

A Farewell 161

Chapter 161

Sage was confused by the fuss Tiana kicked up. She asked, "What do you mean?" She thought her drunk incident had blown over.

Someone shared a video of you drumming at the bar last night. Everyone's talking about you! They say you're pretty and sassy!" Tiana, eager for Sage to see the news, urged, "Go watch it on your tablet! Now!"

Speechless, Sage turned on the tablet and quickly found the video of her drum performance going viral online.

She tapped on the video, which was edited to show only the climax of her performance. The clip lasted for around one minute.

In the clip, she spread her arms and drummed as she immersed herself in the music. From this perspective, she did appear lovely and cool. In the comments, netizens showered her with compliments.

"She's so cool!"

"Dazzling!"

"I'm in love!"

Sage was glad that people liked her and her performance. Still, she knew not to take her fame too seriously because online love was always short-lived. Instead, she regarded her accidental fame as nothing more than 15 minutes of fame.

"Too bad I didn't get to watch it live!" Tiana sounded very disgruntled. "You little bitch! How could you perform without inviting me?"

Tiana was two years older than Sage, so they weren't college mates. In fact, Tiana had only ever been to Sage's campus to swoon over the handsome freshmen.

Although she never spotted any hot guys, she found herself attracted to Sage, who was a cool young lady back then. She asked Sage for her contact number, and that was how they became

friends.

Unfortunately, Sage stopped playing the drums after they met, and Tiana never had the chance to enjoy Sage's sassy performance. Therefore, she excitedly called Sage when she saw the video online.

She remarked, "You're still so good even after all these years! Would you consider performing at bars? I'll show up daily to support you!"

Sage rolled her eyes and shattered her friend's hopes. "You're always busy with your husband and your in-laws. Besides, you have a job. You won't have the time to support me."

Tiana choked on her anger. She vowed, "I'll make time for you if you perform on stage!"

Sage knew that Tiana truly enjoyed her drum performance, so she tried coaxing Tiana into going with a plan that she had just thought of. "I played the drums last night because I was in the mood. I had so much fun with Michael and his bandmates. When you're free, let's visit that bar. I'll perform for you."

"That sounds more like it!" Tiana snorted. "You're hanging out with Michael a lot lately. Did he record the video for you?"

"What are you getting at?"

"Don't

sing."

you think something's fishy? Despite being the lead singer, he'd rather film you than

Sage was rendered speechless. "Mrs. Tate, there's no rule that the lead singer must sing at every performance. It wasn't even a competition. He was allowed to let his bandmates take his place. Besides, I might be good-looking, but Michael's level-headed. Would you fall for a married person if you were him?"

"Well, I like my husband, and he's a married man!" Tiana joked.

Sage rolled her eyes and dropped the topic. She decided instead to ask Tiana for updates on Wilson. "Has that female schoolmate of Wilson reached out to him in the past few days? Any

news?"

In their past life, the said female schoolmate, Lana Gates, had been transferred to Wilson's hospital in the first week he returned from abroad. Moreover, she was a heart surgeon—just like Wilson. She would spend her breaks discussing work with Wilson, taking away his time.

from Tiana.

"I don't think so! He's been very busy after coming home. I don't have the time to ask him about it."

Chapter 162

Tiana sounded cool over the phone. "He'll be off work early tomorrow. I'll ask him by then."

She added, "I have something to do now. Let's meet over dinner if you're free tomorrow!"

"Sure." Sage stretched after ending the call with Tiana and headed to the bathroom.

She wanted to admire her new cool and sassy self in the mirror. However, she only saw a woman with tousled hair in her reflection. Her face appeared clean, with only some makeup residue in the corners of her eyes.

She had fallen asleep in the car last night, so she assumed that Ian had hastily wiped her face with a towel after carrying her into the room. Being a man, he clearly had no idea how to properly remove makeup.

