

A Farewell 131

Chapter 132

“He was already dissatisfied when I decided to split up the company. He assumed that taking away the technology would bring me down. He was waiting for me to fail so that he could reclaim Mimosa. He never imagined I’d turn Mimosa around.

“I’ve been very careful with the quality of the products we sell. The people who stayed behind were mostly employed by my father. He couldn’t stir the pot from inside, so he spread false rumors instead.”

“Has anyone been sent to see the poisoned victims? What’s the situation?” Sage

asked.

Priscilla informed her that she had sent a trusted aide to the hospital, but the victim’s family refused to let them in. In addition, they demanded a whopping one million dollars in compensation and threatened to sue if they did not get it.

“We absolutely cannot compensate them. If we do, it would only validate their rumors.”

“Exactly,” Priscilla agreed. “I flat-out refused their unreasonable demand. But if this standoff drags on or ends up in court, it would damage the winery’s

reputation.”

Benjamin was definitely taking advantage of that. Even if the person who was poisoned tried to clear up the rumors, Benjamin could still use the same trick and get a bunch of people to claim they were poisoned. Therefore, they needed to come up with a permanent solution.

“Well, any bright ideas, Mr. Morisson?” Sage asked Shane, who hadn’t spoken up yet. “We’re comrades-in-arms now that you’ve reached an agreement with Mimosa. Do you have any solutions?”

However, Shane quipped, “Ms. Joyner, you just said it yourself. We’ve only reached an agreement. How can I invest in Mimosa if you can’t handle such a minor issue? There will be many more challengers when the winery is listed.”

His words were blunt but reasonable. Everyone in the room looked a little

embarrassed.

Priscilla assured him, “Don’t worry, Mr. Morrison. We’ll solve this issue and ensure our cooperation proceeds without a hitch.”

Shane smiled. “Very well. I’ll wait here until you guys come up with a solution.”

Sage knew that things would only get worse if they let it drag on. Suddenly, she had an eureka moment. “I’ve got a suggestion, Priscilla.”

Priscilla and everyone else in the office turned to look at Sage.

Sage continued, “Since Mimosa gained its popularity on the internet, Benjamin pulled this stunt because he’s banking on the fact that we wouldn’t want to jeopardize our popularity by turning this incident into a debacle.

“Why don’t we just put it all out there and livestream the whole thing? Whether it’s going to the hospital or communicating with the victims, even if it’s as boring as visiting them to say hi, let’s livestream it for everyone to see!”

“Live stream?” One of the executives seemed concerned. “Wouldn’t that make more people aware of this incident?”

“That’s exactly the point!” Sage responded. “After all, we have nothing to hide, so we don’t need to be afraid of them. Netizens are followers, but they’re not stupid. Once we lay out the facts, they’ll figure it out on their own.” Shane’s eyes lit up when he heard her explanation.

Priscilla was ecstatic. "That's a great idea, Sage! Livestreaming will not only satisfy the public's curiosity but it would also put an end to Benjamin's slanderous tricks. Who knows, it might even give Mimosa's popularity a boost!

"Oh, Sage. You truly are Mimosa's Lady Luck! You always come through for us! Why don't you join Mimosa? We can work together and make it thrive!"

Sage felt a little embarrassed by all the compliments. "I'm not that skilled. The idea just came to me all of a sudden."

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To be honest, everyone at Mimosa could have thought of it. But because they had all been panicking, their natural instinct to play it safe prevented them from thinking clearly.

"I have to admit that it's a rare treat to see you blush," Shane remarked.

Sage couldn't help but roll her eyes at him. "Well, are you satisfied with this solution, Mr. Morrison?"

"Eh, it's alright." He rose to his feet. "Since we're done here, you're coming with me."

"Where are we going?"

"To talk outside." Shane straightened his coat and walked out of the office.

Sage said goodbye to Priscilla and followed him outside. Sage, still a little peeved about Shane's earlier behavior, said coldly, "So what's with all the secrecy? Where are we headed? Just so you know, we're not exactly friends, so don't come to me for anything unrelated to work.

"The feeling's mutual." Shane cast a disdainful glance at Sage. "I've got my eye on a new project, and I want you to take a look into it."

