Louis had booked when Ashton and I were stopped by the host of the restaurant. Apparently, in order to enter this high-end restaurant, Ashton and I would need to make a reservation in advance.

John glared at the host. "What do you mean they can't enter? You know what? Fine. We'll leave. Tomorrow I'll shut down this lousy restaurant!"

He then grabbed my hand, ready to leave. I was rendered speechless by his childish behavior. Thankfully, Ashton stayed calm and stopped John. "You should go in first. We will go in later."

John frowned. "Why? Are you guys planning to leave me here alone?"

"I'll call the owner of this restaurant and let him arrange a table for us. If not, Scarlett and I can't go in," Ashton replied.

John pursed his lips. "You know the owner?"

I knew John was just stalling for time. Fed up with his behavior, I crossed my arms and said, "John, go wait for us inside. Or else, we will leave immediately. This has nothing to do with us anyway. Now I'll give you three seconds to move. Three, two..."

"I'll go in now!" he shouted and stomped angrily away. As he went inside, he kept turning around and looked at me with puppy-dog eyes. "Scarlett, both of you must come inside, okay? Otherwise, I would be very sad."

If we weren't at a public place, I would have punched him to death.

Unable to continue looking at his immature behavior, I rolled my eyes. I then turned to Ashton and saw him on a call with the owner, saying, "Is Tasty Elements your restaurant?"

Seeing the curiosity in my eyes, he put his phone on speaker. A voice came from the other side of the line. "Yeah. I invest it for fun. You want to go there?" Is he Joe?

Ashton replied, "Yup. I'm in front of the restaurant now. Tell your staff to let me in."

With that, he passed his phone to the host. The host took it over tentatively. Before he could say anything, Joe shouted, "Are you out of your mind? Why did you stop the customers from entering?"

The host was still baffled. "Um, hi. May I know who you are?"

Silence came from the other side of the phone, and Joe eventually said, "Give the phone back. You're fired."

Then, he hung up.

Three minutes later, a chubby man came out of the restaurant and smiled obsequiously at us. "Hi, Mr. Fuller and Mrs. Fuller. I'm so sorry for the inconvenience caused. Please come in. According to Mr. Quinn, your meal is on the house today, so please enjoy yourselves and order whatever you want to try!"

He then ushered us into the serene, classy restaurant, and we selected a table right next to John's.

As Ashton ordered food for both of us, I cast my gaze on the lady sitting opposite John. She seemed gentle and virtuous, albeit a little cold and distant.

I continued to observe them. John seemed to have nothing to say, and the lady did not speak much as well. They continued to eat gracefully as if they were not at all affected by each other's presence.

I then looked towards John and shot him a look, signaling him to find something to chat with his date. But he merely stared back and stuck out his tongue at me. Looking at his puerile behavior, I almost jumped out from my seat and beat him.

"Is she your sister?" the lady said. She was not loud, but the three of us heard her well. John and I froze immediately, and she continued, "Let's eat together. The more the merrier." As soon as she finished speaking, she stood up with her bag and walked to our table.

Then, she raised her hand and summoned the waiter. "Hi. Can you move us to this table? We'd like to eat together. Thank you."

Seeing that she had sat down beside me, John rubbed his neck and joined us as well, embarrassed.

“Hi. My name is Emma Lyons. I’m thirty-three years old, a divorcee without kids, and I can no longer conceive. Currently, I’m working as a professor at K University. I guess you know about my family background, so I don’t need to say more about it. As for my past relationship experience, my ex-husband was the only romantic partner that I had. My current income is thirty thousand per month. I have cars and some properties. Therefore, I’m financially independent.” After Emma finished introducing herself, she met John’s eyes calmly.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1046

John hesitated for a moment before replying, "I'm John Stovall, thirty-five years old, not married, but I have a son. He is still an infant. My income is not bad, and I owned several companies, cars, and other properties. Besides, there's someone I love."

I was flabbergasted. What is he doing? Why did he say that?

Emma nodded and turned to me. "So John is also looking for a partner for marriage, just like me. As his sister, do you have anything to ask? You can ask me whatever you want to know about."

Me?

Taken aback, I gave her an awkward smile and said, "No, I think you've misunderstood me. I'm not here to judge if you're suited for John. This is a private matter between you and him, so it's not up to us to decide. If everything goes well, both of you are the ones who are getting married, not us. We are just bystanders."

Emma pursed her lips and did not respond.

John also turned quiet all of a sudden.

Seeing their behavior, I sighed inwardly. I could feel a headache coming.

After a pause, I looked at them and asked, "Would you like to go for a walk together? Maybe you guys can find a café and chat about each other's hobbies and lifestyle."

"No, thanks. My hobby is reading, and I don't have any other hobbies," Emma replied curtly.

John also gave a terse answer. "I like to sleep with young women and spend money on them. Other than smoking and drinking, I have no other hobbies."

I took a deep breath and shot daggers at him. Is he out of his mind!

To my surprise, Emma replied, "Great. We wouldn't interfere with each other's life then."

What!

I stared wide-eyed at both of them, and it suddenly dawned on me that they're perfect for each other.

Feeling like a third wheel, I started to rack my brain for an excuse to leave.

However, Joe suddenly appeared in the restaurant with a pretty lady beside him, who looked about twenty years old. Her clothing and bag were all high-end products, unlike the women whom he would casually date.

As soon as they entered the restaurant, they found us and came towards our table. It seemed like Joe was here for Ashton. They clapped each other on the back and greeted one another. Then, they sat down at our table, and now we were a group of six.

When Joe saw me, he was stunned for a second before saying hi to me. I initially thought that I would need to introduce Emma to him, but he said, "Hi, Ms. Lyons. What a coincidence. What brings you here?"

"I'm here for a blind date." Emma was still as straightforward as ever.

Joe rubbed his nose, looking a bit uneasy. Something is not right.

I looked at Joe and smiled faintly. "Mr. Quinn, are you not going to introduce the beautiful lady to us?"

He smiled and gave a simple introduction. "She is Zelene Harrett, my fiancée."

That took me by surprise. I did hear the rumor saying that he was engaged, but seeing his fiancée with my own eyes caught me completely off guard.

In just a few days, he had already gotten over Rebecca and found himself a socialite fiancée. Well, I did not expect him to be so level-headed.

Zelene looked at us and smiled politely. "Hello, everyone. Nice to meet you all."

"Seems like you have high standards in choosing your partner. Not only do you want someone with good family background, but also a young, good-looking appearance. No wonder you told my father that we were not suitable for each other," Emma said casually, making everyone's jaw dropped.

Her words obviously meant that she had gone on a blind date with Joe before, but they did not get together in the end. And he probably chose Zelene because she was younger and more attractive than Emma.

What a small world!

Coming to think of it, the social circle of the elites in K City was indeed not large. There were not many prominent families here, so it was quite normal to have a situation like this.

I glanced towards John subconsciously, but he looked completely unperturbed. I guess he doesn't care about Emma at all.

Joe explained, "Oh, Ms. Lyons. Don't tease me like that. I'm not that superficial, and it's not because of the reason you've mentioned. Although I don't have a lot

of yearnings in life, I still hope to find love. But Ms. Lyons, you had told me that you didn't want to have any romantic relationship. So, I don't think we are suitable for each other. And that's why I went to see Mr. Lyons and told him so."

Emma did not respond and looked at him impassively as if she was just blurting out her observation and could not care less about Joe not choosing her.

The dinner had not started yet, and the atmosphere was already so awkward that I could cut the tension with a knife.

However, Zelene was completely indifferent as if she was not involved in the situation. She ordered her food politely and turned to me. "Mrs. Fuller, do you want to order anything? The steak here is really good. Do you want to try it?"

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I smiled. "Since you have recommended it, I will definitely try it. Ms. Harrett, you seem to be very familiar with this restaurant."

She replied with a smile, "Not really, but I've been here a few times. So, I remember the ones that I like and always recommend them to friends that come here."

Surprisingly, Zelene was nothing like Rebecca. With Joe's personality, I thought he would find someone similar to his ex-crush, but Zelene and Rebecca were like chalk and cheese.

After chattering for a bit, I stood up from my seat and headed to the restroom. When Ashton saw me leaving, he quickly stopped his conversation with Joe and wanted to accompany me, but I declined as I did not want to interrupt them.

A few minutes later, I stepped out of the restroom and bumped into Joe, who was leaning against the wall of the corridor. I thought he was waiting for someone, but I looked around and saw no one. Hmm, who is he waiting for?

After hesitating for a moment, I walked towards him and asked out of politeness, "Are you waiting for Ms. Harrett?"

He lifted his gaze and looked at me coldly. "I'm waiting for you."

I furrowed my brows, puzzled. "Why?" I don't think we have anything to talk about. Joe had never liked me. All these years we rarely interacted with one another even though he was my husband's close friend.

"Can I help you with anything?" I asked, stopping in my tracks.

He arched an eyebrow and cut to the chase. "Can we talk somewhere else?"

I don't think I have a choice, do I? So, I nodded and gestured. "Sure."

As we arrived at the stairwell, he put his hands in his pockets and leaned his tall figure against the wall, giving off an aura of grimness. I remained silent and stared at him, waiting for him to speak first.

After a pause, he lit a cigarette and took a long drag on it. "Were you the one who reported Rebecca to the police?"

I frowned. Gosh, is he here for Rebecca? I thought he had moved on! Apparently, he still cares about her.

"I found her by accident, so I called the police," I told him truthfully. That night, Hannah and I went to the alley out of curiosity. I never thought Rebecca would be like that.

He exhaled slowly and cast an icy gaze at me. "Ashton has given his heart to you. What else do you want from her? Why do you have to push her over the edge? You just want her to die, don't you?"

Hearing his accusation, I was stupefied. I could not help but ask, "Mr. Quinn, don't you think there's something wrong with your logic? She was the one who committed the crime. I did not force her to do it. And I have never harmed her. That night, I saw her purely by chance. I called the police because she was doing something terribly wrong. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Are you expecting me to ignore what I saw and let her continue to ruin herself?"

He scoffed, "It's up to her to decide what to do with her life. Besides, you could have solved the problem in another way, but you chose the one that made her suffer the most. You caused Ashton to completely give up on her and took away the light in her life. Scarlett, you're even more wicked than I thought."

I blinked in bewilderment. What? Is there something wrong with him? What does he mean by "you can solve it in another way?" Exasperated, I said, "So, you think that it was my plan to get her arrested so that Ashton would give up on her? Joe Quinn, you're freaking ridiculous! What makes you think that I would use my precious time to do something that would bring me no benefits but harm?"

Then, I continued, "To be honest, I don't care about Rebecca at all; she isn't worth my attention. She's nothing but a woman who only knows how to cling onto men and leech off them. She could have improved herself over the years, but she didn't. Even if Ashton likes her, I don't think any man could put up with a woman like her for long. What kind of man could tolerate her and love her forever? Speaking of which, Joe, didn't you give up on her as well? What makes you think that you have the right to question me?"

Taken aback, he stubbed out his cigarette and stared at me blankly. After a long while, he replied coldly, "Don't change the topic. It's your fault. You didn't have to send her to the police, but you showed no mercy and did it anyway. Her reputation and her life are ruined because of you. Even if she could get out of jail one day, how can she survive in society? Scarlett, you're such a cruel woman."

"Hahaha!" I couldn't help but burst out laughing at his preposterous reasoning. How ridiculous can he get?

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He was stunned by my sudden outburst of laughter, furrowing his eyebrows at me. "What are you laughing about? Do you find this funny? Did I say something wrong?"

It took me a long while to calm down, wiping away tears from my eyes. "There's no way you believe the words that are coming out of your mouth, right?" I said sarcastically. "How could you say such a thing so confidently? You say that she'll lose everything if she goes to jail, but I honestly want to ask you: are you absolutely sure that you have no way of getting her out of there? Is the Kane family so powerless that they can't rescue a single person from prison? Besides, did you think that she was really going to become famous, even if she hasn't been sent to jail? Of course not. Everyone in our circle is aware that she's your and Ashton's precious little doll. Did you think that she would find a partner among us when you let her fly out of the nest? You know more than anyone else that she's just going to end up relying on some old man's money to survive and become nothing more than a toy.

"Admit it. You've fallen out of love with her a long time ago and started to resent her. Why else would you tell her such horrible things at the hospital? You wanted to force her to leave you, yet didn't want to be stuck with the reputation of an asshole, so you just let go of her reins and watched as she made mistake after mistake, until she'd finally reached the point of no return. You are half the reason why she's turned out this way. You were satisfied with the outcome, but you despised the thought of having to take responsibility for your actions! So, in an act of fake self-righteousness, you came to interrogate me and pushed all the blame onto me, making me out to be the villain in the situation. Although, to be honest with you, you really shouldn't have wasted your efforts. Even if you force me to take the blame for your actions, you'd still be regarded as a scummy human being in other people's eyes. So please quit the whole good guy act, or I might just throw up."

I hadn't meant to verbally abuse him, but I couldn't stop myself.

Joe was flushed all the way up to his neck in anger, and I let out an internal scoff at the sight. Nothing about this man was genuine. He'd already committed so many evil acts, yet still insisted that his hands were clean. How ridiculous!

There was no point in continuing the conversation any longer. "You better watch out!" I warned, turning on my heel and walking away.

"You have some nerve—forcing other people to take the fall for you!" he roared out from behind me. "No wonder Ashton is head over heels for you! You're a conniving, sneaky witch!"

I glanced back over my shoulder at him, flashing a polite smile. "You flatter me, Mr. Quinn. Look, if you really can't let go of this, I have a suggestion for you: wait until she gets out of prison, then you can bring her back home to be your precious little doll once more. But by that time, she'd be old and wrinkly, and

you'd probably refuse to take her in. There's no way you could appreciate a woman like that, right?"

After saying so, I left him and headed for the restaurant. Ashton was already waiting outside for me, approaching me as soon as he spotted me. "What took you so long?"

Looping my arm through his, I said cheerily, "Just met a familiar toilet and had a chat with him, so I figured I might as well take out the trash! My mood's greatly improved, and I feel so refreshed."

"What are you talking about?" His eyebrows knitted together.

"I meant to say that I had a nice trip to the loo!" I grinned.

Sighing in exasperation, he flicked my forehead lightly. "Watch your mouth."

Joe, who was trailing behind me, brushed roughly past us as he stormed off towards the lobby, spitting out, "Shameless woman!" as he did so.

"What did he say?" Ashton looked at me, perplexed.

I shrugged. "It's about Rebecca. He didn't want to abandon her in a distasteful manner and wanted to keep his image squeaky clean. When that plan failed, he got frustrated and took out all his humiliation on me."

Ashton's lips pursed as he stared at the back of Joe's silhouette. "He's getting married to that woman from the Harrett family soon, so it's about time he moves on from Rebecca. The Kanes and the Harretts' future business cooperations will benefit each other greatly."

I wasn't interested in any of Joe's business. "Rebecca's life has all gone down the drain. She didn't have any good people around her, and she didn't have a career of her own," I lamented.

The worst thing a woman could do was to entrust all of herself to a man and spend all of her time and energy on him only to get dust in return. Then, there was nothing she could do except to wait until she had become useless to him and get thrown away like an old rag.

Perhaps Rebecca's misfortune had started from the moment Parker entrusted her to the group of friends.

The poor woman had never gotten a chance to plan her life out properly. She had not only lost her pride and independence because of love but had now also lost the motivation to continue living. There was nothing more she could do now except be another rich man's eye candy, but her beauty could only last for so long. She had already ruined her own life with her own two hands.

“I have to go to A City tomorrow to handle some things,” Ashton suddenly spoke up. “It’s time we start living for ourselves too, Scarlett.”

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A little surprised by his words, I squinted my eyes at him. "A City?"

The corners of his lips quirked up into a smirk. I could see the bloodthirst and fury swimming deep in the depths of his eyes, even if he was doing his best to hide them.

"We can't let the child's pain be for nothing, can we?"

Oh. He was finally going to make a move on Armond. After a slight pause of hesitation, I asked, "Can I come with you?"

"Why? Will you miss me too much when I'm gone?"

I nodded, smiling up at him. "I guess. So, how about it? Can I go with you?"

As long as the issue with Armond was left unresolved, we would both have sleepless nights. Although we would have preferred to live a peaceful and mundane life, we knew that we might face even more pain and suffering in the future if we didn't handle the issue as soon as possible.

So, Ashton agreed to let me accompany him on his trip.

Joe didn't even stay for the remainder of the meal, merely telling Ashton the date of his and Zelene's engagement before dragging her away with him. It seemed that their marriage had been confirmed.

I hadn't expected two weirdos like John and Emma to get along, but to my surprise, they exchanged contact details before they left, and even made plans to eat dinner together tonight at the Stovall residence. John later approached Ashton and me to inform us that he wanted to host a small party to celebrate Kiki's birthday, thus coming up with the idea of inviting everyone over to the Stovall residence for dinner.

Hannah and Chandler were likely to be there because of Kiki. Hannah had also moved on from everything, so what was John's motive in bringing Emma along?

After leaving the restaurant, Ashton handled some work issues before going to the shopping mall with me to make sure that we didn't show up to Kiki's birthday party empty-handed.

We strolled around the mall for a bit, where Ashton ended up choosing a Transformers toy as well as a customizable black race car. His reasoning was that all children enjoyed driving around tiny vehicles of their own, and the Stovall residence's yard was large enough for Kiki to do just that.

We bumped into some familiar faces as soon as we left the mall. It was Sally, and with her was the professor that we'd seen once before at the restaurant, Jim.

Having met once prior to that, the atmosphere between us wasn't as awkward anymore. Sally waved at us, politely inquiring, "It's rare to see Ashton in the malls. Did you come to buy something in particular?"

Ashton nodded, but said nothing.

His dark gaze fell upon Jim, an unrecognizable emotion in his eyes as he stared at the man. I didn't understand these sorts of non-verbal cues between men, so I chose to ignore them.

I couldn't help but feel like Sally was glancing down at my tummy on and off as she spoke. "I know we've all been incredibly busy recently, but I've been thinking if we should all return to J City and celebrate the new year as a family. Ashton, you know Uncle Charlie and Aunt Helen are getting older with no children to accompany them. Besides, you're usually so occupied with work that you rarely visit them. It'd be nice to take a break for a family reunion. I doubt you've even been to the old Fuller family home these past few years."

Ashton nodded, simply replying, "We'll see."

"By the way, Jim and I are planning to hold a wedding soon," Sally told him, sounding slightly apprehensive. "Do you have any opinions about that? We're both in our late forties already, and we want to start living a happy life..."

"Have the Murphys agreed to you two being together?" Ashton interrupted, turning his attention to Jim.

"That is solely between your aunt and me," Jim answered, as elegant and self-composed as ever. "The Murphy family has no business interfering with our relationship."

The Murphys?

There were very few "Murphy" families in K City. Was the Murphy family he mentioned the same as the one on my mind?

Ashton's mouth quirked slightly, but the rest of his expression revealed no emotion. "Maybe you should wait until next year. It's still too early to make this decision."

Sally's face fell, presumably feeling as confused as I was. "What are you talking about, Ashton? There's nothing problematic between Jim and me, so I didn't think you'd oppose our relationship."

"Scarlett and I are busy. Let's talk about this another time. I suggest you ask him about his family and find out more about his background before deciding on

anything." Not wanting to continue the conversation any further, he tugged on my arm and we left the mall.

While in the car, I spoke up, "Let's make a stop at the local pet shop. I think Kiki would like to have a small puppy friend to play with."

He nodded in response, pressing the gas pedal and driving off.

We sat in silence for a while before I stole an uncertain look at him. "Are you sure Uncle Jim is one of the Murphys that we know of?"

Ashton made a sound of admittance. I continued on, "Did you find out after looking into him, or did you know since the beginning?"

Even though the Murphys had a lot of children and Armond was likely one amongst many descendants, they had always been a very lowkey family that rarely made any public appearances.

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"The Murphys have many children, but there is only one who controls the family fortune and business," Ashton explained while driving. "Robert Murphy and Armond aren't immediate family members. Robert has three sons—all three of whom are not employed at the Murphy Corporation. The rest of his grandchildren have all also started up their own businesses in fields of their own choosing. Jim is Robert's third son and loves literature, so he focused solely on learning literature and arts since young."

"So, Armond is..."

"He's Robert's eldest's son's grandson. He was chosen to inherit the family business because he has a strong interest in business and earning money. Unfortunately, Armond was so determined to make a profit that greed consumed his morals, bringing lots of trouble to the Murphy family. That's why the Murphys have fallen far from what they used to be in the past."

"I see." It made sense that not every child in a large family would have the talent to go into business. Some would prefer arts, some would prefer research, and others would prefer to live on their parents' money and not ever having to work for a living. If you wanted your family to continue expanding and growing, you had to pick and choose among those children the best candidate to manage the family business. Sadly for the Murphys, Armond has no virtues in his business dealings.

There were always blurred lines between right or wrong. Once someone was cornered, they would resort to whatever methods possible to get out of that. Armond was way too ambitious and predatory, and as a result, the Murphy family hadn't expanded as well as his elders had expected.

"But even so, it shouldn't affect Aunt Sally and Uncle Jim's marriage much. After all, Jim didn't take part in his family's fight for power."

"Idiot." He chuckled, giving me a sidelong glance. "It's impossible for a family to expand if it's solely reliant on one person. It relies on everyone in the family's hard work and effort. If nothing happens to the Murphys, they naturally stay out of each other's business, but once problems arise, the family name becomes everyone's top priority. They will each utilize all their power and resources to defend their fellow relatives. It's just like a country; everyone usually minds their own business, but if it comes down to a life-or-death situation, we'll band together and do our best to contribute even the slightest of efforts for our country."

He has a point.

Once the Fuller family tries to take on Armond, it will become a full-on war.

At the pet shop, I bought a month-old golden retriever puppy so small that it could fit in one of my palms. I was clueless about how I should take care of it

properly. The staff kindly wrote down a list of possible situations and what to do when facing those situations on a piece of paper for me. He also advised me to visit the pet shop again any time if I was truly at a loss. They also gifted some dog food and toys along with my purchase.

The sky outside was already dark as I left the pet shop, having given the Stovall residence's address to the staff and requesting for them to send the puppy to the house. Then, Ashton and I got in the car and headed for the hospital. Summer had gone through her check-up last night and wanted to come home tonight to sleep in her own bed. Cameron had been busy with her own work, so I had no choice but to hire a caregiver for Summer, who had insisted on returning back to the Moore Residence and on Ashton personally picking her up from the hospital.

When we got there, I waited downstairs in the lobby, resting my sore legs while Ashton went upstairs to her ward.

I didn't expect to see Kristina stumbling into the hospital lobby. She seemed to be in an incredibly bad shape, barely taking a few steps into the building before collapsing onto the floor. Luckily, several observant nurses immediately noticed her and hauled her away to the ER.

Out of curiosity, I followed them over.

Standing at the entrance to the ER room, I waited for one of the nurses to come out before asking, "Excuse me, is the woman inside alright? What happened to her? She looked to be in a horrible condition."

"Of course she looks horrible, she has lung cancer," the nurse sighed, shifting the weight of some medical instruments in her arms. "It's already in its late stages. We kept asking her to come to the hospital for treatment, but her family didn't take any of our advice to heart. She's finally come back after her health has deteriorated this much, but I suspect she doesn't care much for her own life at all."

"Lung cancer?" I did a double-take. "How could she have gotten lung cancer? What happened?" Kristina had grown up in a healthy, clean environment. Usually, lung cancer patients were workers at chemical plants or had lived in an environment with a lot of dust and air pollution. But Kristina's life hadn't been like that at all!

"It was caused by a respiratory tract infection. Probably because of long-term contact with some sort of chemical. Are you her friend? Advise her to receive treatment and don't let it drag on any longer. It won't do her any good at all if she continues like this."

I nodded, in a daze as I watched the nurse walk off. How could Kristina have gotten lung cancer, of all things? I couldn't believe it.

It was only when Ashton called my phone to ask where I was that I realized what we'd come to the hospital for. I quickly rushed back down to the lobby and

spotted him helping Summer into his car. "What happened? I thought you told me that you'd be waiting in the lobby," he asked when he saw me.

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"I just met an old acquaintance, so we chatted a bit," I answered. "Come on. We have to go to Uncle Louis' later tonight, too!"

Summer clung to me during the entire car ride. The poor thing had become so fragile that she was nearly just skin and bones, and it felt slightly unnerving when she hugged my arm. "Mommy, are you guys going out on a business trip again? Can you take me with you this time? I don't wanna be alone again. You've been so busy that you never come to visit me. Do you not want me anymore, Mommy?"

Her words reminded me that she was still an innocent and naïve child. Running a hand over her smooth scalp, I smiled wryly as I responded, "I will never abandon you, Summer. It's just that I still have a lot of tasks left unfinished. When everything is over and done with, we'll stay in K City with you every day, okay?"

Puffing her cheeks out indignantly, she nodded in acknowledgment and tightened her grip on my arm. When we arrived at the Moore residence, her caregiver helped bring Summer into the house before Ashton and I left for the Stovall residence.

"Did Jared get out of jail early?" I asked while on the way there.

"Why do you bring him up so suddenly?" Ashton was stunned as he looked at me out of the corner of his eye. "What happened?"

"Nothing. He just randomly came to mind." I shook my head. "Knowing the Crest family's influence, I thought that they'd try to get him out as soon as possible. After all, he's one of them."

Ashton didn't seem as sensitive regarding the topic anymore. Perhaps he would feel relieved and even happy if Jared could get out of jail sooner rather than later. After all, they used to be best friends. Even though there had been some arguments, he had likely chosen to forgive and forget and let time heal his wounds.

"I'm sure the Crest family will take care of Jared's situation," he said, keeping his eyes on the road. "Besides, he might be going to W City in the future, so we'll probably fall out of contact with each other."

I pursed my lips. Ashton's resentment and hatred towards Jared had all disappeared by then.

I turned and fixed him with a solemn stare. "If I didn't want him to come out, and prefer him to stay in there forever until he dies alone, would you be against that?"

I wasn't even sure what my own answer to that question was. "Is it because of Summer's illness?" He glanced at me in confusion. "You resent him and don't want him to come out because you want him to suffer more?"

"Yes, but not completely." If I had only felt shocked by Jared initially, those feelings had all turned to detest by then. Everyone had a dark side to them, even the most angelic and righteous of people. Some were just better at hiding it from others.

Jared was especially despicable because he appeared to be a good person, but there was not a single trace of kindness to be found in his heart at all. If Summer's illness was an accident, then Kristina's couldn't have been an accident too.

He was clearly out to commit murder. I didn't know what he did to Kristina to cause her to be diagnosed with lung cancer, but I was absolutely sure that he had placed Summer in the chemical plant with the intention to make her sick.

It couldn't be a coincidence that Kristina and Summer had both stayed in a chemical plant before, and both had gotten sick. That meant that the rest of the employees at that plant also had to be suffering some side effects from working there in order to earn money for their families. Unfortunately, those employees might now have to live with a crippling sickness for the rest of their lives.

The blatant disregard for other people's wellbeing was exactly why I resented Jared so much. After leaving the hospital, I couldn't stop thinking about how much I wanted him to remain in jail forever, and about how I would never let Summer near him ever again.

Ashton's eyebrows knitted together as he stayed silent for a minute. "What do you want to do?"

"Have you ever thought about investigating the chemical plants in W City registered under the Crest family name?"

He frowned. "Exactly who did you bump into today?"

"It's Kristina. She is diagnosed with terminal stage lung cancer!" I was aware that my way of handling this problem might have been a little extreme, but I couldn't think of any other methods to go about it.

Ashton wasn't dumb. He understood what I was implying, deep in contemplation before saying, "I'll instruct someone to go and investigate for you. If Jared really has something to do with this, I'll contact the police and get them involved. You don't need to get your hands dirty or think about matters that have nothing to do with us anymore, Scarlett. We're just normal people now. All we can do now is protect those we hold dear to us, you understand?"

His words took me aback, causing a wave of unrecognizable emotions to rise within me. It was as if I had suddenly realized the true nature of the person I was in love with. He had a point—we were all just a small part of this huge world, and

being able to care for those around us was good enough. We didn't have an obligation to sacrifice our time and energy to interfere with other people's lives.

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Hannah and Chandler were already at the Stovall residence when Ashton and I arrived. Clearly excited to be with Kiki after a long while, Hannah was holding her son in her arms as they played together in the child's room while Chandler watching over them warmly. The whole image looked very heartwarming.

I had a sneaking suspicion that John might actually be a masochist of some sort. He knew that he would be upset by the sight, yet insisted on making up random excuses to keep going to Kiki's room to take another look at them, and then returning to the living room and plopping down on the sofa in a daze. Even Louis couldn't stand it anymore after watching this process repeat itself over and over, scolding him outright, "Get ahold of yourself! Didn't you invite Ms. Lyons over? Go out and welcome her in; this house is too large for her to find her way around."