Even so, she couldn't believe that he had done this. He was obviously in a foul mood at the bar last night. It was already a miracle that he didn't confront her. Why would he patiently clean her face for her?

But then, she told herself that she didn't have anything to thank him for. After all, she had taken care of him when he was drunk. She had cleaned his body and removed his clothes. countless times before... It was at that moment she realized that she was in her pajamas. Did Ian help her change?

Infuriated, she was about to call him. When she turned around to get her phone, she noticed a suspicious red mark on her nape in her reflection. She froze and pushed her hair for a better look.

away

The red mark was around the size of a thumb. Although it had been inconspicuously hidden under her hair, it was now crystal clear beneath the jarring lights. Frowning, she touched it. It felt neither painful nor itchy.

Although she had not experienced hickeys, she had seen them planted on her college

roommate's skin by her boyfriend. She remembered that those marks were dark red and hard to hide with concealer. When pressed, they were slightly painful.

Since Sage's mark did not match that description, she let out a sigh of relief and assumed that it was a bug bite.

She believed that Ian wasn't a despicable man who would take advantage of her when she was drunk. But as for the pajamas... Sage made her way downstairs.

When she saw Wanda, she asked, "Wanda, did you help me change last night?"

While cleaning the table, Wanda replied, "Yes. You passed out from the drinking, so Mr. Holcomb wanted me to help you change into your pajamas."

Sage instantly felt relieved. Thank God she didn't call Ian to ask about the pajamas, or he might have sneered and laughed at her.

"Thank you, Wanda," said Sage before heading upstairs for a bath. She did not notice Wanda hanging her head in guilt.

Calvin was in a good mood because his project proposal had been approved. Seated next to Ian in the president's office at the Holcomb Corporation's building, he suggested, "Ian, we haven't had a drink at the bar for a while. How about tonight?"

Ian was meticulously working on his emails. "I'm not free tonight."

"Well, make time for me! Even a machine needs breaks." Calvin started scrolling on his phone. Suddenly, his eyes widened in shock. "Damn, Jan! Look! It's Sage!"

Ian glanced at Calvin's phone. Indeed, there was a video of Sage drumming freely. Her hands and body moved with the rhythm as she immersed in the music. Her face was lit up with a bright smile, and her eyes twinkled passionately. She looked radiant.

"Ian, I never knew Sage could drum. She looks so cool and pretty!" gasped Calvin. "Why haven't you mentioned it to me?"

Calvin belatedly realized that he had asked a stupid question. From the look on Ian's face, Ian probably had no idea that Sage knew how to drum either.

Even if he knew, he wouldn't tell his friends anything about it due to his past aversion to Sage.

Chapter 163

"Mrs. Holcomb is stunning! That's strange... I can't believe I hadn't noticed how beautiful she was before," Calvin mumbled. "I mean... it's not that she wasn't attractive before. It's just that she didn't have this kind of confidence and personality."

Ian remained silent. In the video, Sage had on a bright smile and looked like she was enjoying herself. It was a side of her he had never seen before.

The way she twirled her drumsticks was especially captivating. It was as if she had shed all of her inhibitions. Her soul seemed to radiate an unbridled sense of freedom.

"Holy shit, Ian, check out these comments!"

Calvin excitedly read out one of them. "The person who filmed this must have a crush on her. Most people would focus on the surroundings, the technique, and the drummer's skill. But the person who filmed this only filmed the drummer's smile and the twinkle in her eyes. It's hard to believe otherwise."

After he finished, he continued scrolling excitedly. "Look! There are others who agree with this person!"

"Damn, you're so observant! I was wondering why I couldn't stop myself from smiling. It's because this video is full of love!!

"Ian-" Calvin was about to read the other comments to Ian, but Ian snatched his phone away

and turned the video off.

"Ignore them! You can't possibly believe all the nonsense that these netizens spout!" Undeterred, Calvin wanted to see what everyone else's comments were.