She hadn't officially joined Farsight Investment yet, but he was already putting her to work by dragging her along to look into a project. She rolled her eyes as she thought of how exploitative he was.

"Are you cursing at me in that pretty little head of yours?" He arched his brow. "You weren't like this when you were practically begging me for cooperation."

Sage was tongue-tied. "Will I be compensated for looking into the project?" she asked.

"Please don't be so calculative, Ms. Joyner. After all, you're the wife of Holcomb Corporation's CEO," Shane mocked.

Sage retorted, "I'm nothing compared to you, Mr. Morrison. After all, I barely nicked your car, but you demanded millions in compensation."

He didn't seem bothered by her comment. Instead, he decided to hit Sage where it hurt. "I'm guessing Ian dumped you because of your sharp tongue?"

She remained unfazed. "In that case, your fiancée must be clinging on to you because of your snarky remarks, huh?"

His expression changed drastically at the mention of his fiancée. He tossed the car keys at Sage and growled, "Drive!"

Sage figured he wanted her to drive because there might be a dinner appointment later. Hence, she took on the task since he was her future partner and boss. Shane informed her that they were going to a little-known private restaurant after she started the car.

Sage found it strange. "I thought you were all about the high life and luxury, Mr. Morrison. Why didn't you invite the clients to some upscale members-only joint?"

A playful smile danced across his handsome face. "I guess they prefer it this way."

Sage was dumbfounded. "Huh? Aren't you treating them to a meal?"

"Why do you always have so much to ask?" Shane asked, irritated. "Stop asking so many questions."

Sage was rendered speechless. She drove out of the parking lot and was about to exit onto the main road when she heard a loud bang. She felt the car being rear-

ended.

Panicking, she looked at Shane through the rearview mirror. "It's not my fault! didn't slam on the brakes or cut anyone off. It's entirely on them."

His face immediately darkened. Sage wasn't sure if he was upset with her or with the other driver. But suddenly, a seductively dressed woman appeared and

knocked on the car window.

Sage rolled down the window, but the woman's gaze went straight to the backseat.

gas

"I can't believe it's you, Mr. Morrison! I'm so sorry. I just stepped on the hard. I'll take full responsibility." Her voice was sultry, and her perfume was

too

strong. She was practically leaning into Sage's seat.

"Miss, your chest is kind of squishing my arm," Sage blurted out.

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Shane burst into laughter when he heard that, and the woman shot daggers at Sage. “Will you shut up? You’re just a driver. Oh, I get it. You think you can use your looks to get close to Mr. Morrison as his chauffeur. How naive of you!”

“How did you manage to attract someone with such a loose screw?” Sage asked

Shane in the back seat.

“How dare you-”

The woman was about to retort, but Shane cut her off impatiently, “Roll up the windows and drive.”

Sage immediately rolled up the window and stepped on the gas. The woman almost fell over. Then, she shouted as they sped away, “What about your car, Mr. Morrison? At the very least, give me your contact information!”

“Mr. Morrison, you sure have a lot of admirers,” Sage remarked as she looked at the woman, who was trying to chase after them.

Shane rolled his eyes. “Does that mean you’re my admirer too? After all, you crashed into my car as well

No, that was an accident.”

Sage finally figured out why Shane’s chauffeur was so good at dealing with traffic accidents. It turns out plenty of people were attempting to get close to Shane in this way.

“Y’know, you should stop driving such a flashy car in the future. You’ll save yourself a lot of hassle by maintaining a low profile. I’m sure the repairs cost a pretty penny since you’re always getting into accidents,” she advised.

“Why should I give up on what I enjoy because of what others do?” He snorted and pulled out his phone to call his subordinate. He then asked them to retrieve the surveillance footage and deal with the accident.

Sage thought he was just going to chalk it up to bad luck. Yet, it seemed like he just didn’t want to waste his own time.

However, Sage agreed with his point of view. One’s happiness should be one’s top priority. In the past, she didn’t understand this, and it made her life miserable.

Half an hour later, Sage pulled up at the private restaurant Shane had directed her to. Even though it wasn’t grand, it was still massive. The courtyard was full of flowers, plants, and fruit trees. It even had pebbled paths and a pond teeming with colorful fish.