"There are servants at the door that will help lead the way, so why should I go?" John kicked back and leaned against the sofa lazily.

"Greeting people at the door is the very basic manners of the Stovall family!" Louis shouted at him. "You know damn well why you should go greet her!"

Silently admitting defeat, John slumped away to the main entrance to wait for Emma to arrive.

Ashton then started up a conversation with Louis while Kiki started sticking by Chandler's side, insisting on playing with him and him only.

Realizing that she was being left out, Hannah left the bedroom and sat down beside me. "I can't believe I spent ten months fretting and worrying over my pregnancy only to give birth to a traitor," she joked. "I couldn't even get a good night's sleep, but look at my son now."

"Kiki kept looking for you these past few days, though," I pointed out, laughing. "And his Uncle Louis has already been tormented enough. Kids are born mischievous and playful, so don't blame him for it. He'll come back to you when he gets tired and sleepy."

She nodded and sighed. "I think Kiki stopped drinking breastmilk way too early. I'm a little worried whenever I see that his body is smaller compared to other kids his age. Did Summer not drink much breastmilk as well?"

"Macy left right after Summer was born," I explained. "At that time, there were too many things happening at once and I was unable to take care of Summer, so Jackson and Nick essentially raised her. I did consider later on feeding her breastmilk, but it loses nutritional value after it expires, so I never ended up doing it. She used to be smaller than what Kiki looks like now, actually. Afterward, I brought her to live in R Province for a few years, where the environment was great and clean. She was getting better and healthier, and then I brought her

back to K City again. Looking back on it now, my neglect and failure to plan ahead was a large reason why Summer fell sick.”

“There’s no way you could have planned for this, so don’t blame yourself,” she argued. “Besides, Summer still has a chance at growing up healthily if she just focuses on recovering right now. By the way, I heard from Uncle Louis that there are more guests coming?”

“My brother invited his blind date, a woman from the Lyons family. I think you’ve heard of her.”

Hannah nodded. “The Lyons family have a reputation in K City for being made up entirely of scholars, and their children have all studied literature. But, why would the Lyons want to arrange a marriage with the Stovalls?”

“The woman is around thirty years old, and this would be her second marriage. She doesn’t have any children because she’s physically unable to give birth to any. Maybe they agreed to let John marry her purely because they were afraid no one else would. On the other hand, John already has a child, so he doesn’t need to produce any more heirs or anything; he just wants to get married solely because he wants someone to stay at home to take care of the children and Uncle Louis. When Uncle Louis eventually grows old and weak, there will be a lot of chores at home that need a woman’s help.”

“Oh.” Hannah glanced at me. “But John is such a prideful guy. Do you think he’ll agree to the marriage?”

“Uncle Louis told him that it’s all up to him. Besides, John was the one who invited Ms. Lyons over, so he clearly knows what he’s doing. We don’t have to worry about him.”

John and Emma had entered the living room during our conversation. Emma had changed into an outfit with softer textures and warmer, lighter colors, and had also removed some of her makeup to appear kinder than usual.

Hannah and I both stood up, smiling politely at her. “Welcome to the Stovall residence, Ms. Lyons!”

I had already met Emma once before, so she greeted me casually. When she turned to Hannah, something flashed through the depths of her eyes. “Are you Hannah?”

Wow. She came prepared.

Hannah’s mouth fell open at the sudden question but quickly regained her composure. “Yes. It’s nice to meet you.”

John stayed silent in front of Hannah like he always did, gazing at her with a cold stare that had hints of regret and pain.

It seemed like he was determined to marry Emma.

Now that everyone was accounted for, Louis called for the maids to serve the food. Chandler carried Kiki in his arms as he came downstairs, giving Emma a polite smile as a greeting.

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After everyone was seated, Louis invited everyone to begin eating. Emma sat right next to me and I spotted her gaze darting back and forth between Hannah and Kiki. "What a beautiful pair," she finally remarked, looking at John, "You guys were a family, right?"

John was stunned for a moment but quickly regained his calm. "You can say so," he admitted without shying away.

I thought Emma would be affected by John's forthright answer, but instead, she shrugged indifferently. "Serves you right. You should've treated them nicely when you still had them by your side. You only have yourself to blame since you're the one who had an affair."

Her comment took me by utter surprise.

John would have lashed out at her on usual days, at least that was what I expected, but I got it all wrong. John looked back at her nonchalantly and emulated her shrug. "If you say so," he replied shortly.

I really could not get my head around those two. How they interacted with each other was just beyond me.

Everyone stayed back for a little chat after the meal.

Kiki was already fast asleep and everyone was getting ready to leave when a loud ruckus sounded from the outside, so Louis asked someone to go check it out.

The housekeeper returned and walked right toward John. "Mr. Stovall, someone's looking for you."

"Me? Who is it?"

The housekeeper looked stumped. "It's the lady who came over with you last time, Ms. Wilde."

"I don't know her. Tell the guards to throw her out before she dirties this place," John replied coldly.

The housekeeper stared at him uneasily for a second and went back outside to do as John said.

Since it was getting late, Hannah and Chandler decided to make a move first. Louis asked John to send Emma back since Ashton and I was also leaving.

When all of us were at the front gate, we saw Yvonne outside, with a few security guards blocking her way. She looked frail and weak in her hospital gown.

She was wailing and shrieking at the top of her voice, accusing John of being cruel toward her. If a random stranger were to pass by, they might well mistake John for being a heartless brat.

As for Emma, I did not worry for her at all. I was sure she would not take Yvonne's behavior to heart.

What I worried about was Louis' reputation if Yvonne kept shouting outside like this.

"You should at least do something. Uncle Louis won't be able to sleep in peace tonight," I told John.

John pursed his lips impatiently as he walked outside, glaring at Yvonne, who was throwing a tantrum in front of the guards.

When Yvonne finally saw John, the dissatisfaction on her face disappeared and she quickly put on a pitiful look. "Please don't chase me away, John. I really can't live without you. I'll do anything you want me to, so just let me stay by your side. I know you'll marry a woman from a wealthy family, but I don't care. I don't expect anything from you. Just let me stay with you. I really love you, John, so please don't make me leave," she implored with tears welling up in her eyes.

I did not like Yvonne, but for what reasons, I was not sure myself. Maybe I started disliking her back when John and I helped her. She was materialistic and greedy. "You have no loyalty." I came forward and berated her, "You're with so many men at the same time, and you still cling to John shamelessly when you know he's already engaged. You came all the way here to make a huge fuss just so people think he's a jerk who has wronged you. Now you're telling me you love him? You've got to be kidding me, Yvonne Wilde."

I finally knew why I hated her. She did not deserve to be loved.

A glint of anger shone in her eyes when she heard my voice. "You again? What did I do to make you hate me so much? Why do you keep coming in between us over and over again? What did I even do to you? Why can't you just leave me alone?" she shouted at me.

"Watch what you're saying. It's true that you've done nothing to offend me, but neither have I done anything to break you and John up. You know full well that he doesn't love you at all, but you still can't get over him. It's your greed that's stopping you from letting him go. He's already compensated you enough, so you should just take the money and lead your own life. But of course, you can keep hounding us, but don't say I didn't warn you. You'll regret it when I decide to get rid of you on my own."

"What do you mean?" She glared at me, holding her arms as she shivered in her thin clothing.

“You know what I mean. The Stovalls are not people you want to mess with unless you don’t want to live in K City or continue mingling in the rich circle anymore. By the way, didn’t you run a background check on that little boyfriend of yours, Franklin, before you guys got together?”

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Yvonne stared at me in fright and disbelief as her body shook more intensely.

Looking at her disconcertment, a gush of thrill welled up in my heart. "From what I gathered, he's a womanizer through and through. He hooked up with rich women and also those with questionable backgrounds. I heard he ended up having some kind of disease, so both of you have better have a heart-to-heart talk. You might want to do a thorough check at the hospital too. I think you'll need it."

"Scarlett Stovall! Watch your tongue!" she bellowed, "I don't even know who Franklin is!"

I shrugged indifferently and let her have her say before turning toward the guards. "Send her out. It's already late and everyone needs to rest. Call the police if she refuses to leave."

With that said, I left with Ashton and Hannah.

Hannah finally spoke when we reached the car park. "You did a background check on Yvonne?"

"Yeah. She's too greedy for her own good. The Stovall family will never accept someone like her."

"Thanks, Scarlett," Hannah said, her voice suddenly becoming serious. "I've wanted to discuss Kiki's custody with Uncle Louis because I thought John would marry her. I'd never let someone like her come close to Kiki."

A smile spread across my lips as she thanked me. "Don't mention it. The Stovall family helped me before, and John had supported me through my hardest time. Although I'm angry with what he's done, I still don't want his marriage to end on a bad note."

"I'll give John my blessing if he's able to meet someone suitable. Kiki is his child, and no one can ever change that. If he meets someone he likes and they have a family together, I'll still be happy for him," Hannah replied with a hint of resignation in her voice.

Ashton drove the car over and I bid Hannah goodbye before hopping on. I fell into slumber not long after the car drove off. It had been a long and tiring day.

By the time I woke up, we were already back at the villa. It was not until I saw Ashton packing his stuff that I remembered we were going to A City tomorrow.

"They have clothes and toiletries over there, so just bring our travel documents and ID," I said, squinting my eyes as I looked at him.

He turned around at my voice with a gentle smile on his face. "Did I wake you up?"

I shook my head and looked at the clock. It was already past midnight. "What time is our flight tomorrow?"

"Nine. What's the matter?"

"We still have time. Could you help me bring my ID? I need to renew my passport soon. I'll stop by J City and get it reissued after our trip to A City." After we got married, I changed my address to J City, so I would need to go back there to get my passport renewed. It would also be a good chance to go see Macy, grandpa, and grandma. It had been a long time since I last saw them.

"Where did you put your ID?" Ashton asked after a slight pause.

"Hm, good question. I can't remember. It's either in the drawer or in my bag. Oh wait, it should be in that pastel color bag. I remember using it during the donation event for Sasha's mother. It should be there. That's the last time I used it."

He went over to the wardrobe and took out the bag, ruffling through the content. "I didn't know you keep a journal."

"Come on, a lazy bum like me will never keep a journal."

Ashton took out a small journal and looked at me. "What is this then?"

I stared at the book in confusion before I finally recalled something. "That's Sasha's. Renee gave it to me when she was at the hospital. She said it belonged to her mother."

"So this is Sasha's diary?"

I nodded and Ashton flipped through it. I got out of bed and took a curious look. The journal seemed painfully ordinary, and I figured there would not be anything exciting. After all, it was written by someone who had already passed away.

"I don't think there'll be anything interesting. I should probably return this to Sasha's mother. I think she will appreciate having something in remembrance of her daughter."

But beside me, a frown settled on Ashton's brows as he closed the book. "I finally know why Abe was suddenly in charge of Imperial Hotel after you saw him dead in Moranta. This is why Armond gave you all the evidence without holding back although he knew you were investigating him. The truth is, he already had everything planned."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1055

I could not get my head around what Ashton just said, so I took the journal and started looking at it myself.

It took me a while for what came to my sight to register. I did not spend much time thinking about why Abe still appeared at Imperial Hotel after I saw him dead with my own eyes. It turned out that he had a twin.

“So is the person at A City’s prison Abe or Sasha’s husband?” I solicited Ashton’s opinion.

He lowered his gaze as he looked at the man in the photo. The man looked exactly like Abe, but he looked just like an ordinary lad without the uncanny gleam in his eyes. His complexion was fair and his gaze was tender as he held Sasha in his embrace.

If Sasha had not mentioned the man’s elder brother in her diary, I would have mistaken the man in the photo for Abe.

“We can only be sure after we meet the guy in A City,” Ashton said carefully as he closed the book. “You should just stay at K City tomorrow. Go back to Moore Residence. Holden will go over to K City in two days’ time. He’ll bring you around the city then. If the company needs my signature, you can just sign in my stead.”

I blinked my eyes at him blankly. “I thought we’ve already decided to go to A City together? What’s with the change of mind?”

“We can’t be sure if the corpse you saw at Moranta is Abe’s if the guy in prison is not him. He’s a wanted criminal now, so none of us can say for sure that he’s not concocting some evil plan. You need to stay in K City. At least you’ll be safe staying with the Moore family. They don’t dare to do anything to you over there. Besides, judging from the situation now, Armond is already fixed on giving up all the assets in A City, so he won’t be in A City. Chances are he’s gonna stay with the Murphys in K City. I’ll sort out everything in A City and get back real quick. You just wait for me in K City, alright?”

I calmed down and thought about his suggestion before finally nodding. “You stay safe, okay? Keep me updated.”

He nodded and pulled me into his arms with a sigh. “Everything will be okay soon.”

“Promise me something?” I asked, looking up at him.

“What is it?”

I suddenly did not know how to bring this up to Ashton. It was really not the time to bring up in-vitro fertilization. I pulled back and looked at him in the eyes

reluctantly. "Ashton... Let's talk about this after you get back. I'll go take a shower first."

I really did not have the courage to bring this up to Ashton. I was scared, and my desire to have a child had waned off. Taking care of Summer and seeing her grow up was already good enough for me. It was just that the Fullers was an influential and wealthy family. I felt like I needed to have a child to inherit the family business. That was the least I could do for George and Ashton. I had already lost two children because of my own carelessness.

Over in the bathroom, I looked into the mirror and pondered about this for a long time. Ashton and I had a good life and we were blessed to have each other. Not everyone got to have the people they loved in their lives, like John and Rebecca. Life was full of challenges and difficulties, and no one could foresee the future.

All we could do was to appreciate and love the people by our side, and hope that they could remain safe and sound for the rest of their lives.

When I finally got out of the bathroom again, Ashton had already packed everything. When he saw my wet hair in a towel turban, he clicked his tongue impatiently. "How many times have I told you to dry your hair immediately after taking a shower? You're gonna catch a cold like this. Come over here and dry your hair."

I nodded quietly and sat on his lap like I always did. "Is Joseph going with you tomorrow?" I asked, cuddling in his embrace.

"Nope. His wife is pregnant with their second child and she might deliver anytime soon, so he has to stay with her," he said, rubbing my hair dry with the towel.

I was surprised to know that Joseph and his wife were already having their second child. That could be us. I could not help but shoot Ashton a guilty look. "I'm sorry, Ashton."

A sweet smile played on his lips as he replied, "There's nothing to be sorry about. I'm responsible for what happened too. I should've taken better care of you, so you don't have to feel bad. We have Summer now and that's enough for us. Don't you always want to apply for grad school? You should prepare for it and take the entrance exam next year."

I was glad Ashton still remembered I wanted to further my studies. "Sure. I'll go ask Hunter for more information soon. Make sure you come home as soon as possible, okay? Should you just ask Boris to go to A City with you?"

"It's okay. I can handle it myself. He should stay at K City and unwind a little. It's almost new year already, so I think he'll be preparing to go back to Moranta."

Boris' family was in Moranta. Since he had always been at K City, he must miss his family dearly.

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"By the way, my mom mentioned Nick is in K city. We should find some time and have a meal together. After all, we're a family and I'm his sister. We should really have a meetup."

"Sure. You can go ahead and make arrangements. We'll travel down south after I get back from A City. It's winter and it'll be nice to go to the beach. You'll love it."

I nodded slightly at his proposal. His movements were gentle and light as he blew dry my hair. I snuggled in his embrace and started to doze off.

When he was finally done, he tucked me in and went to take a shower himself. I could sense him coming over to the bed and pulling me into his arms after he was done showering. I was so tired I just let him do whatever he wanted.

"Scarlett?" his breath tickled my ears as he mumbled my name. "Uh-huh," I replied without opening my eyes.

His hands started fondling my body before he asked for permission. "Can we?"

I opened my eyes slightly when I understood what he was implying and met his compelling gaze. "It's been a long time," he added.

A hot flush spread across my cheeks, looking at him. "Well..."

I could not bring myself to say anything. It was not like I needed to say anything explicitly. Our actions were already enough to show what we both wanted.

Night passed and morning came.

I was aware that Ashton woke up early, but after a passionate night, I really could not get out of bed to send him off. I lay in bed and watched him wash up and gather his luggage.

Before he left, he stopped at the door and turned back with a smile on his face. "I almost forgot!" he said, dashing back to the bed and planting a kiss on my lips. "Rest well. I'll be back soon."

Seeing me nodding shyly, the smile on his face widened.

We had been married for years, but sometimes I still felt embarrassed in front of him. I continued sleeping after Ashton left. It was not until my phone rang that I woke up again.

It was Cameron. "Letty, you up? What time are you coming over for lunch? I've just sent the driver over to pick you up, so go get ready."

"I'll just eat something at home, mom. You don't have to send the driver over. I'll go to your place later in the afternoon."

"Ashton already called me this morning. It's almost noon already. Get out of bed and come over. You can sleep all you want after you have lunch."

"He called you in the morning?" I sprang up and looked at the clock. It was already twelve in the afternoon. I must have slept for a long time.

After hanging up the call, I got out of bed and got ready to leave.

Ashton's flight took off at nine in the morning and he had not reached yet. I quickly packed some stuff and went over to Moore Residence. Emery and Hunter were already there when I arrived.

Xavier had grown a lot when I saw him sleeping in Hunter's arms. Emery was cooking in the kitchen. She shot me a smile and asked me to wait while she got lunch ready.

I went over to Hunter and asked him about applying for graduate school. "Hunter, sorry to bother you about law school again, but do you happen to have anything I can study to prepare for grad school?" Since I had some free time at home, I decided to do some revision and prepare for the entrance exam next year.

He was surprised I brought up the matter. "I thought you weren't keen on applying anymore since you didn't take the exam the last time. Anyway, sure, I can go get you something to study tomorrow. Hopefully, I'll be able to find you something helpful."

I thanked him with a forced smile on my face.

Hunter realized the change in my expression and comforted me. "Summer seems to be doing well. We should really plan an outing together and bring the kids along. You should discuss with Mr. Fuller and see if you guys can make time."

We actually did have time for vacation, but we would have to wait until Ashton was back from A City.

"What are you guys talking about? Mind if I join?" Emery asked, walking out of the kitchen with a plate of fruits in her hands.

"We're talking about grad school. Hunter is getting me some stuff to read through before I take the exam."

"I see. I'm sure you'll be able to ace it," she remarked, taking over Xavier from Hunter. "I'll take Xavier upstairs and tuck him in. Nick is coming later, so you go get the door later."

Before I could even process what Emery said, the sound of a car engine came from the outside.

Mom came out from the kitchen and saw me in the living room. "Go get Nick, Letty. I think he's here with his friend."

I nodded and went out to the yard. From the black buster came a tall and slim man dressed in a grey suit. I could not recognize him at first sight, but after taking a closer look, I knew it was Nick.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1057

After he got off the car, he went over to the passenger's seat and opened the door before he escorted a lady out. I was totally not expecting him to bring a woman—an elegant woman, to be precise. I thought he would come with Jackson.

I lost myself for a second, looking at the lady.

But I quickly collected myself and went ahead to greet them. "It's been a long time, Nick. You're still as dashing as ever."

Nick smiled back at me politely. The childishness in his manner was long gone already. "It's been a long time. You've gotten thinner."

"Aren't you going to introduce your friend to us?" I asked, looking at the lady beside him.

He nodded and held her hand. "This is Rose, my girlfriend," he said, before turning toward the woman. "Rose, this is my sister, Scarlett."

Sister! The word really sounded stiff and distant coming from Nick.

Rose looked at me and put on a sweet smile. "Nice to meet you, Scarlett. You're just as beautiful as Nick described."

"He must have exaggerated. Come on in. Lunch is almost ready."

I ushered them into the house and asked them to take a seat. There were some burning questions I wanted to ask, but I did not. I wanted to know what happened to Jackson. I wanted to know if Nick intended on marrying this woman since he brought her home.

I never asked Nick about Jackson since I figured their relationship was not as simple. I thought both of them would continue seeing each other, but it turned out that was not the case.

When mom was finally done cooking, dad had reached home after work. Everyone sat at the table and Nick introduced Rose to everyone. "Mom, I'm planning on marrying Rose. This is why I brought her with me today. Her family's from K City, so I guess it'll be easier if we let you take charge of our engagement since you know this place best."

Cameron was taken aback by Nick's direct statement, but it was not like she did not see this coming. "I'm glad you're finally settling down. I'll make sure the engagement ceremony turns out perfect. Let me know if both of you have any preferences."

Nick smiled warmly and shook his head. "We don't have any preference, mom. Something simple will suffice. Maybe just get the two families together for a meal."

A satisfied smile broke out on Cameron's face as she listened to Nick. She was glad to see her children finally settling down and getting married. This was what every parent hoped for their children.

Everyone had a good talk over lunch. I could not help but realize there was something off between Nick and Rose. They looked so rigid and polite around each other. If someone had not told me they were a couple, I would not have thought so.

After dinner, Cameron brought Rose upstairs. I figured she must have a gift for Rose.

As for me, I went outside and saw Nick in the backyard with his face downcast. "I heard mom said you're moving the company to K City? Are you planning on staying in the city in the future?"

He turned around and nodded. "Mom asked me to come over and manage Anderson Corporation with you. I thought that's a good idea. After all, it's always better to be around your family."

I nodded and hesitated a little before I continued, "Did Jackson come to K City with you? I still can't reach him after such a long time. Did he change his phone number?"

Nick froze at the mention of Jackson, but he quickly recollected himself. "I'm not sure. We haven't been in touch for some time already. He probably went to M Country. He's spent some time there before."

"What happened? Did you get into a fight with Jackson?" I felt something was obviously wrong.

Nick stopped for a while before shaking his head. "We're good. There's nothing to be worried about. How have you been? I haven't heard from you for such a long time. I heard from mom that Summer was sick some time ago. How is she now?"

Jackson and Nick took care of Summer for quite some time. If Nick were asking about a random child, I would have understood his casual tone, but it was Summer we were talking about. He and Jackson took her as their own daughter. There was no way Nick would talk about her in such a detached manner.

"Nick, I know what happened between you and Jackson is your privacy. But I'm your sister, and I'm also Jackson's friend. You have to at least let me know what's happening. Do you have any idea how sick Summer was? She had acute leukemia, and she almost died because of it. I have no idea what happened between you and Jackson. I texted and I called, but none of you picked up. If both of you still take me as a friend, you will let me be in the know. I don't understand why you

guys are suddenly so cold to Summer and me—so much so that you would ignore us when we needed you all the most.”

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1058

Nick was genuinely shocked when he learned about Summer's illness. It was apparent that Cameron did not fill him in on the details.

He fell into silence for a while before he looked at me again. "How is Summer? Is she okay?"

"She did a bone marrow and kidney transplant. She's feeling better now but they're still putting her under a five-year observation. If there is no sign of rejection from her body, then she doesn't need to go through another transplant. But Nick, we're not talking about Summer now, I want to know what happened between you and Jackson."

Nick held his hands and tried to control his emotions. "He got a girl pregnant and went back to M Country with the woman," he said after some time.

Nick sounded apathetic, but I was totally caught off guard by his statement. "What happened? I thought you liked him?"

Nick pursed his lips and looked at me in the eyes. "Do you find me disgusting?"

I shook my head in determination. "I believe all relationships are equal. The reason I asked is that I could see there was something between you and Jackson. I know both of you care for each other a lot. I had no idea what happened between the two of you, but now that I know, I just hope you guys find your happiness. Meeting and parting are part and parcel of life, but I really want to see each of you finding where you belong."

"I think it's best we both go our separate ways," Nick said with his gaze fixed on the ground.

I could hear the regret and sorrow in his voice. After some thought, I asked him another question. "Do you like Rose?"

No one was perfect. We could not do everyone justice by giving them the affection they were due, but we could at least try our best and be accountable to ourselves.

"Rose is gentle, kind, and beautiful. She reminds me of you when you were younger. She's a little stubborn and conflicting sometimes, but I think she's the right person to spend the rest of my life with. If she is the one to marry, I'll have no regrets for the rest of my life."

I was surprised Nick would say that. Since he had made up his mind, I decided to respect his decision.

When Cameron and Rose came back down again, she was holding a set of jewelry in her hands. It was not something of an exorbitant price, but it was apparent that Rose liked her gift.

The lot stayed back for some chit-chat after lunch until evening. Hunter had a gathering with his colleagues at night, so he, Emery, and Xavier went home before dinner time. Not long after they left, Nick and Rose took leave too.

Just as I was thinking about spending some time with Summer, Camelia called. I almost forgot her as she had not contacted me in a long while.

"Hey, Camelia." I hesitated and picked up the call.

"Hey, Scarlett. Are you busy? Down for a drink?" She sounded tired.

"Sure, where are you?" I replied without a second thought.

"I'll send you my address," she replied before hanging up.

I planted a kiss on Summer's head and said sorry before leaving for the bar.

I wonder what happened to Camelia?

I made my way into the bar and spotted her right away. She was dressed in a stylish punk fashion. No one would imagine she was already a mother.

"What's up, Camelia?" I asked. I was taken by surprise when I saw her heavy makeup.

From her drowsy look, I could tell that she had drunk a lot before I arrived.

"Hey, Scarlett, take a seat!" she greeted and pulled me over to the seat beside her. "Brandy, please. Thanks," she told the waiter.

"Just a glass of juice would do," I hastily told the waiter.

"You're not drinking? We're at a bar," Camelia said.

"Well, it's not a must to order spaghetti if you're at an Italian restaurant."

"True. And it doesn't mean you'll find love if you're married," she said dejectedly.

I knew something must be bugging her. "So, why did you call me over? Not just for a drink, I suppose?"

Camelia gulped her drink and coughed furiously. She was breaking out in tears and started choking badly. "I've tried everything I could to become just like you, but he still doesn't love me. I've changed how I talk, how I behave, and even what I like and dislike, but it just doesn't work. What should I do?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1059

A frown settled on my brows when I finally knew why she called. Marcus was really a difficult character. He must have put the woman through a lot of ordeals for her to become this haggard.

"Scarlett, can you tell me how you made him fall in love with you?" she asked again.

I looked at the desperate woman before me and recalled how attractive she looked when I first saw her on the plane.

She looked at me intently with an imploring gaze, and it broke my heart to see her in this state. "Just leave him, Camelia. Do you still remember how you used to be? You were happy and confident."

"What did you say?" Camelia looked at me, befuddled.

She was making my heart break. "Do you still remember how you were when we first met? Your blonde hair was shining and you were absolutely stunning. You're attractive just the way you are. You don't have to become anyone else. Don't throw away your unique self just to mimic other people. When you find someone worthy of your love, that person will bring out the best in you, so why give up on yourself for someone who doesn't even appreciate you?"

Camelia looked lost and helpless. "But I have no one else besides him. Where can I go without him? We already have a child together."

It was unimaginable how a fruitless relationship could eat away the charm of a woman. "Camelia, you are your own self. If you're willing to take charge of your own life, you can still find yourself again and be the spirited woman you used to be. Your child should not be your excuse. The White family can take good care of your kid. What you need to think of is how to regain the confidence you've lost."

There were two things women should never stop doing throughout their life. The first was to stay beautiful. They should do everything they could to make themselves attractive. Not for anyone else, but for themselves. The second was to enrich themselves. Women should earn their own money and keep improving themselves. No matter how harsh life was, no one should stop feeding their soul so they could become stronger and more independent.

I didn't mean to say that women should never believe in true love. The love we were after should be one that made us better, not worse.

I was not sure if Camelia would take my advice seriously. She was wasted and kept complaining about how unfair Marcus was treating her. After all these years, Marcus had even given up on making up lies to her.

When I came to think of it, men were really fascinating creatures. They would always dwell on things they couldn't get their hands on. However, when they got what they wanted, they would not appreciate and take care of it. They ended up being alone because they stubbornly clung to the love they could not have and pushing away the love they had always had.

Marcus was not John. I could not tell if Marcus would fall for Camelia one day. All I could do was to encourage her to love herself. Regardless of whether she would earn his love one day, one should always care for her own wellbeing before anything else.

Life wasn't perfect. There were bound to be many regrets in life. Not being with the person we loved as one of those regrets was not a big deal. After all, it was not like romantic love was the only thing in our life.

All of us had to tread down the path of life whether or not we had someone by our side.

I had to say Camelia could really drink. I even lost count of how many glasses of brandy she took before she lay on the table, still muttering for more drinks.

Right after I got her out of the bar, we were met with unwelcomed guests. K City was really not a safe place.

Two drunkards approached us when they saw two of us stumbling out of the bar. "Hey there, sweeties. Craving some company after a drink? How about some fun tonight? I'm sure you'll be begging for more."

As the spoke, two of them reached for us.

"Keep your filthy hands to yourself!" A woman's sharp voice pierced through the night.

I was startled at the woman's voice. It took me a while to recognize the woman with her heavy makeup on. It was Kristina. Her wig sat awkwardly on her head, and she looked far from appealing.