However, Ian hit him where it hurt. Just because your proposal was approved doesn't mean it's all smooth sailing from here on out

Calvin was rendered speechless. "Oh come on, Ian," he groaned. "No wonder Mrs. Holcomb's been glowing ever since she decided to divorce you. You're too much of an ice block."

Ian's expression darkened as he pressed the intercom. "Send two security guards over here and escort Mr. Luther out."

Calvin hastily apologized. "I was wrong! I shouldn't have said that! Please give me another chance, Ian." Ian didn't budge, nor did he rescind his order.

Calvin leaned over and said earnestly, "I know what I said wasn't nice, Ian, but don't you sense the urgency? Don't you want to patch things up with Mrs. Holcomb?"

Ian stiffened and leaned over to cancel his orders.

Calvin wasn't the least bit surprised. It was clear as day that Sage was no longer interested in Ian. Ian, on the other hand, clearly wanted to patch things up with Sage, even though he was too proud to admit it.

The biggest issue was that Ian didn't know what he wanted. Hence, as his best friend and the person who understood him the most, Calvin felt like it was his duty to help Ian.

"Ian, do you know who filmed this video?" he couldn't help but ask.

Ian kicked his chair and snapped, "Get to the point or get the hell out of here!"

Calvin guessed that he did and that he didn't like the person who had done it. Calvin scooted over. "Be honest with me, Ian. Do you have feelings for her?"

Ian's eyes darkened, and he leaned over the table again.

“Wait! This is a serious question!” Calvin blurted out. “You need to figure out how you feel about her first.”

Ian reluctantly set his foot down and said impatiently, “Marriage and divorce are both a hassle. I have enough going on. I don’t need more things on my plate.”

“I’m asking about your feelings,” Calvin repeated. “Think about it. How do you feel about her?”

Ian frowned. “Marriage is a practical arrangement. It’s not a matter of love.”

Calvin was rendered speechless. “Let me rephrase that. Would you be willing to let her go if you got divorced? Have you ever considered marrying someone else?”

Chapter 164

Ian felt uncomfortable when he heard Calvin’s questioning. He was vehemently opposed to

both divorce and remarriage.

He hadn’t thought much of it when Sage brought up the subject of divorce a month ago. He was prepared to let her have a divorce if she wanted one. After all, it would save him a lot of trouble. But now, his feelings had taken a complete turn.

“Well?”

Calvin asked after a while.

“I haven’t thought about that,” Ian said with a frown. “I’m just used to having her as my wife since we’ve been married for over a year. My grandmother is also pleased with her. There’s no need to go so far as to get a divorce.”

Calvin nodded in understanding. So Ian didn't want to get divorced! "Have you ever thought about marrying someone else after the divorce?" he asked.

Ian snapped, "Why would I want to go through it all again?"

Calvin remained unflinching, and he noted that Ian had not developed feelings for anyone else despite his issues with Sage.

He let out a soft sigh. "Ian, if you don't want to get a divorce, you'll have to find a way to win your wife back. Women are very emotional and can fall head over heels for you even with the smallest gesture. However, they can also shut down and distance themselves just as fast,

"Bullshit!" Ian was displeased with Calvin's presumptions.

Just yesterday, Sage reminded her aunt that he doesn't tolerate spice well. She also mentioned that no other man could hold a candle to him during the spat with her cousin in the restroom.

Ian adjusted his collar and tie, revealing a dainty tie clip. "Sage gave me this yesterday. Why would she do that if she has no feelings for me?"

Calvin looked at his tie clip and asked, "Why do I get the feeling that this isn't something she chose?"

"How'd you know? You've never received a gift from Sage" Ian scowled. "I bet you've never even received a gift from a woman, Mr. Know-It-All in matters of the heart."

"Ian... there's no need for insults," Calvin said.

Even though he hadn't received any gifts from Sage, he knew what she liked from the way she dressed.