The lampposts illuminated the surroundings as night fell. Both of them walked into the restaurant and were greeted by a waiter who asked about their

reservation.

Sage assumed Shane had already made a reservation and only needed the dining room number. But surprisingly, Shane answered, “No.”

“My apologies, but all the private dining rooms are booked tonight. If you don’t mind, you can sit in the main hall,” suggested the waiter.

Shane, who was usually picky, agreed readily. “Sure.”

The waiter led them to the main hall. Even though the hall was adorned with antique décor, Sage couldn’t help but feel like it wasn’t suitable for business negotiations.

Shane, on the other hand, plopped down on a wooden chair. "It's alright. It's not us who'll be doing all the talking."

"What exactly are you up to, Mr. Morrison? Weren't we supposed to be looking into a new project? Is this a secret inspection?"

He grinned when he heard that. "Sure, you could say that."

Sage had a feeling that Shane was up to something that day. He seemed to be plotting something devious. Her gut told her to stay out of it. "Mr. Morrison, I'll leave you to it. I forgot I promised my coach that I'd go to the gym today. Please

excuse me."

"Where do you think you're going?" Shane raised his head and said

domineeringly, "I'm sure it's not that important if you can forget about it so easily. Sit down and order."

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Sage had no choice but to sit down and accept the waiter's menu.

"I'm going to the restroom," Shane said while she thumbed through the menu.

Sho

ignored him and ordered several dishes. Regardless of what Shane was up to,

her stomach came first.

Shane returned after she had placed her order. He took the menu from her, swiftly circled a few dishes, and handed it to Sage. "Bring this to the kitchen and tell them to change all the dishes in room 1 to these."

Sage took a look at the dishes Shane had marked. They were all cucumber dishes -stir-fried cucumbers, mashed cucumbers, cucumber salad, pickled cucumber, and cucumber with eggs. Sage realized that Shane was attempting to pull a prank

on someone.

"Mr. Morrison, could you please clarify what you're trying to do here?"

"What's the rush?" He continued, "It's not like I'm asking for a lot. I just want to observe their reaction. Stop fussing and go already!"

"I'm not going," she said confidently. "Why should I change someone else's order? Plus, the kitchen staff won't listen to me anyway."

Shane focused all of his attention on Sage. "How can I trust you if you can't handle something as simple as this? All you have to do is take it to the kitchen. The kitchen staff will carry out your request, believe me.

"Relax. You're not affiliated with Farsight Investment yet. Even if the other party gets mad, it just means they will not do business with me, which is not a loss for you."

"If that's the case, why don't you go yourself?" she asked.

He glanced at her. "I brought you here for a reason. You need to make yourself

useful."

“Don’t tell me... I’m here to take the blame, aren’t I?”

“Mhm. You’re pretty self-aware. Go on, then.”

Sage was rendered speechless. But Shane was right. If the project went up in flames, it had nothing to do with her.

She went to the kitchen and asked them to change the menu. Surprisingly, the head chef agreed without any hesitation.

Sage returned to the main hall and noticed Shane lounging in a chair. He had his long legs stretched out on an ottoman. He seemed to be in a good mood as if he were anticipating something interesting to unfold.

The waiter then served them their dishes, and her attention immediately shifted to her growling stomach. Sage picked up her cutlery and started eating.

Meanwhile, the people in room one were chatting merrily, blissfully unaware of the changes to come. Collin Braun, a man in his 60s, sat in the center, flanked by two other guys who appeared to be his assistants. Ian sat next to Collin with an impeccable posture and exceptional grace.

Terry filled their glasses with wine. “Professor Braun, the food will be served soon. Why don’t you enjoy some wine first? These grapes were grown and

harvested in local vineyards. Mr. Holcomb found out that you have a soft spot for local products, so he had it specially prepared for you.”

“That’s so kind of you, Mr. Holcomb. Despite being so young, you truly are on top of things,” Collin praised.

Ian smiled modestly. “You flatter me, Professor Braun.”