The two men smirked when they saw her. "Mind your own business before I kill you, ugly hag!"

Kristina glared at them coldly. "Kill me? I dare you to."

The two men exchanged uneasy looks and spat at her. "I'm not gonna get my hands dirty touching you. You're disgusting."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1060

With that said, the two men turned and left.

I watched them leave before looking back at Kristina. It was then that I realized she had a name card in her hand.

I wondered what that was, but the question was not pressing enough for me to ask her about it. Instead, I thanked her in all seriousness.

She did not reciprocate my affection. "This is not a safe place, so just stay away."

I wanted to ask her why she was here.

Yet before I could say a word, she held out her name card to a man who just came out of the bar with a lascivious smile on her face. I was stunned by her sudden change of expression. The man threw the name card on the floor and I caught a glimpse of it. There was a picture of an attractive woman printed on it. Beside the picture were her phone number, address, and a price tag.

It did not take much effort to recognize the person in the photo. It was Kristina herself. I was at a loss for words. I wanted to say something, but I had to try so hard to swallow my emotions back in. "Do you need money?" I asked without much discretion.

My brutal question elicited a painful expression on her face as she pursed her lips. "Of course I do. Who doesn't need money? No one can live without money."

"You know I don't mean it that way." I tried explaining myself.

She clenched her name cards tighter and shook her head. "It doesn't matter. Just leave before you meet another drunkard."

I stood where I was, refusing to leave. "Is it because you have to do chemo?" That was the only reasonable explanation I could think of. She had lost her hair and she looked battered. Even her face looked pale.

She covered her face with thick makeup and even had a wig on. I knew she was a prideful person. There was no way she would stoop so low just to earn money. It must be because of the expenses for chemotherapy.

"You mind your own business. Stop getting in my way. I need to get customers," she said coldly.

What I heard about her illness must be true. She must have lung cancer.

I knew she had her ego. There was no way she would accept my help. "Since you want to do business, you'll have to do as your client wants you to. You're coming with me tonight," I said with a commanding tone.

She fixed her gaze on me. "What do you want, Scarlett?"

"I'm your client now, so just do as I say," I repeated.

"I only take male clients. I don't have time for you if you're just here to shame me. If you're getting revenge on me because of that kid, karma has already hit me hard enough, so just leave me alone," she said with a hint of remorse in her voice.

"Just follow me, please. I know you feel guilty toward Summer, so you're obliged to listen to me. You must live nearby. Bring me over to your place," I said with a sigh.

Kristina looked at me for a while before she finally relented. "Follow me."

She led Camelia and me down an alley. Before long, I stopped and cried out, "Kristina, don't you think you should help me out a little?" Camelia was already so wasted she could not even walk properly.

Kristina looked back at me. "I can't carry her. Walking itself is already difficult enough for me. This is the truth, whether you believe me or not."

I smacked my lips and shrugged helplessly. "Just lead the way then."

It was not like I could force her to carry Camelia.

We finally reached after some time. "You should just go back to J City. I'm sure Dr. Ludwick will do everything he can to cure you. You can't just stay here all on your own. You're gonna get more sick."

"We all die someday. I'd rather die somewhere I want to. I've been striving so hard my whole life just to go up the social ladder. If there was an afterlife, I hope I would be born in this city, so I can be nearer to the things I've always wanted to achieve," she said, pouring me a glass of water.

Kristina was really a woman I could never understand. She came from a relatively good family, but it was her worldview that I could never understand. She had always wanted to pursue wealth and status. Ashton was her first target, but when she knew there was no hope with him, she turned to Jared instead. Her motivation was clear as day—she wanted to marry a rich man. But why, I could not tell.

Was it because of money?

Her family lacked nothing.

Power?

Ashton and Jared had money but not power.

Love?

That was impossible. If it were love she wanted, she would not move on from one person to another so easily.

“Both of us need to stay overnight here,” I said, “I’ll pay you at your rate, but you’ll have to stay here with us. Also, stop taking customers. You know what sort of men come in and out of the bar. Your body won’t be able to take it. What if you get STD? Do you want to die earlier?”

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She drilled her gaze through me. "Are you showing concern for me now?"

"Not really. Who are you to me? I'm just reminding you of the possibility of things getting worse if you carry on with this," I turned aside and replied.

She sat on her small bed and a pathetic smile played on her lips. "Isn't life just ironic? You, of all people, are the one who came to my help when I'm in the deepest pit."

I did not know what to say, so I kept quiet.

Kristina looked at the name card in her hand and said mockingly, "It's not like I've never thought about going back. I don't want to go back to J City like this. I told myself when I left that I'd only go back when I'm happy and accomplished. But what am I now? I've lost everything. How can I go back like this? I'd rather just die here."

A pang of sadness ate away at me as she spoke. "Why are you so hard on yourself? There are so many options available, why do you have to choose the hardest one? Don't you know your family is still waiting for you?"

"No one is waiting for me. I'm the only person who's waiting for myself," she said with her head low as tears rolled down her eyes. "My parents were gone when I was two, and my uncle sent me to the orphanage for ten years before he took me back again. He did that because his wife couldn't bear a child herself. But they had a boy after that, and I became a burden to the family. Come to think of it, life is really a joke. I thought I could have a perfect family if I found someone I could spend forever with. I thought I could give my children the best if I could just find that right person, but I went a long way and ended up being all alone."

I did not know how to comfort her. Looking at her crying her heart out, I could only pass her a tissue and listen to her. "Everyone has their own hopes and dreams."

"I guess this is just my life. I should accept it," she said derisively, pressing her hand against her chest.

"What's the matter?" I asked, looking at her contorted face.

"Get me the painkillers in the drawer," she said, sucking in a long breath.

I drew the drawer open and started looking for painkillers among the many medications she had. I passed it to her and got her a glass of water.

She looked much better after taking the pills. "Thanks," she said.

I looked around the cramped room and then at her. "Have you been staying here all this while?" I asked.

Ashton and his group of friends might have very different personalities, but when it came to their women, they were never stingy. Take Rebecca for example, the three of them made sure she lacked nothing.

Since Kristina was with Jared, there was no way she would spiral down to this state if she spent her money wisely.

"Jared has a house for me, but I rented it to someone else because I needed money. It's cheaper to rent a small room here since it's further away from the city center."

I had a rough idea of how much chemotherapy would cost. Given the high cost, she must have spent most of her income. That was probably why she was selling her own body.

Neither Kristina nor I slept that night. Camelia was the only one who slept through the night. When morning came, Kristina could not take it anymore and finally fell asleep.

I left my bank card in her room and left with Camelia to get breakfast.

"How did we end up there in the morning? What were we doing there?" Camelia bombarded me with questions after sobering up.

"I didn't know where else to bring you, so I brought you there," I replied.

"What about the bank card then? Is that for the night's stay?" she pursued.

I nodded.

She was clearly not satisfied with my answer, but before she could probe any further, I beat her to it. "Do you have any plans later?" I asked.

"Not really. What about you?" she said after a brief silence.

"Do you have your bank card with you?"

She nodded.

"Then let's go to the hairdresser later. We're stopping by the beauty salon and the mall after that."

"But Tobias is still home," she said.

"Is the nanny home?"

"She is. I told her I'd be out."

"Then all's good. You have the whole day to yourself," I said.

After getting breakfast, we went to the hairdresser. The hair salons in K City were either low-end or super high-end. For the latter ones, they were not accessible by just simply anyone. I contacted Emery and told her I suddenly felt like getting my hair done. "What got into you? Why do you want to cut your hair all of a sudden?" she asked.

Her words rendered me speechless. "It's my friend, not me. Are you free today? Wanna hang out?" I offered.

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"Of course! Give me your address," Emery agreed readily. "My life only revolves around Xavier these days. I feel I'm so detached from the world outside now. I really need to get out."

"I'll send you my address. You can ask the nanny to take care of Xavier, or you can just send her over to mom's place."

"Come to think of it, you're the one who has the easiest life, Scarlett. Your parents take care of your kid, and your husband takes care of the company. You get to do whatever you want. How I envy you."

"Then do you want to switch places with me?" I joked.

"Hell no. My husband is the best man on earth. I'm not trading him for anything else," she said cheekily.

"So you know. Come on, I just sent you the address. Get over quick, we're waiting for you."

After I hung up, Camelia and I looked for a cafe and had a coffee while waiting for Emery.

"What's on your mind?" I asked, seeing Camelia looking at her phone absentmindedly.

"I'm just worried about Tobias. I haven't gotten any call since I came out last night. Marcus didn't call either. Does he not care at all?"

"You should call the nanny and make sure if everything is okay. As for Marcus, it doesn't matter if he cares for you or not. You've already wasted so many years on him. What you need to do now is to find your own life and improve yourself."

Life was more than just pursuing love. Our lives were full of potential and possibilities. We should look for another open door instead of insisting on opening a closed door.

Camelia called the nanny and learned that everything was fine with the child at home. She wanted to call Marcus, but I stopped her.

"He would've called if he wanted to know where you are. You should just leave him be. Stop thinking about him for a bit and just focus on yourself."

It seemed like Marcus was not home at all yesterday. He did not even know she was not home. I had no clue what Marcus was thinking, so I could only ask Camelia to get a grip of herself.

Perhaps Marcus really did like Camelia at the beginning, else he would not even choose to get engaged with her. There were other families within M Country who were influential in the business world, so there must be a reason why Marcus chose her.

When we saw Emery, she was dressed extravagantly in a leopard print outfit. The handbag in her hand was worth a fortune and she even had her jewelry on.

"Are you trying to show off?" I asked, startled. Her whole outfit would easily cost more than a million.

She exclaimed happily, "I haven't been out for so long. These items had been collecting dust in my wardrobe. It's okay, you wouldn't understand anyway."

I shrugged at her and picked up my ringing phone. "Hey, Ashton, I'm sorry I didn't call last night. Camelia was drunk. I had to take care of her, so I didn't check my phone. How is everything in A City?"

"Didn't I tell you to keep in touch no matter what?" He sounded a little pissed.

"I'm sorry, Ashton. I promise I won't do it again. How's everything over there? Is it cold?"

I could hear him sigh on the other end. "Just what can I do with you, hmm? Everything is fine over here. Tessa is not even taking care of the child. Brandon is emotionally unstable. I think I'll be able to persuade him. What about you? Did you go home last night? Where were you?"

"I brought Camelia to Kristina's place yesterday. We stayed at her place the whole night. You don't have to worry," I said, smiling brightly.

"Kristina? What are you doing with her?"

I kept quiet for a moment, trying to think of how I should break the news to him. "She has lung cancer. I bet she got it when she was in W City. Remember I asked you to check the Crest family's chemical plant? Both Summer and Kristina got cancer, so chances are there's something wrong with that chemical plant. I'm sure they do not meet the standards stipulated. Their workers must have been affected as well."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1063

It was true that Ashton and I should not meddle in the affairs of the Crest family, but whenever I thought about the workers at the chemical plant, I could not just turn a blind eye. Most of the people working there did not come from rich families. A lot of them had labored and toiled their whole life just to make ends meet. If they fell sick, they would drag their families down.

And it was not just one family that we were talking about. A lot of families were at stake here.

It only took the breadwinner to fall sick for the entire family to lose everything.

Sasha was a good example. Her old parents had worked hard their whole life just to bring her up. Alas! Sasha didn't live long and the seniors had to fend for themselves for the rest of their lives.

"I'll send someone to look into the chemical plant. As for Kristina, I'm sure her uncle will be able to be of help. He's a bone cancer specialist, so you don't have to worry about her."

"But she refuses to go back. She already rented out the house Jared gave her in K City. She's now staying in a small room in the urban village instead. I bumped into her at the bar yesterday, soliciting. I didn't know how to dissuade her from working there, so I just left my bank card with her."

"You shouldn't bother yourself with any of these. Everyone has their own way of living. You can't change everybody," Ashton replied.

"Alright," I replied curtly. "Remember to come back earlier. By the way, Nick is getting married. My mom is preparing for his engagement, so you'd better come home earlier. I want us all to attend as a family."

Ashton chuckled at the good news. "Okay, I'll try to go back as soon as possible. You'd better stay home tonight. It's not safe to hang out so late."

"I know, please stop nagging me."

Beside me, Emery shot me an impatient look and whispered, "Scarlett, can we go yet? We're not here to see you and Ashton being lovey-dovey."

"I know right? Stop rubbing it in my face," Camelia agreed.

I smiled and said goodbye to Ashton before ending the call. "Let's go to the hairdresser first," I said to Emery.

Spending money could also be a way of venting negative emotions.

This was especially true for Camelia and Emery. Both of them picked the most handsome hairdressers at the best salon and started talking to them as they got their hair done. Each of them spent thousands buying products and getting a makeover.

Emery spotted the despise in my eyes. "I feel happy when I spend money. Besides, the two young men were really handsome and I had a great time talking to them. I think it's money well spent."

"Yeap, I agree," Camelia interjected, "I haven't been this happy for a long time. This feels better than going for a drink at the bar. I came out looking prettier and in a better mood, so it's worth the money."

Now that they put it that way, I could only say that they had put their money to good use.

Our next stop was the beauty salon. By the time we finished a spa, it was already afternoon.

I just got out of the spa when Kristina called. "I don't need your card. I'll take the cash as your accommodation fee and for taking up my time yesterday. As for the card, you can take it back."

"Sure, you can give it back to me, but I'll need to make this clear—you need to go back to J City if you refuse to take the card. Your uncle is a bone cancer specialist, he will figure out a way to cure you. If you keep up the stubborn act, you'll only end up putting your life on the line. If you refuse to go back, then I'm not taking back the card. You can take it as a token of appreciation for what you did for Summer."

A long silence ensued. "Why are you helping me?"

I found myself asking the same question. Why am I helping her?

It took me some time to think of a reason. "I don't know why I'm helping you, but I don't have peace in my heart if I leave you just like that. Actually, I'm just returning the favor. After all, you're the one who reminded me about Summer. So let's call it even between us."

"So you ended up being my savior. How ironic," she said, her voice soft and mellow. "But still, thank you. I know it's no use saying this, but I still want to let you know I'm grateful."

I did not say another word but hung up after that.

I felt a burden lifted off my chest after the call. Actually, I was not even sure if Kristina would accept my offer. She might continue working at the bar, and this would make me feel bad for her. However, it also meant she would have to accept the bank card. Although there was not a lot of money in it, it was still enough to last her some time. I hope she would be able to think things through

and return to J City and the Larson family. It would be better to be around people who could help her.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1064

After Emery and Camelia were done with their facial treatments, they both decided to go to the mall for a shopping spree. I naturally had no objections, so I went along with them.

Having hustled about the entire day, we went to a restaurant specializing in grilled fish. Just after we had taken our seats, Emery looked at me and clicked her tongue. "What are young girls nowadays thinking? How does she stand being with such an old man?"

Hearing that, I was stunned for a moment. Then, I glanced over my shoulder, only to be greeted by the sight of a couple with a huge age gap. It wasn't a mere assumption, for the woman was kissing and being all lovey-dovey with the man in public without the slightest hint of embarrassment. From the look of things, they definitely weren't father and daughter, but lovers.

However, I only took a gander. When I saw that the woman was all but lying on the man who seemed to be about sixty years old, I didn't continue watching them. After all, it required fortitude to gaze at such a scene for a long time.

Camelia, on the other hand, frowned slightly. "The age gap here must be at least thirty over years. Is such a romance truly love?"

In reply, Emery shook her head. "Nope. It's apparent at first glance that the old man isn't quite right in the mind. He seems a tad senile. As such, the woman is most likely eyeing his money."

Nevertheless, I remained quiet through it all since it was rather difficult to judge such a matter. We then ordered our food, and it was served very quickly. Ah, it's been a long time since I last had grilled fish! I buried my head in the food and started eating with relish. Meanwhile, Camelia and Emery were still discussing skincare routines, including the fact that they should avoid eating spicy food, reduce their sugar intake, and have more collagen. After all, women would slowly lose collagen after twenty-five years old, so they could only rely on money to retain their beauty.

In that, I had to concur. Toward the end of their conversation, they then decided to register for a body conditioning class tomorrow to enhance their figure and deportment.

Sure enough, women were forever pursuing beauty all their lives.

"Yvonne Wilde, I asked you to accompany my father for a stroll! Why did you bring him here? Do you have any professional work ethics?" A voice abruptly rang out behind me.

Upon hearing the familiar name, I couldn't resist looking over my shoulder. By then, the woman, who had been in the old man's embrace, had gotten to her feet. With an apologetic expression on her face, she explained to the fuming woman, "I'm sorry, Ms. Langston. Mr. Langston said that he craved grilled fish, so I brought him here. I'm sorry. I won't do it anymore."

That woman, however, seemed fit to be tied. Glowering at her, she snarled, "Why are you doing everything he says? Don't you know that he has high blood pressure and has to be circumspect in his diet? Also, don't think that I'm unaware of your ploy. "My father is senile. Are you trying to coax him into marrying you so that you'd have a share of the assets when he dies? Let me tell you, that's a pipe dream! It's impossible! Now, scram! Here's your pay for having taken care of him for the past few days. Don't you ever step foot into our house again in the future!"

Throwing a stack of bills into Yvonne's face, the woman then left with the old man. As Yvonne stood by the table, the diners in the restaurant stared at her as though watching a show. From the few simple words, everyone could discern the meaning clear as day.

Is she that strapped for cash? Didn't John give her quite a tidy sum after breaking up with her? So, why has she been taking care of an elderly senile man for the sake of money? Besides, their posture earlier was really intimate.

Puzzlement swamped me.

Again glancing back, my brows furrowed when I saw her picking up the money from the floor in a mini skirt. I was at a loss for words. We choose our paths in life, and though we have no idea whether it'll be good or bad, we should make a conscientious choice from the very beginning itself.

After she had picked up all the money, she stood up. The moment she caught sight of me, she froze for a moment before sneering, "What a coincidence, Ms. Stovall! You've again seen me at my lowest."

Pursing my lips, I lowered my head and commented, "You have plenty of choices, so why must you relegate yourself to this?"

"Haha!" Yvonne gave a bark of laughter. As she brandished the money in her hand, she stared at me and retorted, "You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth, Ms. Stovall, so you've probably never suffered much in life, no? Thus, you likely have no idea how someone with no money survives. "People are born in different classes, and someone like me is destined to be trampled upon and humiliated ever since birth.

In that case, why should I make life unnecessarily difficult for myself? I'd be better off resigning myself to fate and make money however I can do so. "Isn't this pretty good? Look, I've only taken care of that old man for a few days, and I've gotten tens of thousands in addition to the money he gave me. That's a huge sum. You said I have plenty of choices.

Indeed, I do. Considering my academic qualification and good looks, I can get an office job with five or six thousand a month. "But then, I'll have to go to work early and get off work late, not to mention pandering to my superior. I'll have to lower myself all my life, and I might even have to pay the price with my health. Yet in the end, I might not even afford to buy a house when I'm old. Say, what's the use of dignity and pride?"

"From your standpoint, you can't understand me. Likewise, from my perspective, I can't understand you. I wanted to marry John because I'll never again have to worry about money besides getting to live out my life in bliss. So, why did you put a stop to that? Was it because of my filthy means of making money?"

"But the truth is, I'm a commodity in his eyes—one that requires some occasional spending for maintenance. The only difference is that he'll place me in Stovall residence for show at the end of the day. Ms. Stovall, a few words from you extinguished all light from my life in the blink of an eye."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1065

"What kind of logic is that?" Emery countered with a hint of contempt. "If you regard yourself as a commodity, then you should act like one. A commodity has value. Do you know your value? "Why on earth did you attach such a high value to yourself when you're a commodity that has changed hands every so often? Do you think you're worth that much? You're a commodity that has zero aesthetic and practical value, yet you price yourself as a customized commodity. Do you think you're worth that price? Well, the answer is no."

Oh my God, Emery is simply... Amazing!

All at once, Yvonne's face flushed bright red at her lecture. After a long while, she glared at her and snapped, "What has that got to do with you? How's that your business?"

At that, Emery merely snickered, not in the mood to continue debating with her. "It's indeed none of my business. Let's go!"

Naturally, there was no way we could continue with the meal after that debacle. As Emery strode out of the restaurant while dragging Camelia and me along, she muttered, "People are really ridiculous nowadays. Her values are erroneous, yet she doesn't allow anyone else to point them out. Come on!"

After saying that, she turned to me with a frown. "Well, I'm curious. How did you get acquainted with that freak? Damn it, she's just pissing me off so badly!"

Startled for a moment, my gaze remained locked on hers. With the corners of my mouth twitching, I replied, "You don't remember her? She was a hostess at your nightclub back then. She was forced to drink, so John and I intervened. I later got her a job at Nick's company, but it wasn't long before she got her hooks into John."

Emery was stunned for some time before she blurted, "Dang! Are you serious? It's been so long that I don't have any recollection of her. She's really crazy."

After exiting the restaurant, we went straight to the mall. Once those two women started shopping, they were in a world of their own. When the shopping spree drew to an end, the entire trunk was filled to the brim.

Completely worn out, I sat at the lounge on the first floor and waited for them while they shopped.

I had just sat down for a brief second when I spotted a man dragging Yvonne out of the mall by the hair. His movements were vicious and indifferent, turning her silky hair into a tangled mess.

"Please let go of me! I'm sorry, I won't do it anymore. I beg you! I'll give you all the money, so please let go of my hair!" Yvonne wailed at the top of her lungs.

However, the man showed no signs of taking mercy on her. Instead, his grip on her became increasingly brutal. "You'll do anyone as long as they give you money, huh?"

The man's vulgar words were indeed unpleasant, and he proclaimed that in a booming voice, so everyone around them heard that. As they unwittingly attracted people's attention, an elderly lady stepped forward and persuaded, "Young man, just talk it out if there's a problem. This isn't an appropriate way to treat a woman."

"She doesn't mind doing it with any man and has now given me STD! This is all on her! Not only is she filthy as hell, but she also ruins others! It's already merciful of me when she's such a despicable woman!"

Yvonne then fell to the ground while struggling with him. Looking all pathetic, she stared at the man as she rebutted in a tearful and aggrieved voice, "I didn't! It wasn't me! You're the one who contracted it, for I've got no STD at all! All those are wealthy men, so how could they possibly have STD? It's you who contracted it by sleeping around with random women, yet you're blaming me?"

Slap! The man didn't pull his punches, so it was a heavy blow. At that strike, Yvonne saw stars, and blood trickled out of the corner of her mouth.

"What a load of crap! Would you have gotten STD if you haven't gone to the nightclub to prowl for men even when you were together with Mr. Stovall? Did you think that wealthy men have no STD? Even if they do, would they tell you? You'll even do it with an old man in his sixties or seventies for a quick buck, so who would believe you when you say you have no STD?"

Upon hearing this, a sense of unease flooded me. Could it be that I've truly hit the nail on the head, and Yvonne Wilde truly has STD? At the thought of this, I hastily took out my phone and called John.

Fortunately, it was relatively quiet on his side when the call was connected. When he heard the commotion on my end, he asked, "Where are you? Why is it so noisy? And what happened?"

"I'm at the mall. Where are you?" I demanded. When I saw the man beating up Yvonne, my brows inevitably creased. Standing up, I headed toward the security booth.

"I'm having tea with Emma. Would you like to join us? Uncle Louis has an exquisite tea that he has kept for a few years, and the taste is rather good. You can come over and try some." From his voice, it seemed that he was getting along well with Emma today.

Smacking my lips, I retorted, "Don't tell me you stole the tea? You'll be dead meat when Uncle Louis learns of it. Oh yes, when were you last intimate with Yvonne Wilder?"

Pfft! The sound of water spraying out sounded, followed by his violent coughing on the other end. "Letty, you did that on purpose, no? Even if you want to mess with me, you don't have to say such a thing at precisely this moment. That question of yours is too personal!"

I propped my hand against my forehead in embarrassment. After deliberating for a moment, I urged, "Well, just hurry up and tell me. I want to know! This concerns your entire life, so tell me quickly. Stop dawdling!"

As mortification pervaded him, John cleared his throat and lowered his voice to a mere whisper as he spoke into the phone. "Letty, can we speak about this at home? Emma is right in front of me now, so how am I supposed to answer that? Are you sure you're not doing this deliberately?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1066

Pouting, I insisted in exasperation, "Just tell me. Yvonne Wilder seems to have contracted STD. The man who was with her learned about it today, and he is beating her up now as we speak. Anyway, hurry up and think about when you were last intimate with her as well as whether you have been with any other woman during this time. Tomorrow, take some time to go to the hospital and get tested."

When I received no reply from him for a long time, I thought he had truly contracted STD. Thus, I anxiously blurted, "Don't panic, John. This can be treated. Just go to the hospital tomorrow and have the doctor look you over. Then, we'll discuss a treatment plan with the doctor. However, make sure that you don't touch anyone else during this period."

John was silent for a while before retorting, "Where did your mind go? I was just wondering who she got it from. Those men are pretty clean, so an accident isn't all that likely. How did she get the STD?"

Hearing that, I propped a hand against my forehead. Isn't he focusing on the wrong thing here? Exasperation flooded me. "Why are you still fixated on how she got STD at this time? Hurry up and contact a doctor now so that you can get treatment as soon as possible!"

At that, a snort sounded at the other end, and John countered with a chuckle, "Why do I need treatment? I've never slept with her, so why do I even need to get tested?"

My jaw dropped, and I exclaimed in astonishment, "You've never slept with her? But you..."

"She kept dangling herself before me, so I brought her to a few banquets as my companion. We were indeed rather close, but we were never intimate. The debacle about getting married is all because I was angry with Hannah back then. That's why I contemplated marrying her. So, don't worry. We never did anything, and I'm totally fine!" John sounded exceedingly nonchalant.

Upon that revelation, my eyes inexorably went wide. "Were you insane, John Stovall? You actually didn't betray Hannah in any way? Then, why did you create so many illusions back then, making everyone think that you're a scumbag and forcing her to leave you? Weren't you just digging your own grave?"

I initially thought that he had truly been intimate with Yvonne, so he planned to marry her. Furthermore, I had seen him with her several times in the past, and they appeared very intimate. It was so bad that even a bystander like me believed that their relationship was carnal, let alone Hannah. She had a stake in it, so how would she know that all those were just for show?

Noticing my agitation, John murmured, "In the beginning, I never thought that it would drive her away. Nonetheless, it's all in the past, so explanations are superfluous now. Don't worry about me, for I'm fine."

"Hah! You're the last person I'd be worried about!" My blood boiled after having heard all that. He could have lived happily with Hannah, and they could have all been a happy family with Kiki, yet he just had to create a scandal with Yvonne Wilde! Worse still, he didn't even do anything with her but lost the person he loves. Isn't that something that only an utter moron would do?

After hanging up the phone, I was still very much incensed, and anger blazed within me. As I stared at Yvonne who was being beaten to an inch of her life, I initially wanted to call security, but I then stopped short when I reached the door of the security booth. In the end, I returned to the lobby instead.

People often chose their own paths, and they're merely reaping what they sow.

There was quite a crowd milling around, but no one stepped out to help. First of all, they all disdained Yvonne after hearing the man say that she was willing to do anything for money, so they didn't want to lend her a hand. Besides, they were afraid that she was truly diseased, so they kept a distance from her to avoid being contaminated.

When Yvonne was all bruised and battered from the man's blows, a man suddenly rushed out from the crowd and held the man back. "Buddy, even if you're teaching her a lesson, this should stop now. You've already beaten her up badly enough, so you can't be beating her to death despite your anger, no?" he persuaded.

The man was blinded by rage for being held back at that moment, so he roared at the man who had just appeared, "Mind your own business instead of poking your nose into my affairs here! Buzz off!"

"Let's go, Justin. Don't be nosy!" I glanced over when I heard a familiar voice, only to see that it was Stella. She was dressed rather adorably, and she was clutching Justin's arm while talking him around.

Justin looked at her and said gently, "Wait for me at the side. Don't come over. I'll just be a minute."

Then, he turned his gaze to the man and cajoled, "Buddy, having gone so far, it should be enough recompense no matter her transgressions, yes?"

However, the man had no intention of resolving the matter peacefully. He had been incensed in the first place, so he was now all the more ticked off at Justin's heroic interference.

Lifting a fist, he swung it right at Justin. While everyone was struck with terror, Justin swiftly dodged the man's fist and grabbed it instead. "That's enough, buddy," he declared.

With eyes blazing scarlet from fury, the man wasn't in the mood to listen to him. Rather, he bellowed furiously, "I told you not to poke your nose into my business!" As he said that, he swung his fist once more. At that time, Justin didn't dodge, so he took a fist to the face.