Ian looked like he wasn't willing to listen at the moment, and Calvin was worried that Ian would flip out if he told him the truth. So, he chose to change the topic.

“So... are you saying that Mrs. Holcomb still has feelings for you and did not mean it when she said she wanted a divorce?”

for him. However, it

Ian was stumped. Initially, he was convinced that Sage still hadn't seem like she was faking her happiness when she got her hands on the divorce agreement.

He couldn't help but be frustrated when he thought about it. “I have no idea why she suddenly wants to get a divorce. When I asked her what was wrong, she told me that the fact that I was unaware was what was wrong.”

Women were such troublesome creatures. Ian was frustrated because Sage refused to speak her mind and instead expected him to guess what the problem was.

“How am I supposed to know if she won't tell me?” Ian snarled.

“Well... let's not forget that you carried an injured Ivy away in front of everyone and left her all alone in the banquet hall at your company's last party. That wasn't cool. I'm sure you didn't explain yourself to her or check to see if she was okay after the incident, either.”

“What could she possibly be upset about?” Ian fumed. “She used her position as my wife to bring the person in charge of Mimosa to the party. Plus, she didn't even give two shits after such a serious accident happened! She just kept drinking and advertising her liquor. I didn't even blame her for that. I let her do whatever she wanted. So why the fuck should I explain myself to her?”

Chapter 165

Calvin pointed out, “Ian, regardless of what she did afterward, the fact is that you left her there and took off with another woman.”

Ian didn't get what the big deal was. “Ivy's injury was severe. I didn't have time to attend to Sage. Plus, she wasn't injured anyway. Why couldn't she go home on her own?”

Calvin sighed inwardly. How could Ian ever win his wife back with this kind of mindset? He was hopeless.

“Mrs. Holcomb is a woman, Ian, and an accident happened at the banquet. I’m sure she must’ve been scared, even if she wasn’t physically hurt. How could you leave her behind?”

“Did you even think about how she felt? There were so many of your employees and business partners there too. Didn’t you think they would have laughed at her?”

Ian’s forehead creased when he heard that. He instantly thought of the photo of Sage standing on the dance floor attached to that viral post.

Her face was crestfallen, and her large eyes were dull as she stood alone in the crowd. The post also claimed that she was being neglected, that her marriage was just a façade, and that she was actually getting a divorce.

When he came across the subsequent topics about Mimosa, he assumed that it was part of Sage’s plan. However, he hadn’t considered the fact that if it hadn’t been her doing, then she would’ve been subjected to ridicule and mockery

Mulling it over, Ian couldn’t shake the sinking feeling he had when he first stumbled upon that tweet that night. “If she wasn’t feeling well, why didn’t she tell me?”

Calvin analyzed the situation and said reckon she thought telling you wouldn’t change anything. Moreover, Mrs. Holcomb is no pushover. She decided to go with the flow and make the best of the situation when she realized she couldn’t change public opinion. Of course, she wouldn’t bother complaining about being wronged if she benefited from it.”

The image of Sage’s tear-streaked face popped up in Ian’s mind. That night, she said she wasn’t upset and wouldn’t let herself be taken advantage of Ian couldn’t help but wonder if this was how she felt.

“So... what should I do now?” he asked with a frown.

Calvin was relieved to see that he had finally caught on. "Ian, I'm sure a lot of your employees were there that night. All of them must've looked down on Mrs. Holcomb after what you did-

Ian cut him off. "Cut the crap and just tell me what to do to fix this."

Calvin pondered for a moment. "Doesn't your company organize a lot of team-building events? Why don't you bring Mrs. Holcomb along to one of them? It would show everyone that you value her and would help her regain some respect."

"Will that work?"

"Of course! Even if it doesn't, it would still be good to take her out for some fresh air."

Ian decided to give Calvin's suggestion a shot. After all, Sage had complained in the past that he never took her out.