“I’ve come to appreciate the simple things after dedicating countless years to pharmaceutical research,” Collin remarked. “The pharmaceutical industry is becoming increasingly competitive. It’s nice of you to take an interest in our research, Mr. Holcomb. I’m honored that you took the time to come here to discuss it with us in person.”

“Please don’t sell yourself short, Professor Braun. Your research project is beneficial to the public. Even though I am a businessman, I want to help however

I can.”

While they talked, a waiter knocked on the door. “Excuse me, your food is here.”

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Two waiters walked into the room, each carrying a tray. The dishes were covered with lids to keep them warm.

Terry watched them serve the dishes and said warmly, “I bet you guys are

starving, Professor Braun. Please dig in! These have been specially prepared for us, so I hope you’ll enjoy them.”

“We’ve served all your dishes. Please enjoy your meal.” The waiter then removed

the lids from the dishes.

Collin and his assistants looked at each other in surprise when they saw the “cucumber feast” before them. Terry was stunned as well. It took him a moment to realize that everything he had ordered had been replaced with cucumbers.

Terry felt a wave of panic wash over him as he met his boss’ cold gaze. “What’s going on? I didn’t order these!” he asked the waiter.

The waiter claimed he had no idea what had happened and had simply been told to bring this to them. He hastily brought the manager over.

Ian's expression darkened when the manager said a woman who claimed to be his wife had gone into the kitchen and changed their order.

Terry breathed a sigh of relief when he realized it was a prank pulled by his boss' upset wife. He hadn't made a mistake after all.

Terry apologized to Collin and his assistants before asking the manager to bring

them the dishes they had actually ordered.

Even though Collin and his assistants were surprised, they guessed that there must have been a reason for the mix-up. Hence, they didn't blame Terry.

Ian excused himself and walked out into the main hall. His brows knitted

together when he spotted a familiar figure sitting in the corner.

Sage had her hair casually tied up in a loose bun, and she was gnawing on a rib with gusto. Beside her sat Shane. Shane didn't have as much of an appetite as Sage and was largely absorbed in his phone.

Ian's expression turned grim as he strode toward them. "Why are the both of you here?"

Sage was inhaling her food when she heard a cold male voice. His familiar voice startled Sage so much that the rib that she had been holding onto her plate. As it did so, a loud clattering sound pierced the air.

Sage forgot all about her food when she noticed Ian's stern expression. Then, glared at Shane fiercely.

She

So Ian had been his target. He had claimed he was looking into a new project and insisted on dragging her along. He also insisted on having her go to the kitchen to change someone else's order. He had used her to mess with Ian. She couldn't believe how childish he was!

Judging from her expression, Ian guessed what was going on. He shot a cold glance at Shane. "Why did you bring my wife here, Mr. Morrison?"

Shane's eyes widened. "This place is open to the public. We're just here to eat. Is something the matter?"

"Sure," Ian scoffed. "I guess you call changing all our dishes to cucumbers that, huh?"

Shane shamelessly continued, "I heard you were interested in Professor Braun's latest research, Mr. Holcomb. Since I couldn't get involved, I figured I'd shake things up a bit for you!

"Unfortunately, Professor Braun is so well-mannered. He wasn't even scared away by your cheap meal," he said regretfully.

"Also, it was your wife who arranged for the dishes to be changed. So if you've got a problem, please take it up with her." Shane shrugged off the blame without a care in the world.

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Sage was completely baffled by Shane's actions. Why couldn't he have used a more sophisticated approach if he were going to go against Ian? She couldn't accept his childish approach at all.

Jan ignored Shane's provocation. Instead, he turned to Sage and said, "You're coming with me to Room One."

Her brows furrowed together. "Why?" Surely he wasn't going to hold her accountable for this mess?

Shane chimed in, "She's my driver today. I don't mind if you bother her, but she isn't going anywhere with you!"

Ian frowned and shot Shane a cold glance. "Mr. Morrison, word has it that your elder brother is going to be promoted. He might not forgive you if something were to go awry now."

"Do you seriously think you have that much power?" Shane scoffed.

Ian's tone remained apathetic. "I know he's over in Brookfield, but it just so happens that he's particularly interested in involving Holcomb Corporation in his investment plan this time."