But in the next instance, he went on the offensive. He swung a fist at the man and started raining blows on him without holding back his punches, making it evident that he had some martial arts training.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1067

In a flash, people from the mall crowded over. Some whipped out their phones to snap pictures and lodge a police report. Upon seeing that, I hastily called out to Justin who was being surrounded, "Stop! Stop hitting him!"

Swinging my gaze to Stella, I then ordered, "Go and get security! Don't allow them to continue fighting, for it'll only end up in trouble."

Frightened, Stella hurriedly sprinted off in search of security. Meanwhile, as I stared at Justin who had the man pinned on the ground, I urged, "Don't hurt him, or it'll be difficult to explain when the police arrive later!"

Breaking a fight and causing someone injury were two different things. Hence, he would be held criminally liable if he were to hurt the man.

It seemed that my words registered to Justin, for he was more subdued when hitting him. It didn't look as though he was striking him all that hard, nor did he leave any grievous injury on him, yet the man on the ground howled in pain.

In no time, Stella had gotten security over, and the two of them were pulled apart. Shortly after, the police showed up and escorted Justin to the police station to take his statement since he was involved in the fight.

By then, Emery and Camelia were also done shopping, so I suggested, "Why don't we tag along?"

At that, Emery's brows knitted together. "Why should we? That woman deserved it. Considering the kind of woman she is, it's fitting even if she were beaten to death. After all, she'll only be dragging others down with her if she lives."

Nevertheless, I shook my head. "No, I'm suggesting that we tag along because I'm afraid that Yvonne Wilde will twist the truth and get that courageous man in trouble. Let's tag along and see how it goes."

Hearing that, bafflement suffused Camelia. "Why would she twist the truth? The man has helped her, after all. Otherwise, she would have been beaten to death."

I shrugged in response. "That remains to be seen. Come, let's go and have a look. Anyway, you two are almost done shopping this time."

Subsequently, they both exchanged a glance. It seemed that they were truly almost done shopping, for they nodded at each other and concurred, "Okay, let's go."

When we arrived at the police station, Justin and the other man were detained for questioning. Yvonne, on the other hand, was taken to an interrogation room. A police officer doctored her injuries, while another questioned her about the incident.

As for the rest of us, we sat in the lobby and waited.

Stella looked at me, seemingly having something to say yet hesitant to utter it. As things were frantic earlier, I almost forgot about her. Flashing her a faint smile, I greeted, "How are you recently, Ms. Collins? It's been a long time since I last saw you."

Smiling at me, she replied, "I'm pretty good. I heard that Mr. Fuller and you went to Moranta some time ago, so I thought the two of you were still there since I haven't seen much of him... and you recently."

At that, I chuckled. "Well, there's a new project over at Moranta, so Ashton is a bit busy since he has to handle the business over there. That's why he hasn't been to the office much. I noticed that you're looking pretty good these days. Are you dating Justin now?"

Upon hearing that, she hastily shook her head even as she blurted with a smile, "No! Don't get it wrong, Mrs. Fuller. We're just friends, and we came out together to buy some things today. There's nothing more than that, so don't get it wrong."

Surprise inundated me when I saw her explaining with such gusto. The look in Justin's eyes when he gazes at her makes it obvious that he adores her. But why does it seem as though she's neither accepting nor rejecting him after all this time?

Nonetheless, I merely smiled without inquiring further.

After a while, the people inside came out, and Yvonne's injuries had been doctored. With tears streaming down her face, she tugged at the police officer and sobbed, "My boyfriend and I were just messing around. He didn't hit me. He merely pushed me lightly, but that man abruptly came over and started pummeling my boyfriend."

When her words fell, I couldn't help frowning. Likewise taken aback, Stella gaped at her and exclaimed, "What are you talking about? You were being assaulted by that man in the mall, so my friend intervened. Why would we pick trouble when we don't even know you?"

"Who knows what your intentions were? Anyway, your friend hit my boyfriend, so I demand compensation," Yvonne proclaimed without the slightest bit of shame.

Emery and Camelia were initially scrolling their phone with their heads lowered, but they instinctively shot their gazes over upon hearing her words. Looking at the police officer, Emery stated, "Officer, this woman is lying. She's making up stories. The man lent her a hand out of a sense of righteousness, yet she isn't at all thankful. Instead, she's making a false countercharge. We took a video of the altercation, so you can have a look at it. Her boyfriend had been hitting her for a long while, so the man finally had enough and stepped out to teach him a lesson."

As she said that, she handed her phone to the police officer.

After taking a look at it, the police officer then shifted his gaze to Yvonne. With his brows furrowed, he asserted, "Ms. Wilde, are you aware that your behavior is no different from slander in the eyes of the law, and you could be held criminally liable? Putting aside the fact that he did that to help you, you shouldn't be so ungrateful and accuse someone even if it's an innocent bystander."

"Exactly!" Emery exclaimed. Then, she continued muttering, "In the future, no one should interfere when it comes to a woman like you even if you're beaten to death. After all, that's what you deserve!"

Subsequently, the police officer returned her the phone. Pivoting, he then went to the two interrogation rooms and escorted Justin out. "Next time, if you encounter something like this again, just lodge a police report straight away or simply restrain the perpetrator. You don't need to interfere too much." At that, he paused for a moment. With his gaze on Yvonne, he continued placidly, "After all, there are quite a lot of ungrateful people in this world."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1068

Justin was a straightforward man, so he didn't quite understand the police officer's words. He was stunned for a while before he nodded blankly, appearing a tad silly.

After the police officer had said a few more words, we then left the police station. Only then did Justin recognize me, and he murmured in embarrassment, "Thank you so much for making this trip. I owe you one."

I merely smiled and told them to go home first since it was rather late.

Placing her hand on my shoulder, Emery then commented, "That guy seems rather simple and honest, but the girl appears to be quite ambitious. Is she working at Ashton's company?"

I nodded in affirmation. "Yup. I've run into her a few times, and it's indeed true. But then, it's normal for a girl, I guess. She's quite beautiful, so it's not surprising that she's ambitious."

At that, Emery snorted without commenting further. "Dang, it's almost ten o'clock now! I've got to go home, or Hunter will probably chew me out. We'll hang out again and talk another time, okay?"

As she said that, she drove off.

Thus, it was only Camelia and I left. Looking at me, she hesitantly uttered, "Scarlett, I haven't seen my child in a long time, so I miss him. I'd like to go home and see him."

Hearing that, I chuckled softly. "I'll drive you back now. Why are you so forlorn? I didn't say that you're not allowed to go home. I just wanted to bring you out for some fresh air and a change of pace. Your emotions are affected by every single action of his because you focus all your time and energy on the child and Marcus.

"Now that the baby has been weaned, you should really find a job or something else to occupy your time instead of making Marcus the center of your life. I know it may be difficult for you to change in a short time, but go slowly and make gradual progress. You're still young, so you've got a long way ahead of you."

She probably understood me, for she dazedly nodded while gazing at me. With her eyes fixed on me, she then declared solemnly, "Okay. I'll do as you say."

In the car, she leaned back against the passenger seat with her eyes closed after such an exhausting day. After driving for a while, White residence came into view. It was still the same, and only the surrounding landscape had been improved throughout the past few years.

The pond in the yard had been filled and replaced with fruit trees instead. It was winter then, so the leaves had all fallen, leaving the trees barren.

I parked the car beside the yard and watched as Camelia walked in. But just after she had taken a few steps, she suddenly turned and stared at me. With a serious expression, she asked, "Scarlet, if... This is just a suppositional question, okay? If Mr. Fuller is no longer here, would you settle for the next best thing and choose Marcus?"

I was startled for a moment before I stared right at her and locked gazes with her under the dim streetlights that were shining brightly. "No," I answered resolutely. "As you said, it's a suppositional question. There are no ifs in my world, and I'm an obstinate person. Since I've decided on Ashton, it would only be him for the rest of my life. Other than him, all others are merely ships passing in the night."

As she looked at me, she heaved a sigh. A long while later, she nodded and murmured, "Okay, I got it."

Well, well... that was quite a sudden question.

Sending her off with my eyes, I spaced out for a bit while staring at the filled pond. It seems impossible to return to the past. It was here at White residence back when I first met Marcus. At that time, he was taciturn, and indifference was written plainly on his face.

Then, I recalled the day when he brought me back here. When we alighted from the car, he chased after me from behind, and I accidentally pushed him into the pond. The winter that year was extremely chilly, so he fell ill the very next day. Later, my phone malfunctioned. As I pondered back in time, a long time had passed, so much so that I've almost forgotten all that.

After an eternity, I spun around to head back.

Unexpectedly, I caught sight of a black Bentley beside my car and froze for a moment. Someone was standing beside the car, and it was none other than Marcus, whom I hadn't seen in a long time.

He stared at me intently with jet-black eyes without even blinking. In his black suit, he appeared lonely and apathetic. The oppressive aura emanating from him grew increasingly distinct.

"When did you arrive?" I queried as I walked toward the car. I had no idea whether I was so lost in my thoughts that I actually failed to hear the engine of his car.

Pursing his lips, he continued staring at me. His gaze was overly grim that a slither of fear inexplicably crept into me.

"You won't choose me even if he hadn't appeared?" he asked out of the blue, stunning me into utter stillness.

So... he heard my conversation with Camelia?

"Uh... As I said, there are no ifs." As I looked at him, a brief trace of guilt assailed me, but it was merely there for a moment and gone the next. "Actually, we both know full well that there are no ifs. Ashton Fuller's existence to me, well... Putting it simply, he's my husband and lover. We're like two pieces of driftwood, and it's destiny as well as a blessing that we could meet amidst the vast sea of people to end up walking together hand in hand.

Putting it into perspective, he's actually my happiness. He's tantamount to the beacon in my life. His light enables me to persevere and continue forging on bravely. "Marcus, I don't know your understanding of love, but to me, it's definitely not something in which one can settle for the next best thing.

This has nothing to do with anyone because love is independent in itself. We can love a lot of people in our lifetime. Like you, you once loved me, and you'll also fall in love with someone else in the future. But this thing between Ashton and I is no longer mere love. We're more like a single entity, and we share the same body, so we need to face life together in the future."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1069

I had no idea whether he could understand everything I said, but I stared at him and continued, "Camelia is a really nice girl. If you look at her closely, you'll discover that you've missed out on a lot in the past few years. When I was very young, I loved eating rock candy, but I could only have them once a month. Sometimes, my grandmother even forbade me from eating it. Since my craving went unsatisfied, I hankered after rock candy every single second of every day.

"Back then, the pumpkin pie my grandmother made was exceedingly delicious. But because I got to eat it every time I craved it, I didn't find it delicious anymore as time passed. "After that, when I slowly grew up, I could buy rock candy myself when I had pocket money.

At that time, I was very excited and bought several sticks at one go. However, I got sick of it just after eating two sticks. Actually, things we often yearn for are not necessarily what we truly want. Reflecting back on it now, the most delicious thing in my memories isn't the rock candy, but pumpkin pie. Alas, my grandmother is no longer here, so the taste could only remain in my memories."

Marcus' eyes were fixed intently on me. The bridge of his nose appeared high and his black eyes increasingly profound—perhaps because he had grown thinner. "Scarlett, my feelings for you have never been as simple as mere yearning because I couldn't have you. "Do you still remember how you were when you first came to White residence? Back then, you didn't talk much. You were very quiet—always silent with a faint smile on your face.

My mother privately told me that a girl like you is very gentle. At that time, I didn't find anything good about a gentle girl. Later, when we were by the pond, you pushed me in. Now that I think about it, I've forgotten how cold the water was. The only thing I remember is your expression, and it remains vivid in my mind.

Although you were angry, you were very beautiful. "When I carried you out of the warehouse, you were covered in blood. You've probably forgotten about it, but you clutched at me tightly, insisting persistently and stubbornly that I save the child. Your expression back then was truly distressing. At that time, I felt that Ashton Fuller wasn't worthy of you since he couldn't protect you."

At that, I pursed my lips and dipped my head slightly. The past was too overwhelming to me that they barely beckoned memories anymore.

Nonetheless, he continued speaking. With a bitter smile tugging at his lips, he said, "Thus, I vowed to always take good care of you in the future no matter what happens. I saw the child after it was born, and it already took form. Afraid that you'd be anguished, I took the child away to spare you the grief of seeing it. "Later, you were always in a trance when you learned that the child was gone.

You kept waking up in the middle of the night and spacing out in the room alone. I didn't notice it in the beginning, but when I later realized it, I kept you company

every single night. As time went by, you'd sit beside me and take my hand, asking me to close my eyes and sleep as though you were coaxing me.

"You probably had no idea, but those days were the happiest I'd ever been in my entire life. You always covered me with a blanket when you woke up in the middle of the night. "Sometimes, you'd go into the kitchen when you woke up in the morning, saying that you want to make me breakfast.

Your mind was fuzzy, so the breakfast you made was often burnt or inedible. You'd put sugar into the noodles instead of salt. Actually, sweet noodles don't taste half bad. Thereafter, I tried making it myself, but I just couldn't get the same taste as the ones you made me. You said there are no ifs in your world, but Scarlett, you don't know how cruel it is to me."

Finally, I looked at him. The past then flashed across my mind. All of a sudden, a wave of sorrow flooded me. I couldn't deny that I indeed owed him so much that I could never repay him.

In the warehouse, he saved me like a hero, while in Lavelian Village, he took a bullet for me without any regard for his own life. Time and again, he saved me from sure death although I ruthlessly pushed him away every single time. However, when some things had happened, they cannot be undone no matter what.

When confronted with him, I couldn't even bring myself to say a simple utterance of thanks or apology. That was too trivial, and I knew what he wanted, but I just couldn't do it.

I simply hadn't been able to bring myself to utter an apology to him. After a long moment of silence, I asserted, "Camelia is a nice girl, so you should treat her well. Don't let her end up like... you."

There were countless possibilities as well as twists and turns in life. Thus, I was well aware that regrets were unavoidable no matter what. It was no different from people lamenting about having failed to cherish their youth and neglected to live life in the moment. All those regrets would accumulate throughout the days to become the most precious and interesting aspect of our memories.

That's right! Life would be dull without any regrets.

Subsequently, I climbed into my car. Starting the car, I drove away from White residence without bidding him farewell. In truth, I wished him happiness and hoped that he would be able to fall in love with another woman, living a life of his own for the rest of his days.

However, such hope was beyond my control. The only thing I could do was to wish that everything would go well.

When I returned to the villa, I received a phone call from Ashton. He seemed to have been asleep, for his voice was a tad hoarse. "Did you not go to Moore Residence and stay at home alone instead?"

Nodding, I plopped onto the bed and replied, "I was initially going over, but I forgot when I came back. I just felt as though you were waiting for me at home, so I came home."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1070

At that, Ashton chuckled softly. "It looks like Mrs. Fuller is missing me. What did you have for dinner?"

Likewise, I giggled. Without answering him, I remarked, "Ashton Fuller, it feels like you have life within you now." In the past, he used to be cold and indifferent without much warmth. From afar, he always seemed rather chilly, but now that I had been with him for a long time, I found that he was oftentimes no different from the ordinary person—he experienced distress, concern, worry, and he would also nag, badger, and always treat me well.

"Why do you say that all of a sudden?" he queried. His voice was still slightly hoarse, and it sounded as though he had caught a cold.

"You've caught a cold! Have you taken any medication?" I blurted even as I resolved to go to A City tomorrow barring any unforeseen circumstances.

"I just caught a cold when I disembarked from the airplane, but it's no big deal. How's the weather over at K City?"

I nodded before slowly telling him about everything that had happened today while he listened quietly. As I spoke, I inadvertently blurted, "I miss you, Ashton Fuller."

The person on the other end was taken aback for a moment, and silence reigned for a long moment. Then, in a low voice, he murmured, "I miss you, too."

"I don't have much to do in K City, so can I go over to A City to look for you? I want to see you." I actually wanted to tell him about my encounter with Marcus, but on second thought, it would only add to his troubles, so I decided not to do so.

At that, he paused for a moment before saying, "Holden is probably arriving in K City tomorrow, so don't be in such a hurry to come to A City. Fuller Corporation needs you and Joseph there. If you come over, I'll worry about Fuller Corporation instead. Armond will most likely seek you out for the sandalwood box, so stay at Moore Residence as much as possible. You'll have a backup if anything happens."

Upon hearing that, I pursed my lips. "Why is Armond still fixated on that sandalwood box? Even if the item in there could get him some money, it'll be a mere pittance. So, why on earth is he obsessed about it?"

"The oil fields in Eastern Epea have been affected by the epidemic this year, so a huge amount of petroleum there can't be exported. The Murphys run a petroleum company, and this is the best time to buy petroleum there at a low price. However, they don't have a contract in hand. While that single piece of

paper agreement doesn't seem to be of any importance, Eastern Epea only acknowledges that piece of paper.

"As the Murphys have been operating on a small scale throughout the past few years, that piece of paper didn't really matter. But now that they want to purchase in huge quantities, it'll be a drop in the bucket without that piece of paper. Furthermore, Armond didn't get anything useful in Moranta, and petroleum is the fastest way to generate profits for Murphy Corporation, so he'll definitely seek you out for that sandalwood box."

Bafflement gripped me after listening to him. Then, I hesitantly questioned, "So, should I give him that sandalwood box?" After all, I might not necessarily be able to hold onto that sandalwood box if Armond demanded it.

The truth of the matter was, I had indeed promised to give him the sandalwood box when I came back from Venria. But then, Ashton changed the sandalwood box when I gave it to him, and I didn't continue pursuing the matter henceforth.

At that moment, Ashton went silent. After what seemed like an eternity, he admitted, "From my perspective, I don't want you to give him the sandalwood box. He's not an honest person, so no one can guarantee that he won't continue targeting me when the Murphy family has stabilized. He has always wanted the business deal in Moranta, but he has no time to bother now that he's all caught up in the affairs of the Murphy family."

Indeed, that's true.

He then paused for a moment before continuing, "Nevertheless, the Murphys is a domestic company, so the country will have sufficient petroleum reserves after they purchase the petroleum at a low price. It's beneficial to everyone in the country since a huge supply of petroleum means a possible lowering of its price. Therefore, it's a good thing to a certain extent."

At that, I grew increasingly conflicted. "So, should I give it to him or otherwise?"

However, he didn't answer me anymore. Instead, he abruptly hung up the phone. When I called him back, the line was busy. When the call was connected after a long time, we bypassed that topic.

The next day, I went straight to Fuller Corporation.

Holden was late, so Joseph briefly informed me about the company's recent condition before leaving the office. When Stella saw me in Ashton's office, she was stunned for a moment. In the next second, she handed me some documents that were to be reviewed with a neutral expression. They were basically collaboration proposals from some small companies and some internal start-up plans. Ashton had previously left me instructions for these, so I had no problems handling them.

I was reviewing those documents in the office when Holden arrived. His method of making an entrance was truly different from others. A long-legged beauty

with wavy curls sashayed beside him, and he wasn't at all bothered about running his hands all over the woman in public.

As soon as he entered the office, he pulled the woman onto his lap and inserted his long and slender fingers between the woman's thighs. Despite it being in the middle of winter, the woman was wearing flesh-colored leggings. He caressed her for a while, but he probably didn't find it satisfying, for he asked the woman to remove it altogether. Hearing his request, the woman looked at him in mild embarrassment and murmured, "This isn't quite appropriate, no, Mr. Taylor?"

"What's inappropriate about it? As you said, you're here to keep me company and make me happy. Why, are you going back on your word?" Holden's roguish appearance then truly seemed as though he was itching for a beating.

The woman's face was a mask of mortification, but Holden merely looked at her apathetically as though everything had nothing to do with him. While he didn't show much of an expression, he vaguely emanated displeasure. Women working as escorts were naturally adept at reading someone's moods, so after a moment's hesitation, the woman bit her lip lightly.

Lowering her head, she mustered her courage to remove her leggings right there in the office. As I sat there at the table, I couldn't help frowning. Staring at Holden, I suggested, "Mr. Taylor, how about I reserve a hotel room for you, and we'll talk business when you're done enjoying yourself?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1071

Holden leaned back against the sofa with a devilish expression on his face. "Don't bother, for I'm pressed for time. But then, I also feel like enjoying myself, and I can't help desiring to grope a woman, so I'll just do it here."

Argh! What a shameless man!

I pursed my lips and said nothing further.

After turning up the thermostat in the office, I watched as the woman removed her leggings while seated on Holden's lap. Subsequently, the two of them started getting it on right there without any qualms.

Lifting a hand, I massaged my temples as I felt a headache coming on. Then, I made a video call to Ashton, and fortunately, he answered in mere seconds.

I turned the camera to face Holden, whereupon Ashton's brows furrowed. In a terse voice, he drawled, "You came to my office to have fun, Mr. Taylor?" The moment his voice fell, the two people who were initially a tangle of limbs sprang apart.

Raising a hand, Holden wiped the lipstick off his lips before he swung his gaze at me with a frown. "What are you doing, Scarlett?"

I merely shrugged in response. "I think it's more appropriate for my husband to discuss business with you."

At that, his brows creased slightly. He then pushed the woman off him and snapped coldly, "Take the money and leave!" In the next moment, he took out a check from his wallet and threw it at her. After picking up the check, the woman quickly left.

Thus, it was only Holden and me in the office then. Glimpsing that Ashton was in the car, I couldn't help asking, "Where are you going?"

"I went to prison to pay Brandon and Abe a visit."

Hearing that, I nodded in acknowledgment. Now that Holden was back to normal, I ended the call with Ashton. I then looked at Holden and said, "Can we talk business now, Mr. Taylor?"

It was clear as day that he was rather chagrined. Pursing his lips, he sprawled on the sofa as though he was boneless as he grouched in a weak and languid voice, "I didn't eat breakfast when I came out in the morning, so I'm starving and don't have any energy to talk."

Nodding with a faint smile, I dialed the secretary's external line. In no time, Stella picked up the call. "Hello, Mrs. Fuller, this is Stella here. Is there anything I can assist you with?"

"Please order a bountiful breakfast spread. I'd like an American breakfast and a set of continental breakfast. Thank you." After I had finished speaking, Stella was noticeably taken aback, but she promptly concurred, "Sure. I'll get right to it."

When I hung up the phone, Holden closed his eyes while reclining on the sofa. I wasn't in a hurry either, merely continuing to review the documents in hand with my head lowered, scanning through all those that needed to be approved, one by one.

Stella's efficiency was exceedingly impressive, for she delivered the breakfast over not long after. It was a very lavish spread. After placing it on the table, she cast Holden a perplexed look before leaving.

At the sight of the breakfast on the table, Holden didn't continue picking trouble with me. Instead, he stared at me and offered, "Why don't we eat together?"

Flashing him a faint smile, I declined, "No, thanks. I've already had breakfast, so please help yourself, Mr. Taylor."

The man's elegance seemed as though it was in his blood, for even his movements as he enjoyed breakfast were extremely elegant. After taking a few bites, he stopped eating and pinned his eyes on me while sitting on the sofa.

Sensing his gaze, I lifted my eyes and looked at him with a faint smile. "You're done eating, Mr. Taylor?"

In turn, he arched an eyebrow. "You're much more patient than Ashton Fuller, thus less irritating."

At that, I frowned slightly. "Mr. Taylor, this isn't the first time Fuller Corporation is collaborating with the Taylor family, so you actually didn't have to go to such lengths."

Nonetheless, he chuckled at my remark. "You and your husband are truly interesting. Okay, let's go and take a look at the factory as well as the processing materials. If there's no problem, then this matter is settled."

Unbidden, I breathed a sigh of relief. Phew! Thank God this guy isn't making trouble anymore. If he were to continue with his ridiculous act, I might have truly gone crazy!

After putting everything away, I left the office with him. Stella was right outside the door, so she greeted us when she saw us exiting the office. Thereafter, I ordered, "Later, go in and clear the table. Then, reserve a hotel room for Mr. Taylor and arrange dinner for him. Mr. Taylor is from Moranta, so take note of that."

I uttered those words in a mere whisper, so Stella nodded imperceptibly. Cautiously stealing a peek at Holden, she then nodded and replied, "Okay, will do."

While we were waiting for the elevator, Holden looked at me with a frown. "From what I remember, we're considered friends, so why are you so distant with me? Have I done something unreasonable? Or do you feel that you don't know me anymore after having not seen me in such a long time?"

Huh? This man is really childish.

Staring at him, I answered in exasperation, "Of course we're friends, Mr. Taylor. However, I don't think you have considered me as a friend today. Otherwise, why would you have brought a beautiful woman to my office and started getting it on with her in front of me? If you'd regarded me as a friend, shouldn't you have greeted me right away before discussing business as a matter of course?"

Upon hearing that, he lifted a hand and rubbed his nose in slight embarrassment. Chortling, he then countered, "I just wanted to meet you again in a unique way after so long. That was just a trifling intrusion earlier, so don't take it to heart."

I merely shrugged. "Of course not. As you said, Mr. Taylor, we're friends. Since we're friends, I naturally won't take that to heart. But to be honest, Mr. Taylor, you don't have to go so far when you choose a woman next time. That woman is stunning, but I don't think she's your cup of tea."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1072

Giving a light cough, Holden stared at me and drawled, "Don't you think it's rather inappropriate for you to discuss women with me so blatantly? Do you talk to Mr. Fuller in such a manner as well?"

I shook my head in response. "Of course not. He doesn't parade women in front of me so blatantly. Besides, I have some say in the kind of woman he likes. Furthermore, judging from his current demeanor, I think he probably won't be like you for the time being."

Upon hearing that, his brows furrowed slightly. "For the time being? So, you don't trust Ashton Fuller all that much either!"

"Well, not exactly. It's just that no one can guarantee what happens in the future, so I only pay attention to the present. As long as he loves and cherishes me presently, that makes me the happiest. As for the future, we shall see what happens then. It's something that hasn't happened, after all, so no point fussing over it!"

Just then, the elevator doors opened, and I stepped in with him. He agreed with my sentiments, but he looked at me and murmured, "Scarlett, I think you're being too optimistic and rational. It's not really a good thing."

At that, my brows scrunched together. "What kind of love is considered irrational?" Ashton gave me sufficient sense of security, hence the reason for my seemingly rational and calm demeanor.

After pondering for a moment, he replied, "That friend of yours. I think her love is truly irrational. She's so fanatical about her man that it's a bit maniacal. I really don't know how to describe her."

Which friend of mine?

For a moment, my mind stalled. I couldn't figure out who he meant, so I stared at him blankly.

Frowning, he explained, "I meant that woman whom you had me pick up at Moranta back then. Well, the one who was particularly noisy and chattered endlessly. Isn't she the woman who loves Armond to the point of no return?"

Nora?

When I realized who he meant, I couldn't help sighing. "That's different. She's inherently a zealous girl, and she's love-starved. When she first met Armond, she was initially trying it out with him, but she later invested herself increasingly more into the relationship, so she naturally lost herself."

Nora truly loved Armond, growing to care for and cherish him all the more. Back when they first got together, she didn't really care about him all that much, and it didn't matter even if she lost him. But as time went past, she seemed to have focused all her emotions and feelings on him. The more attention she gave him, the more she became devoted to him.

This is indeed true.

I pursed my lips and said nothing further.

Holden, on the other hand, seemed deep in thought, but I didn't bother inquiring about it.

When we stepped out of the elevator, I spotted Rachel in the lobby. She was a beautiful woman—the kind of devastating stunner who turned heads and stood out among beauties. Once, I felt that it was a shame that she didn't become an actress as such a bombshell would definitely be the center of attention in the entertainment industry.

"Oh wow, a goddess!" Holden couldn't help exclaiming as he noticed Rachel.

Tugging at me, he asked, "Is she an employee here?"

"Ashton recruited her from abroad. She's responsible for the technical research of AI development, so she's both a project manager and a researcher. She's a woman with both brains and beauty," I replied with my eyes fixed on Rachel.

While we were talking, Rachel looked in our direction. She was a beauty besides being a fashionable woman who was skilled in dolling up. Right then, she was wearing a white shirt and a black leather skirt coupled with a camel coat. It was professional yet not drab, showcasing her perfect figure. Hence, her appearance always attracted much attention.

"It's been a long time, Ms. Stovall. You seem to have lost weight!" She gazed at me with a red box in her hand. In turn, I flashed her a smile and replied, "You've gotten increasingly beautiful as well."

At my compliment, she giggled before shifting her gaze to Holden. Then, she turned back to me and inquired, "Who is this gentleman here?"

"This is Mr. Taylor, the president cum chairperson of Moranta International Trading," I introduced. As I did so, I noticed that the red box in her hand seemed to contain sweets.

After listening to my introduction, her eyes lit up. In the next instance, she greeted, "Nice to meet you, Mr. Taylor. Besides having achieved so much at a young age, you're also exceedingly handsome. You're truly an exemplary model for youths today, Mr. Taylor!"

Her remark had Holden guffawing in delight. Gazing at her, he blurted, "You're really good with words. May I have the honor of knowing your name? And do you mind me asking you out to dinner sometime?"