Sage called Michael in the afternoon before leaving for the sports complex to ask about the video. Michael told her he had recorded and sent a few videos to the group the night before. Kai thought they were good, so he edited and posted one online.

"Ms. Joyner, we didn't expect the video to blow up like this. I hope it didn't cause you any trouble."

"It's alright," she said. "I'm actually very pleased to receive so many compliments, and I had a blast playing the drums yesterday."

"There are a lot of people asking for the full version, What do you think, Ms. Joyner? Should we post it?" he asked.

Sage sighed and said, "Nah, forget it. I don't want to become an influencer. Let's just leave it at that."

"Alright." Michael respected her decision,

Chapter 166

“Did Mr. Holcomb give you a hard time when he picked you up last night?” Michael asked.

Sage felt a little embarrassed when she remembered how Ian had swept her away in public. “No, he didn’t.”

“That’s good to hear.” He fell silent after saying that.

She assumed that he was just nervous about the upcoming preliminaries, so she smiled and offered him a few words of encouragement.

However, Michael replied solemnly, “Ms. Joyner, I might not be able to help you out right now, but please know that I will support you in whatever you do.”

Sage felt warm when she realized that Michael was concerned about her. “Don’t worry. I’ll manage just fine. Please just focus on your competition.”

Sage made her way to the sports complex after hanging up. There, she practiced kickboxing and the self-defense moves that Michael had taught her. Her punches had become more powerful. Even her coach noticed her rapid progress.

Sage had been eating and sleeping well, and she could feel that her physique had improved. However, her weight hadn’t changed much. She told herself that this didn’t matter, so long as she felt good..

Sage took a shower and changed into a fresh set of clothes after her workout. As she was drying her hair and preparing to leave, she noticed Henry walking toward her. He wasn’t wearing sportswear, so it seemed like he had come specifically to see her rather than to train.

“Hey, are you here to train?” she asked.

“Nope. I’d like to invite you to a nearby cafe for a drink, Ms. Joyner.”

Sage smiled. "That won't be necessary. Please just cut to the chase."

Henry pointed to the lounge area. "Shall we go over there then?"

She nodded. "Sure."

When they sat down, he ordered two cups of coffee. "Ms. Joyner, Layla might've gotten the wrong idea when you told her that you saw a similar pair of earrings on eBay. She's been giving me the cold shoulder the last few days."

was no misunderstanding," she mused. After all, she found out who the seller was. "So... you think Layla's been acting this way because I brought it up?" Sage asked.

Henry responded, "I'm not blaming you, Ms. Joyner. But I do find it strange. I'm sure you wouldn't have to browse websites like eBay since you're so well-off. So how did you come

across a similar pair of earrings there?"

"Sometimes, when I don't like certain jewelry or handbags anymore, I sell them on eBay because I feel like it's a waste to throw them away," she explained. "I'm sure there's nothing wrong with me selling off my stuff for some extra cash, right?"

He didn't press further. Instead, he asked, "Ms. Joyner, do you not want me to be with Layla?"

Sage arched her brow. Was it that obvious?

"I have a rough idea of what your marriage is like. Layla told me about it, and I've seen some videos about you a while back. Layla also mentioned that you've always liked to compete with her for things, so I'll ask you honestly. Ms. Joyner, are you trying to use me to hurt Layla?"

Realization dawned on Sage. He was suggesting that her marriage wasn't going well, that she was lonely, and she liked to compete with Layla for things, so she must've taken a fancy to him and wanted to flirt with him.

No wonder her cousin had such thoughts. Henry must've hinted at them to her.

Sage sneered, "Why don't I give my husband a call right now, and you can tell him all about how I'm thinking about cheating on him?" Then, she immediately dialed Ian's number.

Chapter 167

Henry hastily reached out and ended the call when he heard the dial tone. "What's the meaning of this, Ms. Joyner?"

He expected Sage to be ashamed of herself after being caught red-handed. Why did she call Ian herself?