Shane snorted. "What does that have to do with me? If he doesn't get promoted, he can always just come back and run the family business!"

"I'm sure you could disregard your elder brother, but what about Mr. Morrison Senior? Can you also disregard him?"

Shane was at a loss for words. If his grandfather found out he had messed up his elder brother's promotion, he probably wouldn't be safe even in death.

"Fine. I should've known this was all you were capable of." He rose to his feet. "I'll let you off this time. Enjoy the rest of your evening with your wife. I'm out of here!"

He then stormed off. Sage didn't even get the chance to ask him to foot the bill. Then she turned to Ian. "You should leave as well."

Ian frowned. "Do you seriously think you can just sweep this under the rug, Sage? I can't believe you'd bribe the manager to change my order and make me look like a fool in front of Professor Braun."

The manager claimed that it was his wife who had requested the change. But it was clear, based on her reaction, that she hadn't revealed her identity. It was clear that Shane had bribed the manager in advance.

But he wasn't upset because of that. He was upset because Sage was getting closer and closer to Shane. He had clearly warned her that Shane was not to be

trusted.

"Did you and Shane come here just to ruin my dinner appointment?" Ian asked.

Although Sage was clueless as to Shane's purpose in coming here, her involvement in changing the order made her an accomplice. Out of courtesy, she had to go over and apologize.

Hence, she wiped her hands and said, "I'll go over and explain myself. But I'm – not doing this for you. I'm doing this because I made a mistake."

Ian pursed his lips and opted to remain silent.

Sage found the porcelain dolls on the shelves in the corridor leading to the private dining rooms adorable and couldn't help but try and touch them. However, she couldn't reach it.

To her surprise, Sage felt her feet leave the ground as soon as she withdrew her hand. She looked down and realized that Ian had actually lifted her off the ground.

"What on earth are you doing?" Sage exclaimed.

Ian remained calm. "I'm helping you reach it because you can't."

Sage felt embarrassed because she was being held like a child. "Put me down!" Ian complied and put her down, his hand lingering on her waist.

Sage was so angry that she shook off his hand and hurried forward. As she did so, she accidentally bumped into a waiter who was carrying a bowl of soup and walking in the opposite direction.

“Watch out!” Ian swiftly drew her back and deftly steadied the waiter’s tray

before she could react. Despite his quick reaction time, he couldn’t stop a bit of the scalding soup from splashing out.

When Sage turned around, she noticed that a large area of Ian’s hand had turned red from the scalding hot soup.

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry...” the flustered waiter apologized profusely. “I couldn’t move out of the way in time...”

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“It’s not your fault. Go have the kitchen remake the soup and charge it to my room.” Ian said.

The waiter left, grateful to have been spared. Sage couldn’t hide her concern for him. “Go rinse your hand with cold water.”

Even though she tried to hide it, Ian could still see a gleam of concern in her eyes.

He looked into her eyes and said, “Help me.”

Sage didn’t decline. There happened to be a mini sink in front of them. They walked over and Sage turned on the faucet.

Worried that the water pressure would be too strong, she cupped her hands under the faucet before slowly pouring it over Ian’s flushed hand.

The warm yellow light from the corridor cast a soft glow on her hair and delicate face. It gave her a gentle, ethereal allure.

“What do you like?” Ian asked.

Sage looked up in surprise. Her large, dewy eyes widened.

His tone softened. “Didn’t you say that I should know your preferences before I give you something?”

Sage smiled wryly as she thought about what had happened last night. In the past, she would’ve gladly shared all her preferences with him if he asked her this question. Then, she’d tell him, “I like you the most, Ian!”

But now, she found his interest laughable. “It’s alright. I appreciate the thought, but I don’t need you to give me anything.”

Ian felt his anger bubbling up when he noticed her indifference and disdain. However, he maintained his composure and added, “I know your uncle and aunt have been wanting to meet and dine with the CEO of Pacific Group. I’ll be free in a few days, so you can ask them to come to Holcomb Corporation to see me.”

Sage lowered her gaze and continued to pour water over his hand. “I wasn’t

joking when I told you that I don’t want you to interfere with my family’s business. I meant what I said. It wasn’t something I said in the heat of the moment. My uncle and aunt need to realize that they can only rely on themselves.