He smiled brightly at her. His smile was alluring, friendly, and gentle. In fact, it was so dazzling that I couldn't help wondering whether he was trying to enchant her with his charm.

Looking at him, Rachel smiled faintly as she replied, "You flatter me, Mr. Taylor. I'm Rachel Zimmer, and it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. But don't worry about dinner since a meeting is destined in itself. I hope that you'll still be here in K City during my wedding. I'm looking forward to seeing you there!"

As she said that, she took a handful of sweets out of the red box in her hand and placed them into his hand. Then, she even took out a wedding invitation from her handbag and handed it to him. "Do honor me with your presence then, Mr. Taylor!"

Holden was stunned for a moment, and he clicked his tongue while holding the sweets in his hand.

Subsequently, Rachel handed me a bag of sweets and a wedding invitation. Looking at me, she said, "You'll wish me well, yes? I hope you and Mr. Fuller will attend my wedding then. I'm looking forward to seeing you both!"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1073

She's getting married?

That was something that surprised me.

Holding onto the wedding invitation, I froze before saying, "Aren't you too quick? You're marrying so soon."

She gave me a faint smile. "It's not really. I'm almost thirty, and it's about time for me to get married. Moreover, I'm lucky to meet someone who loves and adores me. So it's not too soon. The time is just right."

Looking at the blissful smile on her face, I could not help but smile at her too. "Then, let me congratulate you on your wedding. We'll be there on time."

The smile was still on her face when she handed the wedding invitations to the other coworkers. After Holden and I left, he muttered under his breath, "F*ck, I can't believe a beautiful woman like her is getting married soon. This is ridiculous. Right as I found a woman whom I'm interested too. What a pity."

After we got in the car, I rolled my eyes at him. "Can't you have a semblance of normalcy? You're treating love as a game. Aren't you afraid of karma being right around the corner? One day, if you meet a woman you truly love, you might suffer if you keep this up."

He leaned back on the chair before answering coldly, "That kind of woman you speak of will be someone I'll never meet. I'm born free, and I live freely. No woman will affect me in this life."

I kept quiet when I saw his confident look. No one in this world could predict the future, and all we could do was take one step at a time.

I remained quiet as I drove. After all, there was nothing to talk about. When we reached the factory, Holden schooled his features and entered the building with me. Fuller Corporation did not have many factories, and most were focusing on technological devices. Most of the staff they hired were technicians. Furthermore, in the past two years, most of the work in the factory was done by machinery. Thus, there were few people in the factory.

The one who was in charge of the factory was a middle-aged man in his forties. As we had told him about our visit beforehand, he came to greet us when we reached the doorway. After a brief exchange of greetings, he then brought us to the processing room.

"So far, the batch of products seems fine. I'm here to take a look at them for myself, then I'll tell the rest back at the Taylors that everything's fine. We can sign the contract right away, but I have a request—I want to bring some of the

samples back. That way, I'll be able to convince at the board of directors meeting."

Looking at me, Holden then asked, "Is that all right?"

I nodded. "Sure."

Ashton had told me about this before that day, and it was a request that was fine with me. After showing him around the factory and answering his questions, the two of us then left the factory.

By the time we left, it was already afternoon. Holden asked, "Aren't you planning to show me around in K City? Why don't you bring me to try some specialties in K City?"

Glancing at him, I replied, "In a bit. I've arranged a hotel room for you. If there's anything you need, feel free to call me. I'll send someone to resolve any issues you have as soon as possible."

He nodded but then queried, "Can I not live in the hotel?"

"Of course." As I gripped onto the steering wheel, I continued, "Although the hotel room is reserved for you, you have the freedom to choose whether you live in it or not. There are many nightclubs around the city center. Pretty women, models, and unpopular celebrities often roam the area. Of course, it's fine if you're interested in popular celebrities instead. However, that might be a challenge, and it'll depend on how capable you are."

He pouted. "Am I that terrible of a person to you? What do you mean by unpopular celebrities and models? Do I look like that kind of person to you? I don't want to live in the hotel because I want to live in your house. I've asked others to send my luggage there. Honestly, is Ashton that stingy? Why isn't he hiring a housekeeper for such a large house? It's so big and empty!"

Hearing him, I pursed my lips. "If you're not used to living in hotels, you can live in our house. I'll hire a housekeeper."

Almost immediately, he grinned. "That sounds about right."

When he saw me driving toward the metropolitan area, he wondered, "Where are you heading to?"

"Didn't you say you want to try K City's specialties? I'm bringing you there now. It's time for lunch. Aren't you hungry?" When I peeked at him from the corner of my eyes, I realized he was staring at me.

"Let's skip the specialties. Bring me back to the villa and just make me some simple food. I bear no high hopes for K City's specialties," he responded nonchalantly as he leaned back on the chair again.

The corner of my lips twitched in annoyance. Unable to hold myself back, I huffed, "You don't have some ulterior motives, do you? You're so eager to go to my house."

Glancing at me, he chuckled. "What ulterior motives can I possibly have? Even if you gifted me those things in your house, I won't even want it. What motives can I honestly have? I just want to eat the food you make. Is there something wrong with that? Since the contract is signed, and we've done everything that's necessary, are you planning to let me go back now?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1074

My brows furrowed. "No. I was just wondering why you suddenly have the craving for the food I make. By the way, how is your mother?" I casually asked.

To my surprise, his expression darkened. "Are we going back to your place or not? If we're not, let me get down from the car. I'm going back to the hotel."

What's wrong with him? He's just unreasonably angry right now.

I fell silent and drove straight to the villa instead. Right as he got down from the car, he made a call. Soon, someone brought his luggage over. When he saw me looking at him, he lifted a brow and questioned, "I'm starving. Why aren't you making anything yet?"

For a moment, I was speechless.

I entered the villa and began preparing some food for him.

Dragging the suitcase behind him, he glanced around the house before asking, "Where will I be staying in?"

"There are bedrooms on the first and second floor. Have a look at them yourself. You can live in whichever room you prefer." Cleaners were often hired to clean the house, and I rarely stayed here whenever Ashton was not around. Therefore, the interior of the house seemed silent and dead. Now that I think about it, Holden's right. I should hire a housekeeper for this house. Summer is recovering well. If I bring her here, the house will be livelier.

After Holden looked around the house, he commented, "This house is worth tens of millions, but look at the state of it. How busy Mr. Fuller must be."

Then, he queried, "Your bedroom is on the second floor?"

I nodded. "Yes."

When I saw him carrying his suitcase upstairs, I voiced, "Mr. Taylor, I'll be going back to the Moore Residence at night, and I won't be coming back here. Is there anything you need? If so, do tell me, and I'll get the things you need later."

Standing in the middle of the stairs, he turned around to stare at me with widened eyes. "What do you mean by you're going to Moore Residence and not coming back? Are you going to make me stay in this house all by myself while you enjoy a sweet home somewhere else? Scarlett, do you have a heart? How can you just leave me here by myself?"

His words were giving me nothing but a headache. “Mr. Taylor, I’m supposed to go back to the Moore Residence anyway. Ashton isn’t home, and I rarely sleep here. You’ll be fine living here. There’s a car in the garage, and you can drive yourself anywhere you wish to go. If you really don’t want to go out of the house at night, I’ll prepare something for you to eat later. In a while, I’ll get a housekeeper to come here and prepare your meals. Don’t worry.”

He scoffed. “What do you mean by don’t worry? I’m very worried. What’s the difference between living here and living in a hotel? No. You have to stay here tonight, or else I won’t sign the contract. I won’t listen to anything else from you.”

At that point, I have no words for him. Why is he so childish?

“Mr. Taylor, let’s put aside how inappropriate it is for us to live under the same roof and talk about how I’m also a married woman. Do you really think it’s appropriate for us to live together?”

“What’s wrong with that? I’m not asking you to share a bed with me. I don’t care. You have to stay here tonight, and it won’t matter even if you call Ashton. Also, I don’t want to eat anything else but the pasta you make. It’ll be the same at night; you have to cook for me. Otherwise, I won’t sign the contract. You can mull over this yourself.” With that said, he stormed off to the bedroom.

Speechless at his words, I fell silent. It was not that it was inconvenient for him to live in the villa—the villa was big enough for another person to live in, not to mention the fact that I had once lived under the same roof as him—but that I was worried about Armond.

Ashton had told me Armond would come to me for that box. However, with the current situation, it would be impossible for Armond to ask for the box from me directly. Instead, he would be trying to get the box secretly.

This villa was our primary residence. He would not be able to do anything if no one was around at night. However, if someone was, I was worried that he would use me to threaten Ashton to hand over the box to him.

After placing his things in the bedroom, Holden went downstairs. When he noticed that the pasta was almost done, he took a bowl to put it beside me. Staring at the pasta, he asked, “Do you know how to make anything else?”

I shook my head. “No. I only know how to make this.”

He frowned. “I knew it. How can a woman like you know how to make anything else but pasta? I’ve really overestimated you.”

He knows nothing else but how to infuriate others. Spinning around to shoot him a glare, I then huffed, “Any more rubbish from you, and I’ll throw you out. I’ll get Ashton to discuss the contract with you. I’m not a shareholder of the Fuller Corporation. You can do whatever you like; it’s none of my business.”

He clicked his tongue. "You ungrateful woman. How can you get angry just because I'm speaking the truth? Look at the other women. They either do makeup or they make sure they present themselves well. Now, look at you. You're bare-faced all the time, and with the kind of lifestyle you lead, I'd say you're going to have menopause earlier than the rest."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1075

"Ah!" Unable to hold back, I stomped his foot, and he yelped. "Scarlett, what in the world is wrong with you? Why did you step on my foot? It hurts like hell!"

"Keep running that mouth of yours, and I'll do it again. The pasta's done. Add anything you like, but don't put too much of it. Otherwise, it'll taste bad." He's just like a kid sometimes. How childish.

After a moment of hesitation, he raised his head to look at me again. "I don't know what to add. Help me add something. I've never done this before."

Shooting him a look of disdain, I groaned. "Did you just crawl out from under a rock? This is the first time I've seen a man who can't even do something as minor as this. Ashton's so much better than you. No wonder you haven't found a good girlfriend even though you're already at this age."

Apparently, my words stunned him, for he whined, "What do mean by I haven't found a good girlfriend even though I'm already at this age? It's because I'm not looking for one, okay? If I wanted to, I'd have found one already. I have a house, a car, and money. Moreover, I'm handsome. I can have anyone I want. I'll look for a girlfriend tomorrow." With that said, he brought the bowl to the dining table and whipped his head to the side. "It's not like everyone's the same as your Ashton."

Despite finding the way he was mumbling under his breath hilarious, I managed to stop myself from laughing. "But truthfully, have you found no one you really like all these years?"

Freezing, he then muttered, "No. I did meet some, but they're not suitable for marriage. All they do is ask for money from me. So they're suitable for me to have fun with. I'm looking for a woman who isn't greedy for my money."

That's not what he should be thinking. Thus, I said, "That's the wrong idea you have. At a certain age, other than loving you, girls have to have monetary desires. Do you really expect her to have no desire for anything?"

He clicked his tongue in frustration. "Can't she just want me?"

"Even if she only wants you, she still needs to live. Do you think by wanting you, she can pay her bills? Asking for money from you is a sign of her reliance on you. I'm sure you've come across women who never asked any money from you, but I'm also sure you never cherished them, did you?"

The corner of his mouth twitched. "How did you know about that?"

I pressed my lips tightly together. "Of course I'll know about it. That's how people like you are. You can't find a sense of accomplishment from girls who want nothing from you, so you'll neglect and chase her away. In the end, you'll be left with those who'll ask for things from you. However, once you spend more

time with those girls, you'll start assuming that they're only around for your money. Then, you'll break up with them. Hence, at the end of the day, you're the one who's trapping yourself in this cycle."

Many men were like that. They spent their money on women, not because they loved the woman, but because they could find a sense of accomplishment from them. After all, at a certain point in life, people needed others relying on them to feel like they were succeeding in life.

Holden narrowed his eyes at me and questioned, "What about you? Does Ashton give you money to spend?"

I nodded honestly. "Of course. I'm not working right now, so what can I possibly do if I don't use his money? He's not like you. Our walk-in closet has the latest clothes of the season because he buys them all for me. He also buys me pieces of jewelry and bags. Although he did not love me as much at the start of our marriage, this has always been a habit of his. I only wore some of these clothes, but he still keeps the wardrobe updated every season. Furthermore, his card is with me until now."

He scrunched up his face and muttered, "No one can be as generous as Ashton. A whole wardrobe of a season's clothes is worth millions. I'd rather give hundreds of thousands to those women and let them pick the clothes they like."

I shrugged. "That's why I said you're different from Ashton. His love has always been subtle. I'm blessed to be his woman in this life of mine."

As he dug into his pasta, he mumbled, "If you were my wife, I'd do the same."

Instantly, my brows knitted, and I asked, "What did you say?"

Slowly stuffing more pasta into his mouth, he uttered as he looked into my eyes, "I said the pasta is great. I want more at night."

In response, I rolled my eyes at him. I did not have an appetite for food, so I only had a few mouthfuls before I went to the fridge, looking for milk. Right then, Ashton called, informing me that the housekeeper he had just hired had arrived.

Thus, I stepped out of the villa to bring the housekeeper in while Holden continued with his food.

The new housekeeper was a simple woman in her forties. She greeted me when she saw me and told me her name was Nelly. After I briefly explained to her the situation, she nodded and began her work in the villa.

After Holden finished his serving, he even took mine, seemingly still hungry. When I noticed it, I stiffened, and he commented, "You cooked too little. Make more tonight."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1076

What could I say to that? I only nodded in response.

I had nothing to do in the afternoon, so naturally, I did not go to the office. However, what surprised me was Armond. He had called me and went straight to the point—he wanted to meet me.

I pursed my lips before replying, “There’s no point for us to meet. Mr. Murphy, what you’re looking for is not with me.”

His chuckles traveled out of the speakers. “You’re overthinking this. I just want to invite you to a meal. Nora is here in K City, and you were once close friends. Are you not going to have a meal with her now that she’s here?”

Sensing something else lying behind his friendly tone, I frowned before answering, “I’ll invite her another day. I won’t interrupt your meal with her.”

“Scarlett, I heard you’ve rented a small place for Shane’s parents. I’ve met with the two today, and they told me they want to thank you personally by inviting you to a meal. Is that inconvenient for you? If you reject, the two might be upset.”

His words made my heart skip a beat. Why did Armond go to see Sasha’s parents? Did Shane cross Armond?

“Armond, they’re old. What are you trying to do?” Until now, I still could not figure out to what extent of cruelty Armond could tolerate.

“Nothing, really. I’m just free recently, and I was thinking of getting a meal with someone. Scarlett, will you join me? Should I come and pick you up or are you going to drive?”

Tamping down the fury in my heart, it took me a while of silence before I uttered, “Send me the address.”

Once again, I heard him laughing. “Hahaha! Scarlett, aren’t you an exceptionally nice girl? I really like that about you.”

My lips pursed as I ended the call. Then, I called Ashton.

It took a few rings before the call went through. “What’s the matter, Scarlett?”

“Armond called me. It seems like he has found Sasha’s parents, and he has gotten Nora to come to K City. I don’t know what his aims are, but I’ve agreed to meet him. How are things on your side?”

Ashton inhaled sharply. "Brandon's been in a foul mood ever since he found out about how his daughter has been treated. He's hesitating. Something seems off about Abe. It's as if he's been drugged. When I saw him, he's only half-conscious, so I couldn't get anything from him."

I frowned. Thinking of Hailey, I said, "Ashton, perhaps there's someone who can help. Look for Hailey. Her father should have seen Armond in the past. As long as Hailey's the one to talk to her father, things will be much easier."

After a moment of contemplation, I added, "By the way, before meeting with Hailey, look for Fawn, Amy, and Jody Falker. They're all victims among the children. Hailey can't come to a decision. If you ask them to come with you, she might be able to make up her mind. Also, will you be able to come up with a plan to protect Hailey's father? At the end of the day, he's still involved with the organ trafficking incident. Once the investigation is done, I don't think he'll be able to say that he's innocent in it."

After a moment of silence, Ashton replied, "I'll try my best. Armond should be looking for you for that box. Hold on to it. If you have to, then give him the box. The box is useless to us, so it's best if you don't get into a conflict with Armond."

I understood why he said those words, so I hummed in agreement. After ending the call, I was about to leave the house.

When Holden saw me about to leave, he darted to my side. "Where are you going? Why aren't you bringing me along? You can't be dating another man behind my back, right?"

I nodded as I looked at him. "That's right. I'm going to have a secret date with another man. Do you want to join me? It'll be exciting."

For reasons beyond me, he blushed. "No way, Scarlett. Are you really that shameless to do something like this behind Ashton's back?"

Rendered speechless for a moment, I then asked, "Are you coming with me? If you're not, I'm going to leave now."

Promptly, he nodded and entered the car before I did. When he turned back to look at me, there was a smug expression on his face. "How can you possibly leave me out of such a thrilling matter? Just the mere thought of it makes my heart race."

Ignoring his excitement, I started the car. The address that Armond had sent to me was a villa in the suburbs.

Bringing Holden with me was part of the plan. If anything did happen, he would be useful.

When he realized we were heading toward the suburbs, Holden muttered, "Wait, why are you driving toward the suburbs? Shouldn't we be going to a hotel?"

I pursed my lips for a moment before replying, "We're going to a villa in the suburbs. Only fools go to the hotels."

"Holy sh*t! Scarlett, you're one brave girl. Does Ashton know about this? When did you start doing this? Aren't you afraid of contracting some disease? How many men are there? Are their figures as good as mine? Why didn't you ask me to come along to such a fantastic gathering before today?"

Irritated by his rambles, I shot him a glare. "Shut up or get down from the car. Also, things aren't what you think they are. Armond has invited me to a meeting in the suburbs. I'm a little worried, so I brought you along. Don't be a coward later."

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1077

He was taken aback by my words for a while. After a beat, his eyes widened comically before he gasped in disbelief. "Scarlett, you set me up?"

I nodded honestly. "You can think of it that way if you want to. If you're scared, you can leave the car right now. I won't stop you."

He gritted his teeth before hissing, "This has nothing to do with whether I'm scared or not. You clearly know I have no way to go back if I were to get down from the car now. Moreover, do I look scared? Armond's nothing but a dumbass. Why should I be scared of him? I just don't want to see him."

I nodded again. "Well, then. Since you're not afraid of him, be quiet and follow me there. Take it as if you're protecting me, and I'll owe you a favor. How about that?"

He scoffed, "How are you going to return me the favor? Tell me more. If I like it, I'll even take Armond down, not to mention protecting you."

My mouth hung open for a while before I managed to voice, "What do you want? I'll try my best to fulfill it."

He mulled over my words. "Why don't you cook for me for a week? I don't want pasta every day. I'll definitely puke by the second day."

His request was reasonable and simple, but it still stumped me. With a frown, I muttered, "Mr. Taylor, have I ever told you I can't cook? Other than making pasta, I don't know how to make anything else. Are you sure you want me to cook for you?"

He glowered at me. "If you don't know how to cook, then learn. I don't care. That's my request, and nothing else will work."

"Okay, then." I had to agree first; whether or not my cooking would be edible was another matter.

When we finally reached the villa, I was transfixed. This villa is humongous. The villa in K City's suburbs usually have specific limits for their size, but this house is evidently thrice the size of the normal villa. This isn't a villa; this is a manor!

The Murphys are filthy rich. This villa is worth hundreds of millions. Are they planning to live in it? Do they plan to use it for something else?

After entering the compound, I had to drive a distance before I reached the villa itself. By then, there was someone waiting for us by the doorway. "The size of this villa is comparable to the Taylor residence. The Murphys are truly affluent if

they can build such an enormous villa in a place like K City, where the population density is high.”

When I took a good look at the villa, I realized I had to agree with him. The place looked newly built, and it would be impossible for them to build a place like this legally; they must have bribed the authorities and pulled some strings.

After entering the living room, I noticed it was so empty I could even hear the echoes of our footsteps. We then followed the maid up into a room on the second floor. Right as we entered the room, we were greeted with the sight of a gigantic folding screen.

Facing the folding screen, the maid respectfully announced, “Sir, they’ve arrived.”

The person behind the screen hummed in response before muttering, “You can leave now.” Then, he said, “Ms. Stovall, you’re quite punctual. It seems like I’m still important to you.”

I frowned but stayed silent. All I did was take in my surroundings. Sometimes, it was not a good thing when a house was too big, especially when the house was not lively. It would be like stepping into a haunted house.

It was eerie.

When Armond walked out from behind the folding screen, his gaze landed on Holden, and he frowned. “Mr. Taylor, you’re here too?”

Sounding exactly like a ruffian, Holden drawled, “Yes. I wanted to take a walk, and I ended up here. Mr. Murphy, your house is quite big. What’s it for? Keeping babes?”

It was easy for Holden to set someone ablaze with fury in seconds.

However, Armond only smiled. As he stared at me, he asked, “Ms. Stovall, why don’t you take a seat while we chat? It’s been a long while since we had a good chat.”

Pressing my lips into a thin line, I then said, “Didn’t we agree to have a meal together? Where are the others? Were you just joking with me, or did you think that my time isn’t worth anything?”

“Of course not,” he responded before chuckling. “They’re all upstairs. I have some things I’d like to discuss with Ms. Stovall, so I’m meeting you here.”

As he spoke, his gaze trailed toward Holden. “Mr. Taylor, if you don’t mind, could I have a word with Ms. Stovall alone? I’ve prepared drinks and snacks upstairs. You can try out K City’s specialties there.”

Holden glanced at me, his thoughts obvious; he was asking what he should do next.

When I stared at Armond, I speculated that he must want to ask for the sandalwood box from me, so I said, "Mr. Taylor, please greet Nora and the others for me upstairs."

Holden tensed for a brief second before nodding. Then, he left the room and headed upstairs.

At that moment, the two of us were the only ones left in the spacious room. After Armond sat down and crossed his legs, he lifted a brow at me. "Are you not going to sit for the talk?"

I was silent as I sat down on a chair and waited for him to speak.

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As expected, he soon said in a low voice, "Ashton must be progressing well in A City."

His abrupt topic made me sit transfixed for a moment. Then, I frowned. "You can be straightforward with me, Mr. Murphy."

He snorted, "You know what I want. Scarlett, honestly, I like you a lot. My mother asked me about you a while back, talking about how your stomach will be bigger soon. She even asked me when I'll be preparing for the wedding and when I'll marry you. To be frank with you, if you're meeker and more obedient, I'll be more than willing to let you keep the baby. However, you're too cheeky; you registered that girl, and you even adopted her. What you've done upsets me. Once I'm upset, I'm prone to do bad things. So, I'm sorry, I could not stop myself from getting rid of that baby in you. You won't hate me for this, will you?"

For a moment, his nonchalant tone made a murderous urge sprout in my mind. At that second, I wanted to strangle him to death; in seconds, I had already murdered him in a hundred ways in my mind.

However, I did nothing but look at him, waiting for him to utter all those words I despised. However, he did not continue. "You don't need to record what I've said. These things are useless to you. Scarlett, for me to be in my position, I can't be a fool, so stop those pointless things you're doing, okay?"

My heart skipped a beat as I tensed. In the next second, I schooled my features to look calm. "What are you talking about? I don't understand what you're trying to tell me. I'm not doing anything pointless for those disgusting acts of yours. I know karma will come for you soon."

He raised a brow at my reply before rising to his feet. Walking to my side, he leaned his face closer to mine as he smiled menacingly.

When I saw his bony fingers reaching toward me, I could not help but hold my breath. Swiftly, he removed my earpiece and mocked, "Don't worry. I won't do anything to you. There isn't any need for you to wear these unnecessary things. It'll only affect our conversation."

With that said, he threw it out of the window. My mouth was set in a hard line, feeling rage boiling in my gut, but still, I looked at him calmly.

He soon returned to his chair. "I know you hate me, but that's fine. If I can't get you to love me, it'll be equally thrilling to have you hate me. You shouldn't blame me for what happened to the kid; you should be blaming yourself. If you didn't appear, no one will do anything to you. But, Scarlett, you were too stupid to save someone who's completely unrelated to you. That's why your kid's dead. This is the ending you've brought upon yourself, and the only thing you can blame this on is how you've stuck your nose into someone else's business."

"Shut up!" I roared. "Armond, have you never thought about how you'll end up? I used to think that you're a gentleman, but boy was I horribly wrong. You're a scum that has no morals nor principles. No one will ever love you. You want that box, don't you? I'm going to tell you now that I'll never give it to you. I'd rather burn the box myself than hand it to you, so stop thinking of getting it. I want to see you destroy the Murphy family and yourself."

Unfortunately, it seemed like he was not as angry with my words as I was with his. His gaze on me remained tranquil, but it took him a while before he said, "Scarlett, you know I don't want to do anything bad to you. I hope you'll be good and give me the things I want. That way, I won't hurt you or those that you're concerned about. If not, I can't guarantee your and their safety. You must be curious about what this villa is for. Have you heard of a snake's nest? I've loved them since young, but my grandfather did not like them. So, I could only secretly keep them. The third floor is where they reside. If I press on the switch, those upstairs will be together with my pets. As for whether they'll live or die, I won't know. After all, I'm not quite sure whether those pets I have are venomous or not."

My eyes were wide as I stared at him in disbelief. "Armond, you shameless man!"

He nodded in agreement. "I, too, think of myself as shameless. But Nora's with me. Say, why do you think she loves me that much? At the start of our relationship, we didn't like each other that much, and I never have any romantic feelings toward her. Why is she enamoured with me?"

My hands clenched into fists as I scavenged through my brain for what I should do. I knew nothing about how many snakes Armond had kept. Since young, I was deadly afraid of these soft creatures. I was not sure whether we could escape the place in time if those creatures were released. If the worse did happen, he could easily dismiss his responsibility in the matter by claiming that it had only been an accident. All he needed to do was pay for the medical fees and remove the snakes. He would lose nothing in this.

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At that thought, anger curled in my chest.

"At the very least, Nora truly likes you. How can you possibly use her to threaten me? Armond, you're shameless beyond imagination," I snarled as I tried to look for my phone in the pocket.

He sneered, "Truly likes me? What's the use of that? If she isn't the one I want, what's the point of her true feelings? She's still useless. Am I right?"

I was sure that the man was insane. To him, everything he did not like, did not want, and did not care about, was nothing but a burden. He would never cherish those things.

Has Holden realized that something is off? At that thought, I was about to call my father with the phone in my pocket.

However, before I could, a hand stopped me. A wide, emotionless smile was on Armond's face as he leaned close to me. "I wouldn't do that if I were you. Isn't the sandalwood box useless to you? Why are you stubbornly holding on to it instead of giving it to me?"

Retracting my hand as I clenched my jaw, I then moved away from him and sneered, "Will you let them go if I give you the sandalwood box?"

He raised a brow. "Of course. You know my aim is a simple one. Furthermore, I don't really want to hurt them. Scarlett, no one is born a villain."

As I stared at him, I knitted my brows. "All you need is Nora if you want to threaten me. Why did you invite Sasha's parents here? They're old people who are useless to you. Why do you have to torment them?"

He lowered his gaze. "I'm not using them to threaten you. It's a mere coincidence that they're here. Shane owes me too much, so I'll have to invite his parents over so that he'll pay up soon."

I pursed my lips. "Why don't you just kill him?" He's destroying someone's family, but he won't even stop at that. Why can someone like him continue to live in this world?

He shrugged and said instead, "Give me the box. You know I really need the things in it. If you give it to me, you can take the people away."

I muttered, "Let them come down here first. The box isn't with me right now. Also, you know that even if I want to take Nora away, she won't come with me."

He narrowed his eyes. "So what are you trying to tell me?"

"I'll give you the box, but you have to let them go first. You know well that Sasha's parents are useless to you. That b*stard Shane has no morals to speak of, so he won't care about his parents. That's why you should just let the two go and let them enjoy their last decades peacefully. Leave Shane to the police. Let them stop him from making society worse."

However, he sneered, "These things are out of my control. Scarlett, honestly, I don't trust you much. You've fooled me once, so no matter what happens this time, you have to give me the box. It's fine even if you don't have it with you now. I'll give you a chance to go back and get it. Once you get it, give it to me, and I'll let them go."

My brows furrowed. Ashton had swapped the box once, and I had no idea where it was now. Looking at him, I confessed, "It's not that I don't want to give you the box, but that I don't know where it is. When I gave you the box back then, I didn't even know it had been swapped."

He narrowed his eyes again, the upset evident on his face this time. "You mean, you don't know where the box is?"

I nodded. "Yes."

Immediately, a scowl grew on his face. "Then, I'm sorry. Since you don't have the box, we'll have to talk again when you find it. You might as well stay here for the next few days. Don't worry; I will treat you well."