"Isn't it obvious? I wanted to give him a little scare just to see where I stand with him," she lied through her teeth.

He fell silent when he heard that. He had looked into it even though Ivy hadn't told him anything and refused to allow him to probe further. He was aware that Ian didn't care about Sage, so he assumed she was using him to get back at him and hurt Layla at the same time. After all, he had the means to do so.

Hence, he didn't mind helping Sage test Ian.

"So, you're not attempting to ruin my relationship with Layla... you're just using me?" he asked.

Sage chuckled. "Sure, whatever floats your boat. However, you're right about one thing—I don't want you to be with Layla because I don't think you're good enough for her."

His expression changed slightly when he heard that. "How am I not good enough for her?"

“I mean... you claim that you came to Haldon to start a business, but all I’ve seen is you hanging around Layla.”

She paused before continuing, “I’m sure you’ve seen her admiration for her brother-in-law at the parking lot last time. That is the reason why I believe she’d only fancy a guy who’s got his career together.”

Sage brought this up on purpose because she vaguely remembered her aunt bragging about Layla’s boyfriend in her previous life, claiming that he was not only wealthy but also extremely capable. He had acquired the distribution rights for a drug and received an investment shortly after he arrived in Haldon.

However, Ivy probably hadn’t had the time to plan these things in this life, so Henry hadn’t secured that distribution yet.

Sage wanted to push Henry into desiring rapid success in his career. Then, Ivy would have to start considering this issue. After all, she wanted them to feel this urgency.

Sure enough, his expression darkened after he heard that. “I just haven’t found the right business opportunity yet, Ms. Joyner. I’m not as carefree as you think. I will prove myself to you and Layla!”

1.2

Sage smiled. “I’m sure not only Layla will be impressed if you succeed, but so will my uncle and aunt. However, talk is cheap. I hope you don’t let Layla look down on you again.”

Even though he was displeased by her condescending words, he didn’t let it show. He maintained his composure and stood up. “Do you need a ride home, Ms. Joyner?”

“Thanks for the offer, but I drove here,” Sage replied.

Then, she casually added, "By the way, Mr. York, didn't you say you hadn't gotten around to buying a car yet? I think it would be more convenient for you to do so since you're planning to start a business in Haldon. Don't you think so?"

Sage wanted Henry to keep asking Ivy for money. This would make them more desperate to land the project.

"Of course." Henry forced a smile. "I'll be going now, Ms. Joyner."

"Alright." Sage couldn't help but smile wryly when she realized that Ian hadn't returned her call even after Henry had left.

There were two reasons why she made that call in front of Henry. First, she wanted to use Ian to make Henry back off. Second, she was hoping it would make Ian angry enough to want a

divorce.

Thank goodness Henry hung up for her. Otherwise, Ian wouldn't have answered her call at all, and she would've been embarrassed in front of him.

Chapter 168

Sage gave Shane a call after she left the sports complex. Although she hadn't spoken to him since he used her to get in Ian's way, Shane was the best person for the job.

Even though both of them were present at Mimosa's contract signing, the crowd made it impossible for them to catch up. In no time, his lazy voice came through the phone. "What's up?"

"Do you have a minute to meet up?" she asked.

"What's this?" he asked in a flippant tone. "Have you taken an interest in me now that you've given up on Ian?"

Sage rolled her eyes and brooded, "I've just gotten rid of an arrogant guy, and here comes another shameless one. Don't worry. I'm not interested in men anymore, especially thick-skinned and conceited ones like you."

"Damn. What's got you all worked up?"

"I don't have time for this. I've got something important to talk to you about."

"Come over to my office then."

Sage hung up and went straight to Shane's office. When she walked in, he was still as carefree as ever. He had his long legs propped up on the desk as he watched a video on his phone.

Sage recognized the familiar melody of "Hotel California" and walked over to take a closer look. Shane was watching the video of her drumming.