Her distant and cold demeanor wore his patience thin. “Well, I’ve offered to help. Whether you take it or not is up to you.” He then turned off the faucet and said curtly, “Let’s go.”

Sage didn’t utter a word. Instead, she wiped her hands dry and followed Ian to Room One. Terry had the kitchen rush out a few hearty dishes. During Ian’s absence, Collin and his assistants had become quite acquainted with him.

Everyone looked up when they heard footsteps. Ian met their gazes, calmly put his arm around Sage, and introduced her to the room. "This is my wife, Sage." Then, he turned to Sage. "This is Professor Braun and his two trusty assistants."

Sage flashed a polite smile at them. "It's a pleasure to meet you all. I apologize for what happened earlier. I got a little carried away with my prank."

Collin smiled. "No worries. The dishes you ordered were great. They were super green and healthy, just what someone like my age needs."

"Mhm. Eating healthy is important, but it's not like you need it because of your age. Seriously, you don't look a day over 20!" Sage teased.

Collin burst out laughing. "Mrs. Holcomb, you sure have a way with words. Come! Sit down and join us!"

Sage glanced at Ian, hoping he would help her turn him down. However, he

pulled out a chair for her. "Since Professor Braun has invited you to, you might as well join us.

But Sage didn't want to join them. Her prime ribs were still waiting for her outside!

"Well, you've had your fun and vented your anger, right? Let's sit down, shall we? Ian spoke up again. His affectionate tone elicited a knowing smile from Collin's assistants.

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Sage's cheeks were slightly red. She glared at Ian and sat down, saying, "I'll just comply then."

"Mr. Holcomb, your wife is so lovely. You shouldn't make her angry. You must apologize properly when you go back later," said Colin.

Ian, as if he were truly a man who had angered his wife, readily agreed, "Okay."

Just as they were talking, the restaurant manager knocked on the door and handed a bottle of ointment to Ian before apologizing on behalf of the waiter for what happened earlier. Only then did the people in the room notice the redness.

on his hand.

"Mr. Holcomb, why didn't you speak up earlier? This burn could be serious,"

someone said.

Remaining calm, Ian replied, "My wife helped me to rinse it with cold water earlier. I'm fine."

Terry couldn't help but snicker inwardly seeing how Ian seemed to be calling Sage his wife more and more naturally now.

Then, he began to recall a previous dinner appointment at a seafood restaurant not too long ago. Ian had refused to go and instead had asked him to go as a representative. But just as he was about to arrive, Ian called to say that he wanted to go along too.

Terry couldn't understand Ian's indecisiveness over such an insignificant

occasion. It wasn't until he saw Sage in front of the restaurant that he understood his true intentions.

Seeing the ointment in Ian's hand, Terry quickly suggested, "Mrs. Holcomb, why don't you help Mr. Holcomb apply the ointment? It'll be inconvenient for him to apply it using his left hand."

"Yes, it's important to apply the ointment promptly. Otherwise, it might ulcerate," Colin chimed in.

Amid the encouragement from the two of them, Sage knew that their loving couple act had to continue. She graciously took the ointment and opened it. She dipped a fingertip in and gently applied it to Ian's wound.

He didn't know if it was the effect of the ointment or the fragrance from her hair, but Ian felt the pain in his hand easing almost instantly.

"That should do it," she said.

When Sage was done applying the medicine, Ian's heart fell slightly.

"I'll go wash my hands," she said to everyone before heading to the washroom.

Standing in front of the mirror in the toilet, Sage thought about the urgency in Ian's tone when he pulled her into his arms and how natural he seemed when he introduced her with his arm around her waist.

There was a hint of inexplicable bitterness in her heart. There was a time when she had longed for him to care for her and to publicly acknowledge her identity. But he always avoided her and treated her with disgust. Now, however, she had everything she always wanted. She found the situation rather ironic..

After washing her face with some cold water, she put on a firm expression. Regardless of how she felt now, she could no longer hold any expectations for Ian. She had tasted the bitterness of love once, and that was enough for her. When the dinner ended, Terry escorted Colin and the rest back. Meanwhile, Sage and Ian walked to the courtyard to wait for the driver to bring the car over.