I froze before frowning. "Armond, what do you mean? Are you trying to lock me up here?"

He shook his head before smirking at me. "No, of course not. How can this be considered as locking you up? I just want you to stay here for a few days. Ever since the villa was revamped, no one has come for a stay. It's quite dead in here. Since you're all here, it's a good opportunity to liven up the place.

As he spoke, he reached out to press the call bell. Soon, someone came upstairs—a middle-aged man. When Armond saw him, he said, "Spencer, I'll have to trouble you to take care of my friends for the next few days. Thank you."

With that said, he stood up and walked out of the room.

I hastily stopped him. "Armond, this is illegal. Let us go."

"We'll talk again when you find the box. I'm tired now. Spencer will lead you to your room. You don't need to think much about anything; you just need to stay here. I'm sure Ashton will help you with the box."

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In my fury, I glared at him. However, he ignored me and left without sparing another glance at me.

The only ones in the room were Spencer and me. When the man turned to look at me, he smiled. "Ms. Stovall, your room's on the fourth floor. You..."

"Take me to the third floor," I interrupted. Then, I walked out of the room. Armond's villa was massive to the point one would take minutes just to go from one end to the other end of a floor. Spencer frowned, seemingly hesitant about leading me there.

Hence, I said, "Take me there. Since he wants to keep me here, he can't possibly stop me from going anywhere."

Spencer was taken aback by my words for a moment. A beat later, he nodded.

The layout of the third floor differed from the second floor; the third was locked by a steel door. At the sight of that, I grimaced. "Where are my friends? Have you locked them all in there?"

Spencer smiled before answering, "Of course not. Your friends are all on the fourth floor, Ms. Stovall. This floor is where he keeps his pets. They used to come out from there and scare the rest, so he locked them all in here."

I nodded. "Are they all snakes? Does he keep anything else?"

The smile remained on Spencer's face as he replied, "Mr. Murphy likes to collect rare animals, so he almost has all kinds of creatures. He has had them for years now. Ms. Stovall, would you like to take a look?"

As I could not see anything from behind the steel door, I dared not answer him immediately. It would be fine if the creatures were locked up as the animals in the zoo, but it would be dangerous for me to enter if they were free to roam anywhere they pleased.

After brief contemplation, I replied, "No need. Spencer, please take me to the fourth floor instead."

He nodded before leading me to the floor above ours. The villa was huge, and the structure of it was reminiscent of a noble castle of ancient times. It was grand but empty.

The stairs looked complicated. I did not know whether it was built that way to display the designer's capability.

The moment I entered, I saw a lavish living room decorated with statues of Venus and saints. I was startled when I realized there was even a statue where one of the saints was breastfeeding a baby.

Perhaps it was because I knew not how to appreciate art, so I felt nothing when I looked at the statues.

There was a couch and a table in the living room. Holden was by the window, staring outside. For a moment, I wondered what he was thinking about.

However, I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw him. It seemed like Armond had not done anything to him. When he heard my footsteps, he turned to look at me. "Armond's house is built weird."

"Huh?" I froze in my spot for a moment. "Like how?"

"Do you see that greenery there? Don't you find it odd?" He raised his arm to point at the green patch downstairs, but no matter how long I looked at it, I found nothing odd about it.

Thus, I looked at him, perplexed, and asked, "What's odd about it? It looks fine to me. Is it some kind of Fengshui setting? When have you learned that?"

He gave me a look before replying, "Nope. It's the growth of the plants. Can't you see any problems with them?"

I looked back at the spot, but still, I could not see anything strange about it. It was winter then, and most of the plants had wilted. The only ones that did not wilt were the pines, which thrived in all seasons.

He sighed. "The growth of the pines is all different from each other. Don't you see it?"

His words made me look closer again. He was right, there were dozens of pines in the courtyard, but the ones in the middle had wilted. Meanwhile, the ones planted by the sides were still fine.

"Is it because the soil isn't as healthy in the middle?" I asked.

He shook his head. "The soil here is all the same. The courtyard is enormous, and it's far from the villa. It's unlikely that the villa has blocked the sunlight from reaching the plant. In other words, either there isn't enough soil in the middle, or something is buried there."

"A cellar?" The villa had no underground parking lot, so the only thing I could think of was a cellar.

He turned to stare at me in silence for a moment. "I don't think a villa like this needs a cellar. It should be a warehouse, meant to store something."

When I thought about Abe and Armond's relationship in Venria, I could not help but say, "For example, kyanine? Armond was quite close to Abe back in Venria. However, K City has strict rules about kyanine. How is he planning to sell them?"

Holden rubbed his nose, seemingly speechless for a moment. "What in the world is in that skull of yours? A huge villa like this usually has basements built for refuge from disasters. Even normal villas have them; they're just converted into underground parking lots."

After Holden tapped my head, I frowned. "You were so serious about your observation, so that's why I thought about kyanine instead. What else did you think I was going to think about when I saw that solemn look of yours?"

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He sat back down and threw a casual glance my way. "Judging from the way you look... let me guess, we're being held captive by Armond?"

My brows knitted into a frown after seeing him so unbothered. What the heck is he doing?"How are you taking this so calmly? We're literally trapped here, yet you seem relaxed. Aren't you afraid of being killed by Armond?"

He chuckled as he looked back up at me. "So Armond is now a bloodthirsty murderer who kills anyone in his way? Well, you're probably refusing to give him something he wants then."

At this, my shoulders tensed. How does he know so much?

No point lying then. I pursed my lips and replied, "It's just a sandalwood box that my grandma gave me. He wanted it, but I said no, so he locked me here. The rest is history."

Deep laughter rumbled from him while his gaze met mine again. "Is it important?"

I nodded and explained, "A little. The sandalwood box holds a contract between my grandma and a major gasoline-producing country. That contract allows the Murphys to take advantage of the low oil prices and bulk purchase petroleum, which they'll make a profit out of later on."

"I see." His eyes narrowed at me before he advised, "I think you should give it to him since there's no sentimental value behind it. Plus, it's not like the Murphys are the only ones benefitting from this. The whole country will benefit from the petroleum deal. So why the hesitance?"

"I don't mind giving the box to the Murphys, just not to Armond!" I stifled a growl at him. "Ashton visited A City to dig up all of Armond's past dirty businesses, so Armond will get what's coming to him. I know the Murphys are involved in the competitive gasoline market, but Armond isn't the only Murphy capable of running the business. I'll eventually hand them the box once Armond is locked up behind bars."

He frowned, trying to comprehend the reason behind my actions. "So, you're not giving it to Armond because all of his bad deeds will be forgiven if he secures a gasoline deal with Meudari; Because then, Ashton's evidence will mean nothing as people will adore Armond for boosting the nation's fuel economy."

I nodded, "That kind of sums it up."

An understanding look flashed briefly on his face before he stared off into the space. "You hate Armond that much?" I heard from Nora that he and you used to be close, so how'd you two end up as enemies?"

"Life had different plans for us," I shrugged.

"So you're gonna ruthlessly force him into a dead end?" a voice startled me from behind. My head whipped around to see who it was; it was Nora, whom I haven't seen in a while. She looked more elegant now in her fox-fur shawl as she glared at me with disappointment. "He already surrendered A City to you Fullers. Since then, he returned to his turf here in K City and hasn't done anything bad. Why won't you let him live?"

When did she get here?

I brushed my shock off and spoke casually, "What are you doing in K City? You didn't even call to let me know you were coming."

That prompted a sharp retort from her. "There's nothing to say between us. I just happened to bump into you. Speaking of, why are you here? Don't want to return what rightfully belongs to the Murphys?"

My lips twitched with disdain at her. Rightfully theirs? "This doesn't belong to the Murphys," I snarled. "I don't know why you're here, Nora, but I'm sure you know that Armond doesn't love you and that he's only using you to get what he wants. Must you continue to lie to yourself?"

"That's none of your concern. I don't need you to explain whether he truly cares for me," her gaze flickered in another direction. "You should give him that contract because he really needs it. I know that he wronged you guys in the past, but getting that contract is a matter of life and death for him. Can't you give it to him?"

She wasn't making sense at all. I couldn't help but sigh at how blinded she was in helping Armond. "You should get your facts checked before telling me what to do. And Nora, don't forget who you are and your values as an individual. It's not wise to lose yourself whilst chasing after some unrequited love."

I didn't know what else to say after seeing the harsh determination in her eyes.

Sure enough, she refused to give in. She looked at me and softened her voice, "You Fullers have already gotten all the glory in the world. You don't need what's in that box, so there's no point holding onto it. Why won't you hand it over to Armond and help him out?"

"Scarlett, we'll always be friends, so can't you do this favor for me? I know Armond hurt you guys in the past, but those times are over now. And you guys turned out fine anyway, so why not let bygones be bygones? Help him out just this once. I'm sure that Armond will get along with Ashton once he gets past this hurdle. We'll do anything you ask after this, hmm? Please, Scarlett?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1082

Nora drooped her shoulders and stared glassy-eyed at me.

My lips pressed into a thin line. I averted her stare by looking over to Holden, who was staring back at me with an uninterested expression. His eyes bore into mine, hinting that he wanted no part in any of this.

Then Nora's hand clamped around my wrist, and her nails tore my flesh apart like a bear trap while she wailed, "I'm begging you, Scarlett. I'll do anything you ask me to; I'll even convince my grandpa to hand over the Oberick family business to you and Ashton. Please, Scarlett, I'll do whatever it takes as long as you promise to help Armond. Just this time."

An oncoming headache pounded at my temples, drawing my brows into a deep frown. "What are you thinking! Do you even know what you're saying? How could you sacrifice your pride and get on your knees for some heartless, uncaring man?"

Nora's eyes swelled and darkened into a deep red. "Scarlett, you've misunderstood Armond. He's not the villain that you say he is. You've got it all wrong. I'll call him over, and he'll explain how things actually went down."

At her bold correction, that annoying headache grew into an electric pain behind my eyes. I couldn't help but bark out, "How dare you expect me to forgive him? You think you know everything, huh? Well, your loverboy orchestrated the car accident and abducted Ashton, then almost froze him to death in the refrigerating chamber. He did all that to obtain trading rights to the Taylor family's port. Do you know that? How would you feel if you were in my shoes? If you knew that Armond did all that to Ashton, what would you truly do? Here you are, preaching to me about how he's misunderstood and asking me to forgive him... but have you ever considered my feelings?"

"You say that we're best friends, yet you put me through the pain of losing my child. All because you called me, saying that you were drunk at Imperial Hotel. You knew that I would go to you. Then you used my kindness against me and caused my miscarriage... Do you even know how much the baby that you murdered meant to me? The doctors say that I'll never be able to conceive again, and it's all because of your phone call, that one dreaded call that stole my child from me. Tell me, Nora, do you not care about the lives of others? Because as long as you're not the one suffering, then none of it matters? Because only your problems trump over anyone else's?"

I never blamed her for my child's death as I was equally responsible. However, she shouldn't have pointed fingers at me and said that I misunderstood the whole situation and acted so condescendingly by telling me what to do. Her shamelessness ticked me off so much that it reddened my ears.

Hence, I couldn't bite back my burning resentment any longer. The woman before me was no one worth saving, even if she was once my dearest friend.

Nora's eyes swelled as if they were going to fall out at any moment. She gripped white-knuckled onto my clothes and begged, "I know what I did was wrong, but it's too late to change anything now. Scarlett, please, I don't know what to do anymore... Tell me, what do I do for you to give Armond the contract? All I want is to help the man I love to get through this hardship in his life. That's all I ask..."

At that moment, I could no longer recognize my cheerful and carefree friend. Her tear-strewn face felt so foreign to me. It felt like I had never really known the real her, and now her facade was peeling away to reveal her green and hideous nature.

This wasn't the Nora that I knew. Something lodged at the back of my throat as I saw her begging pathetically. Can a so-called love really change a person that drastically?

Oddly enough, I found myself asking a question that even I couldn't comprehend. "Nora, do you love Armond that much?"

She paused before admitting with a solemn weight, "Yes. He's all I want, and I'd rather die than live in a world without him."

"You're certain that he loves you? Because love isn't one-sided, nor is it unrequited. Are you absolutely sure that he loves you back?" I shot a sharp gaze at her.

My question had taken her by surprise. Her vision blurred, possibly confused as to why I asked her this.

It took her a moment before she eventually regained her focus. Despite this, there was a hint of insanity laced in her voice, "He loves me. He told me that himself, and I trust him. Why do you ask this, Scarlett? He really does love me. He does."

I raised my chin and let out a dry, humorless laugh. "Even friendships have their limits, and you've crossed all of them, Nora. So you can quit your miserable begging because we're not friends anymore. However... let's make a bet since you're so certain about his feelings for you. Come over tonight, and I'll show you his true colors."

Bitter laughter throbbed from my chest as I held her gaze. "Armond still hasn't touched you anywhere intimately, has he?"

"Y-you," Nora stammered. She took a moment to calm her bright pink cheeks before she muttered, "You know that his health doesn't allow for it. Plus, you have no right to use that against me. He treats me well enough, and not all couples need that kind of intimacy to be in love."

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"How are you so certain that it's because of health reasons?" I paused intentionally, hoping to stir anger in her. "Have you thought about why he refuses to seek medical attention, despite not being able to get it up every single time? Hmm? Have you considered that some people only react to those they have feelings for, so maybe he doesn't love you at all? Maybe that's why he doesn't react sexually to you."

At this, her eyes reddened hideously beyond recognition. She stared wide-eyed at me whilst speaking through jagged breaths, "You have no right, Scarlett! I don't care for your lies because I know he loves me."

Seeing her deceive herself, I couldn't help but snicker. My shoulders raised uncontrollably as I held back a burst of roaring laughter. At this rate, she might crack.

Inhaling deeply, I composed myself before continuing, "Then there's nothing left to say between us since you're so sure. I'll see you later tonight; if it turns out that he doesn't love you, then I hope you reflect on him as a person, as well as on yourself. Don't be swayed into living a life that someone else dictates for you."

There was nothing more I could say, so I dropped the subject and turned the other way.

Silence engulfed us for the longest second. Eventually, she got the hint that it was pointless to beg me and gave up altogether. Before she left, she looked me in the eyes and swore that Armond loved her, as if she were reminding not only me but herself.

I said nothing up until the moment she left.

Once she did, it was Holden's turn to glance at me with an unreadable expression. He questioned, "Call me curious, but how does an outsider like you know whether Armond is intimate with Nora? And how would you know that he can't get it up for her? Unless... you've experienced it yourself?"

My lips curled into my teeth as I rolled my eyes at him. "Nonsense! Honestly, I'm starting to wonder if your mind is filled with junk. These were things that Nora and I talked about back then between us girls. What else was I supposed to say to convince her?"

Then he threw his head back understandingly before mumbling to himself, "Does that mean my ex-girlfriends talked about me behind my back? That's crazy! I wonder what they said about me... Nah, I'm pretty sure they talked about how good I am in bed."

This guy...

Ugh... How brazen of him!

I didn't want to waste my breath on responding to that shameless man. Instead, I pulled out my phone to call Ashton but quickly realized that there was no signal. Frowning, my gaze snapped over to Holden.

"Why are you staring at me?" he raised a brow and challenged.

I raised my phone. "There's no signal here?"

He scoffed, "Yeah. Isn't that a given since he locked us up here? Did you really think he'd still allow you to contact Ashton or others from the outside to rescue you?"

"If you knew, then why aren't you trying to escape?" My jaw dropped at how unbothered he seemed. He's not an idiot, is he?

To my dismay, he shrugged in response. "Escape? Mr. Murphy will have someone in send top-notch food soon. Literally, we're trapped in a luxurious villa with good food, something I can't get from a regular holiday hotel. So why would I escape when I can bask in the comfort of all this?"

How optimistic.

Ugh, alright then. Any help is better than none.

I put away my phone and sat down next to him. "Holden, can you not be so gullible? We're literally trapped here, trapped! Come on, put your greed aside and help me think of a way out."

He tutted in response, "What for? It's real nice in here."

It felt like my last brain cell had snapped after hearing that. Appalled, I shook my head at him. "Forget I ever asked and just do as you please."

Surely enough, Armond had ordered Spencer to deliver our dinner not long after. As Spencer set up the dinner table, Holden casually conversed with him. What's even more shocking was that Spencer, our captor's butler, responded politely before leaving us to our meal.

My lips thinned at the sight of Holden contently chowing down on his captor's food like a fool. There really was no point convincing him to escape, and that made me lose my appetite. Instead, I looked out the window, scanning the perimeters of Armond's ginormous villa. There was a stone wall around the villa that was way too high to climb, and the place was crawling with security. It seemed nearly impossible to sneak out of here undetected.

Unable to think of an alternative way out, I felt another headache pulsating at my temples. I whipped around to face Holden, who was chewing loudly with an oily sheen on his lips.

I couldn't help but snap, "Holden Taylor, for the love of God, please stop eating and help me think of an escape plan! Do you want to be locked up here forever?"

"Forever?" His gaze shifted from my eyes and down to the plentiful food before him. Then he chuckled heartily, "If being that means living here and eating all this food every single day, then count me in!"

This man is hopeless.

Arghhh! Forget him then! My head ached from thinking of escape plans all day, yet I still hadn't come up with a way out. At this point, I gave up and sank into the living room's cushioned chairs.

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I suddenly remembered that Sasha's parents were also locked up here. At the thought of this, I instinctively shot off the chair and paced out the door. Seeing me leave, Holden called out, "Where are you going?"

"To find out where everyone else is!" Worry seeped into my mind. Sasha's parents couldn't handle being stressed, given their old age.

He frowned. "Don't, it's pointless, and not to mention, extremely dangerous because Armond keeps his poisonous pets downstairs. He'll strangle me with his bare hands if you somehow get yourself killed. So, it's best to stay here. I'm sure someone will get us out."

I pursed my lips at that last bit. "Is that someone the person that you're working with?" Isn't that person in Moranta? So who is he referring to?

But Holden disregarded my question. Instead, he resumed eating and even complimented Armond's private chef, singing about how tasty the food was.

Hesitantly standing by the door, I thought about the conversation earlier with Nora before announcing, "Stay here while I head out for a bit. Don't worry, Armond won't hurt me since he still needs me to get that sandalwood box. And I'm sure he's installed cameras all over this villa, so he'll be watching our every move."

Then I exited the living room and trailed down the hallway that Spencer took when he brought me up earlier. After walking for some time, I realized that I hadn't even left the fourth floor at all.

My face scrunched worryingly at the realization that Armond's villa must be built like a maze. Otherwise, he wouldn't have made it so big.

At this thought, I halted and scanned the never-ending walls around me. There were no stairways, and each door looked identical, down its gold knobs and intricate carvings. On top of that, there were many adjoined corridors. Shoot, which path did I take earlier?

My heart thundered in my chest. It swung like a mallet against my ribcage.

All the doors were shut, so I approached random ones and tried to open them. Yet, no matter how much I rattled or turned their knobs, none opened.

The booming in my chest grew incessant as if my heart might burst at any moment.

Then I heard them; despite my initial hesitance, I eventually gave in and trailed after the faint chatters of some men and women. I inhaled sharply as the voices had miraculously led me to a door whose knob could be turned.

With extreme caution, I opened the door and entered before freezing at what was inside the room.

The dimly lit room was spacious. Many stares snapped towards me, alarmed by my sudden entrance. The one person who didn't seem shocked was Armond, who lounged leisurely on a sofa as his gaze trailed from the performance at the very front of the room over to me.

He swirled a glass of blood-red wine and raised his eyebrows mockingly. "I see you've made it. Come in! Join the fun."

I was still too stunned by everything to respond. Eventually, my lips parted as I managed a simple squeak, "I..."

"Escort Ms. Stovall in." Armond's eyes fixated on me like a predator's. He placed his glass down whilst a crooked smile smeared itself across his face.

His stare sent a chill down my back, straightening every fine strand of hair on my body. I trembled helplessly as two men grabbed onto my arms and brought me closer to Armond. They then left after completing their task.

Before me, Armond crossed his legs whilst grinning with a tainted delight. "Have a seat, come watch the show since I doubt you've ever witnessed such finesse."

My feet remained firmly rooted into the ground. I refused to go over, knowing that there were about four to five mastiffs and dingos eyeing me cautiously from every corner of the room.

Thoughts raced in my mind as I tried to figure out Armond's next plan of action. Seeing how unresponsive I was, Armond's eyes narrowed furiously.

"So you prefer to stand and watch?" He spat.

But neither of us, especially myself, was prepared for what happened next.

I winced, feeling a dry and clenching ache in my stomach. Then my knees gave in, and I plopped onto all fours before a sour stream of vomit retched up my throat.

Armond's face loosened into a dull expression, save for the slight twitching of his lips that showed how entertained he was by my suffering.

A sharp stench filled the air around us. I emptied almost everything in me, yet I could still taste the sourness of rotten plums in my mouth. It took a moment before I regained my focus on him. I yelled in disbelief, "Armond, you psychopath! You're insane!"

That's right. Armond thought to himself.

Armond's eyes bore indifferently into mine. "Hmm? Have you finally decided to surrender the contract to me?"

“Do you even know what you’re doing?” I felt my emotions churning as I stared down at the repulsive man before me, who sought after the contract by any means necessary.

Armond relaxed deeper into the sofa, sprawling his arms into a comfortable position. He shot a contemptuous stare at me and hissed, “Do you think Ashton would hand over the contract if I made you join them?”

“You’re insane!” My face paled to a greyish disdain. Feeling my blood run cold, I stepped backward, wanting to put some distance between myself this monster of a man.

He howled obnoxiously at the sight of me trembling. His laughter wriggled into my ears like worms as he mocked, “You’re too meek to beat me in this game of chase, Scarlett. I assure you won’t lose anything by giving me the contract, so why don’t you hand it over, hmm?”

Damn it. Regret seeped into me as if I had been drenched with a bucket of cold water. I shouldn’t have entered the room and walked so willingly into the lion’s den.

Gathering whatever courage I had left, I forced myself to meet his gaze. “I’d hand over the contract to anyone without question, just not you, Armond. What you’re after is the Murphy family’s recognition, aren’t you? Well, I won’t give you that satisfaction. Look at how you destroyed the Murphy family business. That was why you sought after the trading rights to Moranta’s ports; you wanted to undo the damages you’ve done to the Murphys.

“You’re probably nervous because Mr. Murphy’s already planning to remove you from your current powerful position, am I right? Well, a vile man like you will never succeed in life, no matter how capable you are or how many despicable tactics you resort to. I won’t give the contract to you. I’ll put you behind bars myself and allow the Murphys’ next heir to restore their family’s initial glory. As for you, you’re better off rotting in a jail cell where you belong.”

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1085

Armond gazed coldly at me, his dark eyes gradually shrouded by devilish redness. Then, his lips curved into a vicious smile as he hissed at me, "Rotting in a jail cell? Haha! Scarlett, no doubt Ashton has fallen head over heels in love with you! I'm really impressed with your courage. So far, nobody dares to talk to me like that!"

I moved backward as he approached me inch by inch, never shifting his blazing eyes away from me. Bang! The sound was followed by a slight pain on my back, indicating that I had retreated to a corner of the cage. As a wave of fear surged within me, my legs started to tremble. I gulped and was about to force myself to utter some words. However, in just a split second, he ripped my clothes into pieces and bellowed, "The rest of you, get out now!"

Everyone in the room stumbled out in an instant. As he trapped me in between his arms, I stammered in panic, "A-Armond, what do you intend to do to me? You can't touch me! A-Ashton won't let you off easily!"

He snickered, "Do you think that I'm afraid of him? He's just a nobody to me! Scarlett, you must have forgotten that this is my turf. Do you think he has the right to stop me from doing anything? After all, he's still busy investigating me in A City at the moment. Do you think he can reach here at once to come to your rescue?"

As he leaned closer to me, I was repulsed by his disgusting countenance. My entire body was shivering in utter anxiety, and I was seconds away from an emotional breakdown. I intended to raise my arms and push him away, yet he was far too strong.

The insidious man looked at me from head to toe with his ferocious eyes. After a while, he slowly took off his black suit and unbuttoned his shirt. My eyes widened as my voice quivered. "What are you doing?"

He twitched his lips and asked mockingly, "You know what I want to do now, don't you?"

Shaking my head frantically, I tried to talk him into changing his mind by yelling, "Armond, you can't do this! Nora is still in this villa as well. You can't do that! You can't!"

His lips lifted into a sly smile. "Didn't you have a bet with her earlier? Well, this is a golden opportunity for you to test it out now. You can experience it for yourself, and you'll find out the truth. Besides, maybe you'll get to know whether Ashton or I have better skills too!"

"Back off!" I grimaced and growled at him. How I wish I could rip him into pieces at once, but there was nothing I could do!

He stared at me and said sarcastically, "Why're you looking at me like that? How do you know that I'm not as well-built as Ashton? You can place your hand on my body and feel it for yourself. Come on now, don't be shy..."

Crouching beside me, he grabbed my hands to press on his body forcefully. I tried hard to pull my hands away, yet to no avail.

I was aghast at his forcefulness, but there was nothing I could do to stop him.

My pupils constricted in profound anxiety right then. Following that, I shook my head apprehensively and yelled at him, "Armond, stop it!"

However, he smiled wryly and continued to mock me, "Are you sure you're not keen on comparing me with Ashton? Don't you, women, like to compare?"

Taking a deep breath, I rose abruptly and pushed him away, thinking of dashing out. However, he grabbed hold of my body effortlessly. No matter how hard I kicked and slapped him, he never loosened his tight grip on me.

Embracing my body from the back, he clung to me tightly. I shrieked hysterically, "Armond Murphy, you pervert! Let go of me! Or I swear to God, you will meet your end soon!"

"Do you know since when I've fallen for you? It's love at first sight! It's amazing, isn't it? The very moment I met you, I told myself that I must win your heart by all means. Initially, I thought of sending you all the way to Venria, and would only appear to be your knight in shining armor when you're in trouble. I'm sure you would've been touched by my gesture and fall for me easily then. Nonetheless, I've underestimated your love for Ashton. I've never expected that even after being apart for such a long time, you are still deeply in love with him!"

Unable to move at all, I panted and responded in difficulty, "Let me go! Don't you know how humiliating it is when you said that you've fallen for me?"

He sneered as he became more violent due to exasperation. "Humiliating? In that case, I'll make sure that you'll be humiliated for the rest of your life!"

The next moment, he tore my skirt apart with brutal force. I was stupefied and yelled helplessly, "Armond, you'd better think twice. I would never forgive you if you dare to touch me! I'd rather die, and by then, Ashton would surely avenge me by ruining the Murphys!"

Armond burst into laughter that instant. "The Murphys? They are nothing to me, so don't waste your time threatening me with the Murphys. Besides, Ashton will never be able to trace your whereabouts. Did you see this cage here? I've prepared it just for you, my sweet little canary! Give up now, Scarlett! There's no use struggling because you're mine!"

"Never!" I roared at him and bit hard on the back of his hand. He shouted in pain and loosened his tight grip. Gazing at me with a glint of ferocity in his eyes, he scoffed, "I'm sure Ashton is on the way to rescue you now, but he's too

impetuous. Impulsiveness and anxiety would always lead to something disastrous. Who knows if he would be a victim of a car accident or a plane crash? Scarlett, if any misfortune occurs to him on his way, won't you feel guilty? After all, he came here because of you..."

"Armond Murphy, you're a freakin' lunatic!" Instantaneously, I was panic-stricken at the sight of his nonchalance. On the brink of tears, I could feel the throbbing pain of my heart. No! I can't let anything happen to Ashton! I won't!

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1086

"Don't hurt him! You just want the contract, don't you? I promise to give you that as long as you don't threaten him!" I mustered my courage to grip his hand and look at his grim face. "Armond, I know you only wanted the contract, so I will give it to you. Just please don't hurt Ashton, okay?" I pleaded.

Right that instant, there was a sudden change in his expression. He laughed scornfully at me, "My, my, Scarlett, you can only blame yourself for messing things up. Initially, it never crossed my mind to hurt you or even using you to threaten Ashton. However, you've spoiled my mood, and now, I've changed my mind."

After that, he rose and opened the door of the cage. He stepped out and then picked up the phone on the floor to hand it to me. Squinting his eyes, he said grimly, "Call Ashton now and ask him to pass the contract to Linda. Do you get it?"

I cooled myself down, took the phone from him, and called Ashton. He answered my call almost immediately.

Upon hearing his voice, my heart flinched because of the complex emotions. Suppressing my uneasiness, I asked, "Ashton, where are you now? How are you? Is everything going on well?"

"I'm fine. Don't worry, Don't be afraid!" His deep, calming voice seemed to soothe my anxiety.

Nothing is more important than his safety! I would do anything, just so that he's safe and sound...