She decided to use his words against him. "Do you have a crush on me, Mr. Morrison? Why are you watching my video alone in your office?"

He wasn't the least bit bothered when he teared fier. Instead, he arched his brow and quipped, "To be honest, I wouldn't mind if you wanted to be with me after you dump Ian. After all,

you're pretty talented."

"Thanks, but I'll pass," she said without hesitation.

"What does he have that I don't?"

"An ego check, for starters."

“Eventually, you’ll realize that having thicker skin is an advantage.” Shane tossed his phone aside. “Alright, let’s get down to business. What brings you here?”

Sage pulled out her phone and opened a document. “Does this look familiar to you?”

He glanced at it. “Isn’t that the pharmaceutical research facility Ian invested in?”

13

She inquired, “I’m sure you must be interested in this project, right? After all, you did bring me to sabotage Ian and Professor Braun’s dinner appointment the last time.”

Shane chuckled. “Oh, Mrs. Holcomb, what are you playing at? What does it matter if I’m interested in it or not? Ian has already invested in it.”

Whenever he wanted to taunt her, he would address her as “Mrs. Holcomb” instead of “Ms. Joyner”.

“Ian has only invested in its initial development. The institution will surely require a few more rounds of financing after this.”

Shane’s patience was wearing thin. “Clearly, you haven’t done your research. Ian’s investment was for personal reasons, not because he believed in the project. It’s not easy to introduce a new drug to the market. Sure, you’ll make a name for yourself and earn a lot of moolah if you succeed. But if you fail, it will all be for naught.”

In short, he wasn’t interested.

Sage was well aware that the drug had promising prospects. However, Henry’s decision to charge a high price sparked widespread criticism.

In the past, she hadn’t realized Henry had acquired distribution rights for the drug from Collin’s research institute. She had wracked her brain and spent countless hours on before coming to that conclusion.

In the past, Collin and his assistants didn't launch the drug under the name of the research institution. Instead, they let Henry handle its distribution. Sage was convinced that Ivy had

been behind this.

Hence, she wanted to secure its distribution rights first to prevent Ivy and Henry from having their way. Plus, it would be easier for her to proceed to the next step of her plan.

"There's no doubt that the drug is effective. It will be a big hit once it's launched on the

market."

Her confident demeanor prompted Shane to agree, albeit reluctantly.

Chapter 169

"Hold on, I thought you weren't joining us until next month. Why are you so eager to talk about projects now? Is there something you need from me?" Shane asked with a sly smile.

Sage didn't beat around the bush. "Yes. I do need your help with something."

"I'm listening."

Sage laid out her plans openly.

Once she was done, she was surprised that Shane didn't object outright. "Why are you setting them up? Do you have a grudge against them or something?"

“Can’t I just dislike them?” she fired back

He stared at Sage for a few seconds before grinning wickedly. “Of course, you can, and this is right up my alley. But you know, you can come straight to me for this favor. There’s no need to use the project as an excuse.”

Hearing his words, she rose to her feet. “I appreciate your generosity, Mr. Morrison. I’ll get started on the proposal then.”

“Hold on. I have one request,” Shane responded.

Sage had a bad feeling about his request. “What is it?”

His forehead creased. “Why are you giving me that look? Do you seriously think I’m interested in you? I just want you to play the drums for me after everything’s done.”

“Do I have a say in this matter?”

“No.” Shane snorted. “Please don’t take me as a fool, Ms. Joyner. After all, you’re essentially asking me to do you two favors, and all task in return is this one small favor. I’m sure I’m not asking for too much, am I?”

From his point of view, Collin’s project wasn’t a safe bet. Sage couldn’t fill him in on the details at the moment, so she nodded. “Fine, you have a deal.” It was just a drum solo. It wasn’t that big of a deal.

Ian deliberately chose to reach home during dinnertime, but Sage was nowhere to be found.