It was a fairly breezy night, and she subconsciously rubbed her arms to warm herself up. As she did so, a coat was draped over her shoulders.

The coat was warm and smelled faintly of pine. She lifted her head and saw a hint of displeasure in his dark eyes. "Why didn't you wear something warmer when you know it's going to be cold?"

Just as the driver arrived, Sage tossed the coat back to him and said, "I don't need your fake kindness!"

With that, she got into the front passenger seat. Holding the coat that had been thrown back to him, Ian glanced at the woman's cold and distant face.

Eventually, he got in the back and asked, "Why were you with Shane today?"

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Upon hearing his question, Sage looked at the rearview mirror and retorted, "Which rule says I can't have a meal with him?"

Her words drew a hint of coldness out of Ian's handsome face. "Sage, you know I don't get along with him. Are you deliberately getting close to him to provoke me?"

She chuckled and replied, "Are you provoked?"

"You wish. If you want to be reckless, go ahead! But if you suffer because of him, don't expect any sympathy from me!"

Again, she chuckled and said, "You'd better focus on yourself and your

confidante. My affairs are none of your concern.

With that, she withdrew her gaze and refused to talk to him anymore. Ian remained silent, and his expression was stern.

Back at Solaris Estate, Sage went upstairs and took out a blanket from the closet. With only a dozen more days left, she decided not to bother moving things

around.

If Ian wanted to sleep here, he could. She would just go to the guest room.

As she approached the door, Ian's tall figure stopped in front of her, blocking her way. "Where are you going?"

"To the guest room."

"Tell me, why are we not on speaking terms again?"

She glanced at him and replied, "I don't have time to play the role of a normal couple with you. Leave me alone."

"Sure. But if you don't want to pretend anymore," he said as he began to dial Linda's number, "you should explain to Grandma first that it's not me who forced you to sleep in the guest room."

Sage was rendered speechless. How could she explain this to Linda? Owen and

Susan had just gone to trouble her recently, and she didn't want to upset her

further.

"A dozen more days. Just a dozen more days. The flies," she repeated silently to herself. She then turned to toss the blanket onto the bed. "We'll each use our own

blanket."

After washing up, she wrapped herself in her blanket and lay down on the edge of the bed. It was her first time consciously lying on such a big bed with Ian, and it felt slightly awkward.

Fortunately, he didn't immediately come back to the bedroom but instead stayed busy in his study. Sage tried to stay alert. But eventually, she fell asleep.

The next day, when she woke up, she found herself still under her blanket. However, she was now lying in the center of the bed. Perhaps it was her imagination, but she thought that she could smell Ian on her blanket.

She sniffed it and found the smell to be quite faint. Looking at the indentation on the pillow next to her and the smoothed-out blanket, it seemed that Ian had encroached into her space.

She was glad that he returned to his room after she had fallen asleep. That way, she managed to avoid any awkwardness.

When she went downstairs, she learned from Wanda that Ian had gone on a business trip and wouldn't be back for two days. She felt somewhat relieved to hear that she wouldn't have to see him for another two days.

Tiana was supposed to have returned to the country, so Sage called her to arrange a meal. However, Tiana said she needed to tidy up her home and accompany her in-laws, so she couldn't meet up with Sage.

"I've been away for over ten days. Although my in-laws didn't say anything, it's obvious they're not pleased. Even after buying them gifts, they're still giving me the cold shoulder," she said helplessly.

"You're fortunate in this aspect since you don't have to worry about your relationship with your in-laws."

Indeed, Sage didn't need to worry about that. Ian's parents were both abroad.

Apart from video calls, she hadn't even seen them yet.

She had heard about the strained relationship between Ian's parents. When he was only ten years old, his mother decided to migrate overseas with their newborn daughter.

Although they didn't get a divorce, they had been living separately ever since. A I been living separately ever since. A

few years ago, after Ian's father fell seriously ill, he entrusted Holcomb Corporation to Ian and went abroad himself.

His feelings toward his parents were frosty, so he rarely contacted them.