Meanwhile, Armond was staring at me with a grim look on his face. He was waiting for me to bring up the topic on the contract. Pursing my lips, I asked Ashton tactfully, "Ashton, do you still remember where I put the sandalwood box from Grandma?"

On the other end of the line, Ashton seemed to be stunned for a moment before replying, "It's at home. Weren't you always aware of that?"

I knitted my brows as I started to ponder. After that incident, he never talked about the contract. Hence, I didn't know where it was all this while! "Alright, I'm not at home right now, but I'll get someone to go and get it later. You take care over there! Come back only after getting your matters resolved, alright?"

He replied gently, "Alright. I'm almost done with it anyway. Anyway, are you okay with being alone for now?"

Ignoring how Armond was staring at me, I pursed my lips and replied, "Yeah, I'm fine. I just kind of miss you, but it's alright... I'll wait for you at home. Do come back soon!"

Before I could finish my words, Armond stretched out his arm to snatch the phone away from me. Fortunately, I managed to dodge, so Ashton did not sense anything awry. He paused momentarily before replying, "Alright. I miss you too!"

Glancing at Armond, who was looking intently at me, like a beast ready to pounce on its prey, I told Ashton, "Take care of yourself. I'll see you soon."

He replied gently, "Alright, you too!"

After hanging up the phone, Armond snatched it from me instantly and smashed it onto the floor. I was dumbfounded to see the phone shatter into pieces right in front of my eyes.

Nevertheless, I remained silent and tried to keep a cool head. He turned and glared at me with eyes that were blazing with anger. The next moment, he dragged me from the floor and flung me onto the sofa.

Before I could react, he had pinned me down and started to run his hands all over my body, despite my struggles.

As he continued to run his disgusting hands all over my body, I almost broke down. I growled at him, "Armond, I've asked about the thing that you want. It's at the villa. You can ask your men to go and get it any time. So why are you still doing this to me, you b*stard?"

I tried to push him away by force and threw punches at him, yet he was not affected at all. It was as if he was a robot without any sense of pain.

Seeing that he had totally lost his mind, I was panicked that the worst would befall me at any time. I could not understand why he was treating me so roughly and domineeringly all of a sudden.

At that thought, I burst into tears and wailed helplessly "Armond, you b*stard! Let me go. I beg you! Please let me go!" Nevertheless, he was not moved at all.

A surge of despair welled up from within me. At that very moment, I felt like ending my own life on the spot so everything would come to an end.

Bang! In an instant, it was as if the heaviness above my body was being lifted. To my astonishment, Armond's body slanted to one side and fell onto the floor. Within such a short span of time, there was a twist in the current situation.

He passed out and sprawled on the floor with his face down, like a lifeless body. Blood started to ooze from the back of his head. I held my breath as I raised my head instinctively. Nora's face turned pale as she was standing motionless with something in her hand. I only realized that she had bashed him hard on the head.

Everything happened in a flash, and it was just like a dream for me.

Clang! The bottle slipped from Nora's hands and shattered into pieces on the floor. She looked at me in bewilderment, then turned to look at Armond. Blood drained from her face as she stuttered, "I-I never thought of rescuing you, I..."

I climbed up from the floor and grabbed hold of her, thinking of fleeing at once. Nevertheless, I froze in my tracks when we were about to reach the main door. Spencer was blocking our way with a few muscular bodyguards.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1087

"Where do you both intend to go?"

Spencer asked courteously as he smiled at us. Looking at his unusual demeanor under such circumstances, my heart skipped a beat.

Nora and I grabbed hold of each other and looked at Spencer persuasively. "We have to leave this place. Spencer, please let us go!" I pleaded with him.

It was as if Spencer totally did not catch what I said. At the sight of Armond, who was lying on the floor in disheveled clothes, he shot me an indifferent glance and instructed the bodyguards, "Go check on Mr. Murphy!"

Two of the bodyguards moved toward Armond swiftly and took some time to check on him before they carried him away cautiously. Meanwhile, I was locked up in the room again with Nora.

We cowered in one corner and were still traumatized by the terrifying events that happened a while ago. Nora stared into space for quite a while before she came to her senses. Gazing at me silently for some time, there seemed to be something that she wished to tell me.

I looked at her and thanked her sincerely, "I really appreciate you coming to my rescue just now. Don't worry. Ashton will surely try his best to save us."

However, Nora continued to gaze at me in silence with a mixture of emotions in her eyes. After a while, she finally broke the silence. "I've known right from the beginning that Armond has never fallen for me, and I'm just a nobody to him. Yet, I choose to lie to myself all this while. I thought that if I follow him wherever he went and clung to him with perseverance, he would be able to notice me one day. To be frank, he actually treats me quite well whenever you're around. He buys me things and is really considerate, although he would never touch me."

"For instance, when we were first together, he used to smoke in the car. I was sick of the smell and asked him about it. From that day onwards, he attempted to quit smoking. When we stay at the hotel and he feels like smoking, he would rather open the window and smoke with his head poked outside so I won't smell the smoke in the room. Don't you think that he really minds about what I said? If he didn't fall for me, he would not be so considerate of me. Scarlett, I'm pretty sure that he was really in love with me at that time. I'm not making up a story. I just don't understand why he has turned into such a ruthless person all of a sudden. However, I'm sure he really did love me before! I'm telling the truth, and I really felt it at that time!" she continued to mumble with a dreamy look on her face.

At the sight of her bitter smile and teary eyes, I was at a loss for words to console her. Armond probably has really fallen in love with her before. Yet why did he say those meaningless words to me just now?

If Nora was right about him having feelings for her, why can't he continue to cherish such a nice girl like her?

Nora cowered in one corner, wrapping herself in her own arms. Feeling upset about her current melancholic state, I did not know how I could console her and cheer her up. Letting out a deep breath, I patted her gently and said softly, "Nora, I might not have the right to give you advice, as I myself can't handle my relationship well too. I'm overconfident at times and tend to put myself in hot water, putting the person I love at risk as well. As for Armond, I'm sorry that I'm unable to put myself in his shoes, just like how you are doing. We're definitely in a different stance as he's my foe. You also witnessed how he was trying to assault me earlier, didn't you? I understand how you are deeply in love with him, and I've no right to persuade you to fight against him with me. Yet he must pay the price for the hideous deed that he has committed!"

I paused as my heart throbbed in pain when a girl's figure flashed across my mind. "You know about Hailey, don't you? The heart that keeps her alive now was actually sold to her father through a business trade between Armond and him. Do you know that an innocent girl was sacrificed just to keep her alive? Armond had indeed applied the most brutal way to fulfill the deal with her father. Consequently, poor Hailey ends up living in guilt. To me, he's really a cold-blooded murderer in a way. Furthermore, countless children in the villages have perished in his hands miserably. It's really unfair for them! Nora, I've witnessed all these with my own eyes. You must really think properly and make the right decision. I'm sure that you really love him, but he can't be easily forgiven for his misdeeds."

Nora looked at me with eyes welled up in tears, "What do you want me to do? I mean, what else can I do now? I'm sure he won't trust me anymore from now onwards. Thus, there's no chance for me to set him up again. Look at these beasts. They have just taken a meal and are sleeping soundly at the moment. However, when they are awake and hungry later, we might become their food to fill up their stomach at any time!"

She was right, but I was reluctant to give up easily on any chances to survive. I tried to motivate her by saying, "I know it's really challenging for us to survive. Even so, we must be united to look for ways to leave this place. Since you're able to come all the way here, it proves that you know pretty well about this villa. Hence, you'll be able to find the way out, right?"

She was dumbfounded for a while before she nodded slowly again. "What do you want me to do?"

"Ashton will be here in a while. However, he would not be able to enter this villa as the wall is too high. Thus, the only way for us to get out of here is to look for Holden so he can team up with Ashton to rescue us!"

Silence ensued for a moment before she replied hesitantly, "I've stayed here for quite some time. Even though I can't assure that I know every corner of this villa well, but I guess there's still no problem for me to give a try."

Then, she turned to look at me abruptly, "But, Scarlett, you have to be prepared to have your life at risk if you intend to get out of here. Do you think you can accept it?"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1088

I was stunned and baffled by what she meant. She gestured to me as she stole a glance at the mastiff sleeping soundly in the cage.

It suddenly struck me that she was hinting that the mastiff could strike us at any time. The very thought of the mastiff pounding on me brought me out in a cold sweat. Restraining my fear, I calmed myself down and replied firmly, "Yes, I can!"

She nodded and handed me a knife. "All the best to you! Take care of your own safety!" she warned me and approached the cage to unlock the main door.

Once the main door was unlocked, the mastiffs were still motionless and sleeping soundly.

Standing near the cage, Nora took a deep breath and incapacitated one of the mastiffs with an electric baton.

In a split second, the mastiff howled in pain as the electric baton inflicted electric shock on it. She then moved aside swiftly.

That one mastiff's deafening howl triggered the other mastiffs as well. They woke up one by one and glared at both of us viciously.

Raising the electric baton in her hand, Nora looked at me with chattering teeth. With a quivering voice, she reminded me, "Grab hold of the knife tightly and protect yourself!"

I nodded as my heart pounded tremendously with fear.

All the mastiffs moved out slowly from the cage and fixed their ferocious gazes on us as they snarled at us.

The mastiff which was incapacitated by Nora earlier approached her as if it knew that Nora was the one who had woken it up earlier.

Looking at Nora, I was scared stiff as I asked, "Nora, what are we supposed to do?"

Still holding the electric baton, she gritted out, "Scarlett, I mentioned earlier that your life would be at risk. So... I don't know what we're supposed to do next!"

At the same time, another mastiff was moving toward me, making my whole body tremble with fear. I stuck myself closer to the wall, with the knife tightly clenched in my hand as I stepped back.

The enraged mastiff's intimidating stare sent chills down my spine. Even though Nora mentioned that the mastiffs had just taken their meals and would not eat us,

it didn't mean that they wouldn't bite us! For some reason, I felt like we would be easily torn into pieces with just one deadly bite!

The sight of me holding the knife must have provoked the mastiff in a way. That explained why its agitation was triggered at once, and it was ready to pounce on me. Standing rooted to the floor, I could only shut my eyes and screamed at the top of my lungs. At the same time, I could not help mourning for myself at the devastating fate which would befall me soon.

At the eleventh hour, I was taken aback by the ear-piercing sound of gunshots. Thud! The beast, which was still pouncing on me seconds ago, collapsed onto the floor. It writhed in pain and lay motionless on the floor within seconds.

What a close shave! I was still petrified and remained frozen. By then, all the other mastiffs were also lying motionless on the floor, with a syringe poked onto each of their necks. They were apparently injected with some sort of anesthesia.

"Both of you shouldn't have infuriated them!" Spencer said in an icy-cold tone as he glared at us. He was standing with the other bodyguards at the main entrance of the room.

Nora and I nodded in embarrassment. Meanwhile, Nora looked at Spencer with her teary eyes and asked nervously, "Spencer, how is Armond? Has he woken up? Can I go and see him?"

Spencer frowned slightly as he replied, "Mr. Murphy has just woken up. Ms. Oberick, don't worry, he's fine."

Heaving a sigh of relief, Nora asked Spencer pitifully, "Spencer, can you bring us to see him? I'm really sorry for what I've done just now. But it was never my intention to hurt him. I just really love him, so I was blinded by my jealousy. I couldn't watch him do that to another woman..."

Spencer let out a deep sigh and said, "Let's go. Just don't be so impetuous next time!"

After that, he led us out of the room without saying anything. Unexpectedly, the mastiffs were left unattended on the floor.

Once we stepped out of the room, it was locked again. Trailing behind Spencer, Nora gazed at me meaningfully, hinting me to find ways to escape.

I nodded silently at her.

As Armond's villa was too spacious, I could not guarantee that I would not end up losing my way here. Nevertheless, I could only try my luck as that was the only chance for me to escape at the moment.

Before I could think of a brilliant idea, the siren blared abruptly with a high-pitched sound. I immediately covered my ears.

Spencer furrowed his brows and turned to look at the bodyguards behind him. They left at once after he threw them a glance. I presumed that he had instructed the bodyguards to attend to some urgent matters in the villa.

I exchanged a look with Nora right then. She asked Spencer inquisitively, "Spencer, why is the siren blaring suddenly? What happened?"

There was a momentary weird look on Spencer's face before he squeezed a smile. "Ms. Oberick, you don't have to worry so much. The bodyguards are checking on it now. It's probably caused by the system which malfunctions at times. Here, let me lead you to Mr. Murphy."

Nora nodded constantly and asked deliberately, "Armond is currently in his bedroom, right? I'll go and see him now." After that, she trotted eagerly toward his bedroom. Fearing that she would unintentionally stir up any troubles again, Spencer quickened his pace to catch her up. Meanwhile, I purposely slowed down behind them, trying to grab the golden opportunity to wander around by myself in order to find ways to flee the horrible place.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1089

Seeing that, I strode forward, following the route that Nora had told me in advance. Only the fourth floor of Armond's villa was occupied at that moment. Nonetheless, it was exceptionally challenging to locate the stairway leading downstairs because the place was humungous. He might have possibly built it that way on purpose to make it difficult for people to find the staircase.

Remembering what Nora told me, I managed to locate the exit and quickly headed downstairs to the living room.

I was stunned to see several hundred policemen besieging the villa. Right then, I also noticed Ashton in their midst.

It had been a few days since I last saw him. That man stuck out like a sore thumb in the crowd, wearing a dark-colored trench coat, looking as dapper as ever.

I was taken aback for a moment until our gazes were fixated on each other. A fuzzy feeling arose in me, and I ran toward him without the slightest hesitation.

Oh, how I've missed him and longed for his embrace these days. My overwhelming emotions fueled me to dash toward him relentlessly like waves hitting the shore.

Simultaneously, he was darting across the room to me. Nothing else mattered at that moment besides falling into his arms and hugging him tightly with my head buried in his chest.

The reunion made me tear up. "I thought I'll never be able to see you again in this lifetime. I thought I'll have to face everything on my own this time. I thought you'll never come. I..."

"Silly girl!" He assured me in a low voice while hugging me, "How could I let you face this alone? Not now and never will."

Resting in his arms, my body started to warm up as I calmed down. I could feel my heart beating normally again with him beside me, and that felt good. I felt like I owned the whole world only when he's around.

Moments later, he said gently, "Let's get this mess sorted."

I nodded in agreement. After all, the main priority was to settle the matters at hand.

At that moment, the policemen had the entire villa surrounded. The person-in-charged consulted Ashton, "Mr. Fuller, should we barge in?"

Ashton nodded and ordered, "Locate Armond at once while controlling the rest. Try to keep the site as it is and reduce any possible damage to the least."

“Noted!”

Subsequently, the troop entered the villa. I reminded them, “Armond’s pets are on the third floor. Beware, they are mostly venomous snakes and scorpions.”

The leader of the troop acknowledged, “Thanks for the reminder, Mrs. Fuller.”

Meanwhile, I remained outside of the villa with Ashton. His composure piqued my curiosity. “When did you return? It takes at least four hours to get from A City to K City.”

He stared at me and replied, “Before Holden came here with you, he sent me a message. To be honest, Armond wouldn’t call you here for nothing. If he failed to get the sandalwood box, it’s expected of him to detain you. Moreover, the Murphys are anxious to obtain the contract. Hence, it’s a necessary step for him to look for you.”

“So, you came back as soon as you got the message?”

He nodded. “When Holden has gotten full knowledge of the situation in the villa, I brought in the police. With Holden’s help, Armond will definitely go to jail.”

Nodding my head, I continued asking, “How did the investigation go in A City? Did you manage to find some solid evidence? Did they confess?”

“Yes, they’ve confessed. Joseph will follow up with the rest.”

This chapter was finally closed.

Earlier, Armond fell unconscious after getting hit by Nora. Hence, the raid was conducted successfully, where items found included numerous Class 1 protected wildlife species and weapons.

Charged with a crime, Armond was taken away directly. On the other hand, the others at the villa were required to record their affidavits before being released. As for the Murphys, they were all affected because of what Armond did.

The less-than-ideal stock market plunged even further, resulting in a severe crash. In the end, Armond was held in police custody.

After a tiring night, I woke up to a loving Ashton next to me.

He looked me in the eyes and curled his lips. “You’re up?”

I nodded as I let out a coquettish smile unknowingly. Snuggling in his embrace, I said with a hoarse voice, “I dreamt of you last night and thought that you’ve left for a business trip. I was thinking to myself how disappointed I’d be if I couldn’t see you when I woke up. Thankfully, you’re here with me, and this makes me glad.”

He chuckled. "You can come with me on all of my business trips in the future. It's always a real bummer when I don't see you the moment I open my eyes in the morning and when my arms hug nothing at night."

I buried my face against his chest. "Now that Armond's case is settled, isn't Rachel taking care of everything in A City? You can now remain here instead of traveling to A City and Moranta. Oh, by the way, Nick is getting married soon."

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He nodded and then cast me an intense gaze. "We'll organize our very own wedding as soon as Nick is done with his. How's that?"

He had me flabbergasted. "Our wedding? Didn't we have one already? It's so troublesome to do it all over again. It's better the channel the energy to plan for a trip when the weather gets better soon. It's been ages since I traveled."

He laughed. "We'll surely go traveling, but only after our wedding."

Squinting my eyes, I hugged him. "Let's think about that in the near future. Any ceremony that we hold right now is considered our anniversary celebration."

Chilling with him on the bed made me feel sleepy. At that thought, I checked the time and realized that it was already noon. Lifting my head, I asked, "Are you hungry?"

Arching his brows, he responded with more questions, "What about you? Are you hungry?"

I admitted, "Quite. But, we don't have that many groceries at home, and the helper isn't around. What shall we have for lunch?"

After pondering for a while, I suggested, "Why don't we eat at Aunt Sally's? Apparently, she's bought a new place in the city, and it's quite near to K University. We can visit the university library thereafter and spend some time reading. How does that sound?"

He brushed his finger lightly on my nose and replied affectionately, "Sounds like a plan."

I sat on the bed briefly to clear my mind. After showering and getting dressed, Ashton walked out from the walk-in closet.

He saw me and asked, "Are you still sleepy?"

I shook my head. "Not anymore. Any reason why you're not wearing your black jacket anymore?" I was surprised to see him wearing something that was not black. His first?

He carried me up and lugged me around his waist, then placed me on the bathroom countertop. With a smile, he handed over the toothbrush to me, with the toothpaste squeezed in advance. "Don't you like seeing me wearing other colors?"

In a muffled voice, I explained, "It's not that. It's refreshing to see you in other colors. You look so handsome that I'm falling head over heels for you. I'll doll up just to match you when we go out."

Hugging me, he stared at my reflection in the mirror. "You're dressing up because you're going to the university!"

I giggled. "That's one of the reasons. However, my first priority is to look good for you." After gargling, I struggled to get off him. He obliged and sat me on the toilet seat.

Frowning, I asked, "Hey, I'm not done."

His gaze fell on my feet, then he reminded, "The floor is cold. Don't walk around barefooted. I'll bring you your slippers. Stay here."

After a while, he came back with a pair of slippers and put them on for me. Pecking my cheek, he said, "I'll go make some breakfast. Come down when you're ready."

I nodded and continued washing up.

After I had freshened up, I searched high and low in the walk-in closet and found a lovely pink dress for the occasion. I wondered where Ashton got it from since it had just been newly released by a famous brand early this year. The style was quite ladylike, different from my regular picks. Wearing it to see Sally would be like a breath of fresh air.

After getting dressed, I put on some make-up and blow-dried my hair. It had been a long time since I glammed up, and my hair had grown to reach my waist. Sitting at my dressing table, I simpered as I was quite pleased with my hairdo.

Frankly speaking, I didn't remember losing any hair. It was still as dark and thick as ever. My skin and smile looked brighter, and in fact, I appeared more relaxed than before.

I had heard from some elderly people that when a couple became more charming, it was a sign that they were getting more compatible, and things would only get better.

Now that I thought about it, it did have some truth in it. Ashton and I had been together for years. Hence, we'd seen it all and also endured multiple hardships. Yet, things seemed to have just begun falling into place, and everything was just blissful.

Not only that, but we were also seemingly becoming better versions of ourselves. When I reminisced about the past, there were only sweet memories.

By the time I got downstairs, Ashton had prepared some fist for breakfast. He waved at me excitedly while reaching out for the utensils. "Come over and try this!" Everything seemed so natural.

However, I felt a little surreal when our stories unfolded so well. Although Ashton and I had just started our relationship not too long ago, I felt that we had been through multiple cycles of ups and downs.

As I was staring into space blankly, he smiled at me and asked, "What are you thinking about? Come over."

His words interrupted my thoughts. I took a seat at the dining table and then looked at him in disbelief. "When did you learn how to make fish soup? It looks delicious."

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He scooped a bowl of soup for me. "I tried it once by chance in A City and liked it. So, I wanted to make some and share it with you."

Accepting the bowl from him, I took a sip and complimented him, "Congratulations, Mr. Fuller, your cooking skills have improved!"

He served me some eggs. "Bon appétit." Is that a bashful smile?

With a gleeful grin, I lowered my head. Everyone acts differently when they're in love. Take Ashton and me for example, we're a couple who enjoys simplicity. Yet, it's all these trivial things that help us build solid memories.

After breakfast, Ashton drove us out of the villa. Sitting on the passenger seat, I looked out at the landscape through the car window. The gloomy horizon in K City had finally cleared up, revealing a bright sky that was scintillatingly blue.

"It's so rare to see a sunny day when it's almost the end of the month. Oh yeah, Christmas is just around the corner. I wonder if it will snow by then." It usually snowed in K City. I'm sure it'll make the joyous seasons even merrier.

As I thought further, I started making plans for Christmas. We'd never really celebrated Christmas over the years.

Meanwhile, Ashton continued driving, his eyes fixed serenely on the road. "Do you have any Christmas present in mind?"

Pursing my lips, I looked at him sideways. "Mr. Fuller, have you noticed what has become of us? Our lives are too mundane and dull, just like a couple who have lived together for decades. There's no longer any excitement."

Furrowing his brows, he pulled over. His deep eyes stared at me. "So, you're trying to tell me that we should seek pleasure?"

Seeing that he had pulled over suddenly, I could not help but ask, "Why did you stop the car out of the blue? Aren't we heading to Aunt Sally's?"

He leaned over and quipped, "Let's delve deeper into this business."

"What business?"

"Pleasure-seeking business!"

I was stupefied and then broke out into laughter. "That's not what I meant. I just wanted to tell you that we're doing good. You..."

"Which part is good?" He looked me in the eyes and teased openly. I was taken aback for a moment and glared at him in the next minute. "Can you stop, Ashton?"

He was surprised at my sudden roar. "I'm just saying. Don't overthink things. Aren't we on our way to see Aunt Sally? What if there's bad traffic ahead? With you pulling over now, when will we be able to arrive at her house?"

He was still in a daze. Thus, I pushed him back to his seat and continued, "Focus on the road and stop dreaming!"

Heeding my call, he ignited the engine again. As the car was revved to life, he turned to me with knitted brows. "When did you learn the trick of changing a topic so fast?"

Pretending to be ignorant, I tried to divert his attention, "What about? Did I? I was just reminding you to stay focused on a task and not to run wild with your imagination, okay?"

As I spoke, I gently moved his face to the front, gesturing him to concentrate on his driving. Then, I said sternly, "Anyway, it was just a passing comment. Don't take it to heart. If you continue behaving like this, it's hard for me to chat with you about anything under the sky."

"Okay!" he replied attentively, like a fool.

Sally had since moved back to K City. Thankfully, the journey was quite smooth as the distance was short.

She bought a condominium in a residential area located in the city center. When we arrived, we were greeted by Sally and Jim. They had been waiting for us downstairs. With a faint smile, Sally asked, "Were you stuck in traffic? We've been waiting for you for such a long time. Come, let's go upstairs!"

Holding my hand, Ashton and I greeted Jim with a nod and followed them to their house.

It was a three-bedroom unit. Though not very large in size, it was very cozy. There was a vase of vibrant flowers on the television cabinet. I could not tell if they were real or fake, but the bright colors seemed too good to be true.

"Those are handmade flowers by your Aunt Sally. She gathered some twigs from the neighborhood and then made the flowers out of tissue paper, dyed them in colors, and voila, she turned them into a unique decoration piece," Jim took the time to share with me.

I was very impressed and approached it for a closer look. From afar, they looked just like real flowers.

Ashton followed suit and smiled lightly. "It's hard to tell that these are fake if you don't examine it carefully."

Sally joined us after serving the dishes. "Jim blended the colors excellently. That's how they can look identical to the real ones. C'mon, let's dig in. I have some more of those flowers in my bedroom. I'll let you bring some home later."

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At the table, Sally gazed at us while serving us. "I see that Fuller Corporation has expanded very well. It's operating at a large scale now and has a very solid foundation. You two should start focusing on building your own little family. I mean, you need to spice things up. Don't just leave Summer with the Moores. You need to keep her by your side more, educate, and develop her as she grows up. Don't be lazy."

Feeling ashamed of myself, I nodded profusely. "Noted, Aunt Sally."

We should have kept Summer with us more. There're too many things going on earlier, but I guess it's time to bring her home now.

While I was still thinking about this, Sally ran to the bathroom all of a sudden, leaving Ashton and me perplexed. Jim calmly followed her in, and they took a while before returning to the table.

I blurted, "Did you eat something bad and have a tummy upset, Aunt Sally?"

Smiling, Sally explained, "I'm all right. This is just a temporary symptom. Things will get better after a month or two." She took her seat.

Jim served her some dishes and took care of all her needs.

Ashton stayed silent at the side. Meanwhile, I frowned at him. He's such a log, not knowing how to care for his aunt.

After lunch, Jim and Ashton enjoyed a good cuppa while Sally and I watched television after doing the dishes. Suddenly, Sally pulled me aside and asked, "Letty, age is catching up with the both of you. Do you plan to have children?"

I was momentarily stunned by her abrupt question.

Upon hesitating, I answered, "Aunt Sally, I can't conceive."

Gasping, her smile stiffened as she said helplessly, "What a pity! Life must be tough on you two."

I pressed my lips together tightly, unsure of how to reply. Let bygones be bygones.

After some time, Sally appeared to be unwell again. I asked again, "What's wrong, Aunt Sally? How are you feeling?"

She shook her head slightly. "I'm okay. I'm too old for this, that's why... Letty, have you thought about having a child through alternative means?"

I was completely baffled and tried to clarify, "Aunt Sally, we talked about this and..."

She interrupted me, "Test-tube baby, honey! Now that technology is so advanced, giving birth yourself isn't the only way to have a baby. You can consider getting pregnant via in vitro fertilization since the walls of your ovaries are thin."

I stared at her with a blank expression. "Aunt Sally, Ashton may not agree to this. We're not young anymore. Moreover, we already have Summer."

She shook her head and continued to convince me, "This isn't about age. Look at me. If it can happen to me, you can handle it too. The Fullers are a big family, running multiple corporations. It'd be a plus point to have more children around to add cheers to your days, accompany you when you travel, and also to help out in the family business."

I picked up the main point in her speech. "Aunt Sally, are you pregnant?"

She said admittedly, "Yes, I'm three months pregnant. It's not quite stable yet. Jim and I are planning for the wedding, but we dare not break the news to Ashton. Hence, the delay."

I recalled Ashton expressing his disapproval of the union between Sally and Jim. The main reason being Jim related to the Murphy family, and Ashton is wary of them.

I asked Sally earnestly, "Aunt Sally, do you know that Uncle Jim is one of the Murphys?"

Maintaining her composure, she answered, "Yes, I know. I'm also aware of the conflicts between Ashton and Armond. However, these are their battles in the corporate world. Your Uncle Jim hasn't been involved in the business for some time now. He's just an old professor, leading a simple life. He's been a lone wolf all these years. Having known me now, we just want to continue living our days happily. Letty, please find time to talk to Ashton and advise him to consider my situation. I'm no longer young, so it's not easy to have finally met a man I can depend on for the rest of my life."

Putting myself in Sally's shoes, I could empathize with her. I just didn't know how to bring this up to Ashton. With Armond being sentenced to jail, there was a need for a new successor to manage the family matters. Thus, we couldn't guarantee that there would be no further conflict between the Murphys and the Fullers. At this point, the future remained uncertain.

Two hours had passed when Ashton and Jim ended their coffee session. They seemed to have enjoyed themselves.

Jim then suggested, "We'd love to dine out with you this evening if you don't already have a prior engagement."

After some small talks, we bid them goodbye.

As we exited their condominium, I grabbed Ashton by the hand and asked inquisitively, "What did you talk about with Uncle Jim just now?"

He flipped my hand around and squeezed it into his. "We chatted about the Murphys. I passed the contract to him to hand it over to Mr. Muphy. Then, we also concluded his marriage with Aunt Sally."

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The news was a bolt from the blue. Rejoicing, I held on to his arms tightly. "Really? You're amazing, Ashton. In this case, Fuller Corporation won't be implicated in Armond's crime, and neither will this affect Aunt Sally and Uncle Jim.

"Oh, by the way, Aunt Sally is three months pregnant. Help them out wherever you can. She also suggested for all of us to return to J City along with Uncle Charlie and Aunt Helen during the new year."

He nodded and planted a kiss on my forehead. "Why are you beaming with joy when Aunt Sally and Jim are the ones getting married? Silly girl!"

I chuckled loudly. "I don't know why, either. I just feel over the moon. Aunt Sally has been living all by herself over the years. Now that she's met her Mr. Right, it's something worth celebrating. In addition, she's got a baby. These are all wonderful news."

Ashton let out a thin smile and looked at me. "Do you want another child?"

His question startled me, then I parroted him, "Can we have another child?"

He smirked. "As long as you want one, we'll have it at all cost, regardless of the method. Scarlett, it's been a roller coaster ride for us to be where we are now with each other. Have no regrets. Whatever you want to do, just tell me, and I'll do my very best to make it happen, okay?"

A warm, fuzzy feeling evoked in me as soon as he said that.

I thought about what Sally said and elicited his response, "Ashton, Aunt Sally suggests for us to try in vitro fertilization. You..."

He nodded and agreed immediately as if he was expecting this. "I'll contact a well-known expert in the country and consult him about this. Just leave this to me."

I thought he would turn down the idea, but he agreed right away, which made me quite astounded.

My phone rang that instant; it was Nora. Her voice was low, and she sounded dejected. After a long pause, she said, "Scarlett, I'm leaving for A City today. I wanted to leave quietly but decided to give you a call in the end. I'm still wearing the bracelet. About the child, I regret it so much, but there's nothing I can do about it. I once felt that as long as I kept deceiving myself with positive thoughts, you wouldn't be mad at me. However, I realized that I was wrong. I'm defeated by my guilty conscience. I don't have that peace within me. So, I called to apologize. I'm sorry, and I know that my words mean nothing to you, but I must do it in order to get through this ordeal. I also want to plead on Armond's behalf, so please have mercy on him, if possible."

Clenching on my phone, I could not help but feel miserable for her. I was lost for words. Moments later, I asked, "Where are you right now?"

"Airport."

I glanced over at Ashton, who simultaneously switched directions and headed to the airport.

Then, I said over the phone, "Nora, it's all in the past. We'll all be fine. I know what to do about Armond. Please wait for us at the airport. We're on our way to send you off."

I hung up while Ashton sped off.

When we arrived, I saw Nora with her suitcase. Only those who were very familiar with her could recognize her at one glance since she had a mask on.

I approached her and gave her a bear hug. "Do think of me when you're back in A City. Take care!"

Burying her head in my neck, she nodded. "You arrived in a flash! Initially, I just wanted to bid farewell over the phone. I didn't mean for you to come all the way to the airport."

"I know, but we're just nearby. So, we came. Do you have any future plans in mind?"

Her first experience in love cuts her the deepest. It will probably take a long time for her wounds to heal properly.

She shrugged her shoulders and said casually, "Not really, but I intend to go to Lightspring. My Grandpa has given me a large sum of money, so I want to open an inn over there. I'll bring my Grandpa along, make a big yard for him to cultivate plants and crops, and accompany him every day."

I was a bit green with envy of the life she described. "Hmm... That sounds like an ideal life. Ashton and I will visit you when we're free."

We chatted for a while more before it was time for her to board the flight. Before she left, I took a deep breath when I hugged her for the last time.

Life was, indeed, full of ups and downs.

It was already quite late in the evening when we stepped foot into K University. Since Ashton and I did not have a specific itinerary, we headed straight to the library.

Though it was not very crowded, our appearance seemed to have caught everyone's attention. Ashton was a man of few words, so he quickly found a place and sat down quietly.

Meanwhile, I was searching high and low for some books on the shelves but to no avail. It was my first time here, and I was not very familiar with how the resources were arranged.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1094

Right then, a handsome young man who looked around twenty years old approached me.

He smiled brightly at me, and I subconsciously responded with a gentle grin.

“Are you looking for something?” he asked.

I nodded. “I was looking for some materials for legal research, but my effort was in vain.” It’s probably because I’m not familiar with this library.

He looked at me and explained gently, “Most of the books here are scattered. There are more professional resources in the reading room next door. You don’t seem to know this place well. If you don’t mind, may I show you around? Maybe I can help you find the books that you’re looking for.”

I thanked him with a nod and a smile, “That would be wonderful!”

Just as he had described, I found the books I wanted in the reading room next door. When we were exiting, he asked, “You don’t look like you’re from this university. Are you here for an exam or a Ph.D. student?”

I chuckled. “I’m just here to borrow some books. You look really young. A junior?”

He nodded. “I’m going to be a senior soon. Can I have your phone number, please? You remind me of someone.”

Amused, I asked, “Is this a pick-up line used by young boys nowadays?”

He denied, “No, you really looked like the celebrity I had always liked a few years ago. You two are so alike. She’s seemingly quitted the entertainment world. I liked her very much, so when I first saw you, I thought you were her.”

As soon as he said that, I knew that he must have mistaken me for Nancy. Hence, I told him, “I’m sorry, but I don’t think I can give you my contact number.”

Confused, he asked, “Why?”

I pointed at Ashton, who was walking toward me, and laughed. “My husband doesn’t allow me to chat with strangers, let alone exchanging contacts. Hence, I’m sorry, but I can’t give you my number.”

Looking at Ashton from afar, the young man looked somewhat disappointed. He then nodded reluctantly. “It’s okay then.”

Without saying another word, he left.

Looking at Ashton, I ran toward him and fell in his arms, smiling. “Mr. Fuller, do you know what I was up to?”

He arched his brow, “What were you doing?”

“There’s a junior asking me for my number!” I bragged, “But I told him that I’m married, and my hubby is irreplaceable.”

He took a glance at the young man who had left. Then, he gazed at me. “It seems like I shouldn’t let you wander around in the future. You might get kidnapped when I’m not being watchful.”

Holding onto the handrail, I climbed upstairs. He hugged me all the way, and we found a seat together.

It felt good to be in a vibrant place as if we were young again.

Nick’s wedding was carried out smoothly, but I did not see Jackson there. I called him multiple times and even tried contacting him through other means but to no avail.

At the wedding, Nick said to his bride, “Meeting you has been the best thing that’s ever happened to me. Thank you for giving me a home.” It was a simple yet powerful statement.

I think that people have a bias toward simplicity as they grow older. When we’re young, we often assume that the ending will be sweet, regardless of how the love story goes. Then, we became oblivious of the fact that not everyone who’s in love is tolerant.

Many years later, I met Jackson in M Country during a business trip. With a faint smile, he said calmly, “It’s been a while.” That was the end of our conversation.

As we grew older, our days became simpler. John married Emma. Although he did not do it out of love, he enjoyed leading a simple life and spending ordinary moments with her.

Cherish the person you love in your memory. I believed Emma would understand this very well. John deliberately treated Emma better as if he was compensating for another person. However, Emma took it as a consolation and considered herself blessed. In a way, she was lucky to have a man like John who made attempts to pamper her. The only less-than-ideal part was that she had never truly fallen in love with him. He was way better than he appeared to be.

For me, that was the best ending. At least, John didn’t need to face any challenges and bear the pain that life threw at him all by himself.

During Christmas season, Ashton wanted to bring me along to Joe’s wedding. I was surprised at the news, but I was happy for Joe, nonetheless. No matter who he chooses to spend the rest of his life with, I’m certain that as a responsible adult, Joe is more than ready to lead a life of purpose.

It was also during Christmas when I received news from the rehabilitation center that Rebecca was found dead from a suicidal drug overdose. Ashton was the first one who got the news. He

fell silent for a long time before squeezing out a few words through his lips, “Give her a beautiful funeral service.”

And, that was it.

After years of entanglement, the last thing he heard was her death. I was shocked to the core. Indeed, I was really shaken.

Everyone had their own fate. Perhaps, Rebecca made the wrong decision since the very beginning.

Ashton and Sally were planning to spend the new year in J City. Before the year ended, Ashton cleared his schedule and brought me to the Moore residence to pick Summer up. Having spent a few months recuperating there, Summer’s health seemed to have improved a lot.

Somehow, she became quiet after recovering from the illness. Upon knowing that we were going to J City, Summer asked in anticipation, “Mommy, are we going to the cemetery to see Grandma and Aunt Macy?”

I froze for a moment and instantly nodded. This is great! Summer remembers Macy.

In the meantime, Hannah heard that we were leaving for J City, so she called to say goodbye. I was overjoyed when I discovered that she was pregnant and shared a lot with her.

As soon as I hung up, Ashton held me in his arms. “We’ll pay a visit to the hospital right after the new year. We, too, will have our own child very soon.”

I nodded, feeling really contented and peaceful. To me, it doesn’t matter anymore whether I have a child or otherwise. The best is yet to come, and I look forward to it.

Then, it was the new year.

It did not snow in J City on new year’s eve.

But instead, what greeted us were bewitching lights, incredible decorations, lively streets filled with bustling crowds, and a thick festive atmosphere.

Apparently, it was the first time that the Fullers had gathered as a big family. Charlie’s head had turned white. He said to me, “Scarlett, it’s not easy for you two to get together. The luckiest thing in life is to reunite with the one that you love. It’s a tremendous blessing to be able to watch the fireworks while hugging your one true love.”

I nodded in agreement. Suddenly, I noticed the wrinkles creeping up at the corner of Ashton’s eyes. It finally dawned on me that he had aged.

It had been a long and winding road throughout this journey we called life. We had walked it slowly and arduously. Looking at him silently, I only hoped that we could carry on peacefully in our remaining days.

Seeing the winter skies lit up by the colorful fireworks, Summer let out a gleeful, festive cry. I lay my head on Ashton's chest. "Ashton, what's your new year wish?"

Looking handsome as ever, he stared at me in the eyes and exclaimed, "To have you with me, day after day, year after year."

I could not contain my joy. We locked eyes as I repeated after him, "To have you with me, day after day, year after year."

What an ideal ending to a perfect night!

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1095

It was the first new year that I actually felt so blissful for the first time in my life. Ashton, Summer, and I spent another week in J City before returning to K City.

When we were about to depart, Charlie walked out with Summer in his arms. They were still frolicking around.

Summer had put on some weight during the festive seasons. Thus, it was quite a challenge for Charlie to carry her all the way. Although he was panting and looking slightly exhausted, he did not admit to it. He was playing a fool with Summer and making her laugh boisterously.

"Let me carry her, Uncle Charlie." Ashton stepped forward, wanting to take over and relieve his uncle.

The latter did not hand Summer over immediately. He fixed her scarf, gazed at Ashton and me, and sighed as he finally passed Summer over to Ashton.

"Summer, do call me more frequently once you're home. Will you remember this?" Charlie grinned from ear to ear.

"Yes, I will, Grandpa Charlie!" Summer was very well-behaved, adorable, and likeable by all. Saying goodbye to her made Helen and Sally teared up.

Macy would be so relieved and delighted to know that Summer is loved by all her elders.

Heaving a sigh, Charlie looked at both Ashton and me and reminded us, "I won't nag you further, but do look after Summer and be careful on the road. Ashton, do remember to bring Scarlett and Summer to visit the Moores. Uphold the good virtues and proper mannerism as you should. Don't let others criticize the Fullers for displaying bad etiquettes."

I laughed at his comments, knowing that Cameron and Zachary were not so petty about these things. Then I assured him, "We don't live very far from them, so it's not a big deal to travel to and fro. They can see Summer whenever they like."

That was also the reason why Ashton and I wanted to spend new year's in J City.

Compared to the other relatives, Charlie was quite lonely. Since we stayed quite a distance from them, I often felt bad for not being able to be around them. This new year, it was inevitable for us to bring on the merry and keep them company during the festive seasons.

Drooping his head, Charlie continued to lecture us, "Visiting the elders during festivity has got nothing to do with how far or close you're from them. Don't mix the two up. Good manners begin at home. These are the unsaid rules that you

should be mindful of, so don't take these things lightly. You two are still too young!"

"Rest assured that I'll bring them over and pay a visit soon," Ashton eased the situation while I leaned on him and obliged like a good wife.

Over thousands of years, families in Chanaea continued teaching the next generations how to preserve traditions of rich culture and practice customs of good social etiquettes. There were especially evident in the area of developing harmonious relationships. Courtesy was deemed as a precious element in enhancing human bonds and bridging generational gaps. These concepts might not be easily understood by the younger generations, but they were definitely valued by heart amongst the seniors.

With that, Uncle Charlie nodded satisfactorily while lowering his head. Time stood still as everyone remained in silence. A somber atmosphere enveloped the place when it was time to bid each other goodbye.

Just then, Helen broke the silence unexpectedly, "All right, all right, it's time to go. Otherwise, you'll be late for your flight. Go now."

Everyone became alert once again and hurriedly ushered us into the car.

The chauffeur started the engine and drove us to the airport as we parted ways in a hurry.

I stared at the rearview mirror and saw Charlie and the rest waving at us under a towering tree. Their actions gradually slowed down, and moments later, their silhouettes vanished from my sight. We left with an extremely heavy heart.

I can't remember which poet has said this before, that life is a constant replay of farewells. It's made up of countless collections of moments when you send your beloved off so that the reunion becomes invaluable. The only thing is that no one knows when the next reunion will be.

Ashton noticed that I was feeling glum, so he passed Summer over to me.

The intelligent Summer stretched out her arms to me and requested, "Mommy, carry me!"

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1096

How could I still feel downcast when the little angel is around? I sat her on my lap and gave her a hug. "Summer, shall we spend each new year with Grandpa Charlie and his family?"

"Yes! I'll get lots and lots of presents!" Giggling, she clapped her hands happily. Her crescent-shaped eyes looked very adorable.

"Little miss greedy!" I pinched her nose gently and then joked with Ashton, "I wonder who she takes after."

Macy was a strong iron lady who owned a bar and bought her own house. She was also very outstanding in managing her finance, but she wasn't an avaricious woman. That woman knew how to control her income and expenditures in order to have a more comfortable life.

As for Jared, he's highly unlikely to be a money-grubber. The Crest family once monopolized the entire daily essentials industry. It definitely wasn't exaggerating to say that they regarded money as manure. Besides her facial features, there wasn't an area that Summer takes after him.

Ashton chuckled while turning to look at us.

I observed how gentle and loving he was as he stroked Summer's head. An image flashed up in my head while I visualized Ashton holding our baby affectionately. The more I thought about having a test-tube baby as Sally had mentioned, my desire for it grew even stronger.

When we arrived in K City that evening, we had dinner with Cameron and Zachary to make up for the New Year's Eve celebration.

Summer had already fallen asleep on Ashton's shoulders when we finally got home. After tucking her into bed, we went back to our room to wash up and retire for the night.

It had been quite an exhausting day. Yet, I still spent some time researching on my computer about in vitro fertilization when Ashton was taking a shower.

"What are you reading?"

I was so focused that I did not hear Ashton's footsteps approaching. His voice startled me.

Immediately, I switched off the computer and pretended as if nothing happened. "Nothing, really. Are you done?"

I was not sure if he saw my screen. One of the research journals that I read says that the success rate for women in an ideal health condition to become pregnant

via in vitro fertilization is up to sixty percent. That's the average result achieved by a healthy adult woman. Unfortunately, I'm not able to contribute to that statistics.

"Hmm," Ashton gave me a quick reply. Subsequently, he placed a glass of warm water on the table as well as some pills that he had put inside a bottle cap.

Sally was very concerned about us. On the second day of the new year, she took me to see a doctor, who concluded that I was weak. I was told that it would take a while for me to be in the pink of health, and the only shortcut was to consume some prescribed pills daily. With that, the chances of me getting pregnant again before reaching thirty years old would be higher. Since then, I had been taking the medication, and it was about a week now.

I swallowed the pills as usual and drank some water. Then, Ashton carried me to bed.

The week after the new year was a public holiday. Since we had a day off, we planned some visitations for Summer.

First, we went to the Stovall residence, where Summer received a big present from Louis. She was on cloud nine and brought so much joy to everyone at home.

Emma looked rather matured as she donned a new look and had her hair tied up. I caught a few sweet interactions between her and John when she was standing next to him. I doubt they got married just because they found each other compatible. John caught me observing him in secret like a paparazzi and rolled his eyes at me.

At the same time, Summer was spoiled rotten by the Stovalls in J City. After opening her present, she made Louis play snowball fights with her. The strong and tough man obliged as she already had him wrapped around her little finger.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1097

We sat around the sofa, in a circle. Looking out the French windows, we could see how gleeful Louis was, having some good fun with Summer. He was just like a playful big kid.

Moments later, as everybody quietened down in the living room, John blurted, "Have you heard? Armond's out."

Upon hearing the news, my heart sank. I was very surprised, and at the same time, confused because it was a different ending to what I had in mind.

When Ashton's lawyer was analyzing the case, he stated very clearly that Armond was charged for multiple crimes, namely intentional assault, illegal possession of firearms, and inflicting cruelty against national Class 1 protected wildlife species. He should have been jailed for at least fifteen years. Why was he released?

I huffed as I felt a cold chill running down my spine the moment I recalled the dreadful incidents at the villa.

Just then, Ashton's big hand patted mine to console me. I lifted my head to look at him. I could read from the message through his gaze. Stay calm. I took a deep breath and tried to hold myself together. Then, I plastered a smile on my face so that he would not get too worried about me.

Seeing that we did not react to him, John continued to share his thoughts solemnly, "He got away when he was on parole for medical treatment. I've inquired about this and found out that it was the Venrians who did it. They don't care about their own safety and will only work for money. It's so bold of Mr. Murphy to use a million to sacrifice a few lives in exchange for Armond's freedom. No whistleblower and nothing leaked beforehand. Right after the prison break episode, the police ambushed at the Murphy Residence, only to find out that the Murphys have absconded with the money and went abroad."

"Does it mean Armond will never ever return?"

I was panic-stricken. As soon as I popped the question, I could feel Ashton tightened his grip on my hand. However, I hid my emotions and tried to maintain a calm composure. "I was just curious. Can't the law punish him?" I attempted to cover up eloquently.

"You're too naive, Letty." Raising one hand, John mocked, "The law is also a set of systems. Hence, in that system, the winner rules. Although it looks like we have the upper hand, the dirty games played inside the prison are not as simple as we think. The prisoner can choose to write his own survival story in this system. As long as he can find a loophole within the law, he's able to start afresh, somewhere, somehow."

His analysis had helped me to understand some life concepts. There was nothing much that money could not do in this world. Armond had probably thought of his

escape plan the moment I exposed his involvement in organ trafficking. He must have foreseen his downfall one day and had a backup plan prepared in advance.

When someone turns evil, the extent of horror and ugliness the person can demonstrate through his thoughts, speech, and deeds is beyond our imagination. I learned this the hard way from Jared.

Understanding the reality is one thing; being able to calm my anxious heart is another. Like a vine, fear creeps all over me and invades every cell in my body.

Suddenly, Ashton placed my hands in his palm and started rubbing them to give me warmth. Frowning, I looked him in the eyes.

"I'm here with you," Ashton asserted.

His voice was low yet soothing. Those clear eyes of his were resolute, and they comforted my apprehensive heart.

Ashton had saved me once from Armond. He could definitely save me again and protect me from harm.

Although the devil is prowling, Ashton is the light unto my path. As long as I follow him, I shall not fear.

That assuring thought made me feel better. A faint smile settled upon my face as I locked eyes with Ashton and was met with his unswerving gaze.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1098

Seeing that, Emma teased us, "You guys are so sweet together."

Ashton and I laughed at the same time as if we had planned it.

"Tsk... tsk... tsk..." John shook his head. "Only the two of you would do something like that. Your public display of affection is not welcomed here. But I won't stop you, so please go get a room!"

"Arghhh!"

Emma gave him a tight slap on the arm, upon hearing his passing remark. John groaned in pain. With a scowling face, he commented, "Mind your manners, woman! Are you trying to kill your husband?"

John had a reputation that preceded him. Anyone who saw his long face would tremble in fear or bow reverently to him, regardless of who it was. Yet Emma was different. She faced him head-on as if she had gotten permanent immunization against his vehemence. Impatiently, she rolled her eyes and confronted him boldly, "Who allowed you say such derisive things?"

John's expression became sullen after being refuted by Emma. Wanting to regain some dignity, he stood up abruptly and glared at her, intending to intimidate her. "Trust me. I'll kick you out of the house if you dare to point one more finger at me."

Those two had an agreement when they got married. They vowed to give each other freedom and not to meddle in the spouse's private affairs. Thus, I always thought they were a match made in heaven. Faced with their sudden argument, I felt rather overwhelmed and did not know how to respond to it. I wondered if they were really upset with each other.

Even so, Emma ignored him completely. She scoffed at him and then pulled me upstairs, "How ridiculous! Letty, come with me. I have a gift for Summer, but I forgot to bring it down."

My hands were tied, so I could only follow her upstairs. John roared a few times, asking for her to stay. However, she proceeded upstairs without even turning her head, as if his scolding were music to her ears. I was quite impressed.

Emma then brought me to their room. I waited on the sofa while she went ahead into her bedroom. Moments later, she returned with a vintage sandalwood box in her hands.

"Open it and take a look." She passed me the box.

As I opened the box, I saw a shiny anklet lying on a sponge bed.

“Your brother told me that Summer has gone through a lot of hardships even at a young age. I felt so troubled and wanted to gift this to her. This anklet is said to protect a child from harm and shoo away bad luck. Legend has it that kids who wear one before the age of nine will be kept in safe hands for a lifetime.”

“You’re so thoughtful, Emma.” Holding the anklet, I was deeply moved.

My first impression of Emma was open-minded, sharp-tongued, and placid. She’d often say things that cause everyone’s jaw to drop. Thus, I expected her to stay the same and do things as she pleased after marrying John. Now, I felt like she fit the role of John’s wife very well.

When we were in the living room just now, I had noticed that Emma sincerely liked John a lot. It was practically written all over her face. I suspect John felt the same way about her too, just that he hadn’t realized it yet.

“As long as you like it.” Feeling smug, Emma patted my shoulders.

Summer fell asleep when we were heading home. Cradling her in my arms, I looked out of the window and sank into deep thoughts. My mind was in complete disarray. “Distraught over the news about Armond?” Ashton leaned over, took his coat off, and draped it over my shoulders. He even fixed the corners.

Tugging at his jacket, I lowered my head and hugged Summer tightly. Sighing, I replied, “It’s not entirely because of him. I feel that I didn’t take good care of Summer, causing her to suffer so much.”

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1099

If Macy was still around, Summer would have lived as an ordinary girl, even though she would grow up in a single-parent family. Conversely, since the day she started living with me, she had gone through so much, including undergoing a bone marrow transplant and a kidney transplant at such a young age. She almost lost her life.

I had done so little for Summer. Even the idea of wearing this anklet was Emma's idea. I had not even prayed for her in the last five years she was with me, and to call myself her "mother" was just irony.

Will Macy forgive me?

After a moment of silence, Ashton looked me in the eyes and stated confidently, "You've given her a home."

I did not respond to that but merely stared at the anklet Summer was wearing.

We would officially return to work in two days' time. Hence, Ashton and I decided to spend the next day resting at home.

Yet, he still woke me up early in the morning.

"What is it? Didn't you say we aren't going anywhere today but to rest at home?" I propped myself up and rubbed my bleary eyes.

"Something urgent came up. Do get ready to leave in half an hour." Ashton got off the bed to get changed.

"Huh? What happened?" Yawning, I was very reluctant to crawl out of the comfortable sheets.

The winter season was the best time for sleeping in. When we were in J City, I had to wake up super early to either accompany Charlie for meditation or go for a morning jog with Sally. As a result, I worked out a lot and have been looking forward to slumbering when we got back to K City.

I did not get any response from him, so I peeped through one eye.

He was putting on a necktie in front of the full-length mirror, fitting it snugly into the collar point. Each of his movements was very pleasing to the eye.

What a treat! The eye candy woke me up instantly. However, his next line had me wishing I was still asleep.

"Professor Zidd came back last night, so he has some time for us today."

The name was no stranger to me.

When I was surfing the net for in vitro fertilization a few nights ago, I stumbled upon a headline: Professor Zidd, the father of IVF in Chanaea. It was a thousand-word article. Even without clicking on the link to open it, one could tell how much of an expert Professor Zidd is.

So, Ashton did see what was on my screen, but he pretended otherwise and made these arrangements secretly.

I was quite touched that he took notice of everything I said or did and paid attention to even the slightest detail. Then again, I had to admit that I was clueless about the next steps.

I wouldn't reject the idea of in vitro fertilization, but I would feel helpless at the thought of trying when the result was already pretty clear. The world's average pregnancy rate for in vitro fertilization was less than sixty percent. My body had always been weak, and my uterus had been severely damaged. In addition, I had had two miscarriages. These factors further reduced my chance of getting pregnant by half. Thus, I was unsure if I should fight for the remaining thirty percent chance of success.

Even if the process was a success, there would not be a guarantee that another miscarriage wouldn't happen, considering my current health condition.

Once we walked into the first step of the process, there was no turning back. I had fallen into despair twice. Hence, I could not even bring myself to imagine having to go through the torment of losing my flesh and blood for the third time.

My heart still throbbed in pain when I thought about how my firstborn struggled to survive inside my body and suffocated in his last agony.

That was why I hid it from Ashton when I was researching for the information.

I spaced out on the bed and seemingly returned to the dreadful moment when I had a miscarriage. Depressing air lingered around me as the heart-rending tragedy flashed up in my mind again.

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1100

Suddenly, a familiar warmth on my wrist brought me back to reality. I regained my senses and was met with Ashton's tender and affectionate gaze.

He was down on one knee by my bedside, with one hand holding my phone. His deep eyes stared at me intensely.

"I know you're worried about the success rate and that all our effort might be in vain. I know you're also afraid that some bad people would appear again, wanting to harm you and our child. However, Letty, don't give in to fear. Think about how I rescued you in the nick of time and also think about Aunt Sally's advice. I'm here with you; we're all here for you. God won't let you go through it again. We won't fail this time. Try it once more, for my sake, okay?"

I studied his expression, but I could not tell if Ashton wanted a kid so badly. Anyway, I was somewhat convinced by him.

God won't do this to do for the third time. Everyone deserves a chance to be a mother. There should be a limit to the number of times fate can toy with me.

After contemplating, I changed my clothes and asked Mrs. Eriksen to take care of Summer while Ashton and I headed to Kingston Hospital in K City.

Ashton drove, instead of the chauffeur. Sitting on the passenger seat, the thirty-minute journey felt like a century-long.

At the hospital, I finally saw Professor Zidd, whose picture I had only seen in an article. He had a high hairline, a white lab coat on, and reeked of disinfectant, but the man was very amiable.

Professor Zidd casually asked us a few questions and then requested Ashton and me to go for a body check-up.

Ashton had to get his sperms and semen tested, whereas I had to undergo all of the important gynecological tests. Besides the basics, I had to go for routine blood analysis, diagnostic curettage, basic endocrine hormone determination test, and an anti-sperm antibody test. Ashton spent a large sum of money and took me to complete all the required examinations at the nearby private hospitals within the shortest time. Then, we returned to Kingston Hospital with the medical reports.

Professor Zidd studied my medical records for some time and then removed his glasses. With a serious expression, he asked, "Mrs. Fuller?"

"Yes." I clasped Ashton's hand tightly. My palms started sweating while waiting for Professor Zidd to go through my records. I had to hold onto something for support and fight back the tears in my eyes.

"Your situation is rather complicated because you've had two miscarriages caused by accidents during the fetal period. The fetus in your womb struggled for too long and consequently affected your uterus adversely. For now, let's not discuss whether we can successfully stimulate your ovulation. Currently, the reports show that your womb is temporarily unable to provide an ideal environment for the survival of an embryo."

Although I had expected it, I could not help but gulp to suppress my urge to bawl my eyes out. "In that case, Professor Zidd, did you mean that I don't stand a chance to get pregnant even via in vitro fertilization?"

I mumbled through the second half of the question and ended up sobbing. I had no idea how I managed to get them all off my chest.

I could sense a desperate desire in me, longing to be a mother. Previously, I was told that my chance of getting pregnant was slim, but there was still a small probability it could happen, and it did! This time, I was being declared definitive infertile with a zero chance of having my own baby. I was beyond grief, and my heart died on the spot. Hope is a kind of faith, invisible and intangible, yet, it can motivate a person to continue living.

Subconsciously, my fingers dug into Ashton's palm. It seemed that I could only use this way to draw some strength from him in order to maintain my composure.

A deafening buzzing sound rang in my ears just then. Right before the moment I was going to collapse, Professor Zidd's hoarse voice said gently, "No, that's not true. There's no absolute answer to the question asked."