Wanda approached him and said, “Mr. Holcomb, Mrs. Holcomb went out after lunch and hasn’t returned yet.”

”

His brows drew together. Sage had been going out more often recently. In the past, no matter when he came home, Sage would always have dinner ready for him. But now, she was

returning home later than him.

“Mr. Holcomb, Mrs. Holcomb asked me about who changed her into her pajamas after she got up this morning,” Wanda continued softly.

“I see.” His expression remained stoic, but he couldn’t help but think of what had happened

last night.

Sage

had fallen asleep in the car and had not woken up even after they arrived home. He had decided not to disturb her and carried her upstairs.

She didn’t sleep very well after he laid her down, and he thought it was perhaps because her shirt was a little too tight. She would occasionally tug on the buttons of her shirt with her hands as she slept. So, he undressed her and changed her into her pajamas.

This time, she didn’t kick up a fuss like she did when she was drunk. Instead, she was docile and compliant, letting him change her clothes without any hassle.

Even though she was wearing a tank top underneath, he still drank in the sight of her neck, collarbone, and the tantalizing curve of her bosom...

“Mr. Holcomb, I believe Mrs. Holcomb is back. I can hear the sound of her car outside.”

words snapped him out of his reverie.

Wanda

Ian cleared his throat. "I see. You may go now."

Sage was exhausted. She had spent the entire afternoon exercising and dealing with Henry and Shane. Sage burst through the door and kicked off her shoes.

"Wanda, I'm back! What's for dinner?" she called out excitedly as she ran into the living room.

She was running so fast that she almost tripped over her shoes. But, a long and muscular arm caught her and steadied her before she hit the ground.

Sage realized that it was Ian. He was dressed in a shirt. His tie was still on, indicating that he had just gotten home. He didn't loosen his hold on her waist, and he was looking at her with smoldering eyes.

Chapter 170

Was he out of his mind? He used to be so uninterested in her. He wouldn't even spare her a glance when she walked around him in lingerie. Why was he holding onto her waist and giving her that look now?

Sage was so angry that she tried to shake his hand off. However, Ian seemed to have caught on and pulled her closer to him.

"What the hell are you doing?" she fumed.

His expression was unreadable. "Why did you call me? I missed it because I was in a meeting."

"Don't worry. I accidentally dialed your number."

“Were you upset that I left early at the company party last time?” he asked. There were only inches between the couple.

Sage pried his hand away. “Let go of me!”

Ian didn’t budge. “Answer me.”

Her expression hardened when she noticed that he didn’t seem willing to let go of her. “No. Could you please let me go now?”

Her tone was cold, and her eyes narrowed. It contrasted strongly with the smile on her face when she first walked into the room.

Ian was annoyed. He released Sage and said coldly, “Do you seriously want me to believe you’re not upset? It’s clear as day that you are.”

“Why does it matter to you?” Sage sneered. “This is ridiculous, Ian. It’s been ages. Why are you only bringing this up now?”

“It doesn’t matter how much time has passed. You should still explain yourself.” Calvin’s advice echoed in his mind.

Ian pursed his thin lips and said lowly, “It was just too chaotic that night. I was caught up in a whirlwind of things and didn’t have time to tend to you. It was my fault.

“Grandma told me you’ve always wanted to go to the hot springs at Greenfield. My company’s team-building event will be held there this Saturday. You’re welcome to come along.”

This was the first time Ian had ever explained himself to her. His tone and demeanor both sounded sincere. It seemed like he wanted to make it up to her by bringing her to the hot springs.

Sage might’ve been touched if he had said this the day after the incident. But now, it felt pointless.

This reminded her of a dress she wanted when she was eight but couldn't afford at the time. However, when she was twenty-eight and could get her hands on countless dresses, she didn't feel joy anymore. In short, it was too late for him to attempt to make it up to her.

"I'll pass," she declined softly. "I have other plans on Saturday."

"What other plans do you have?" Ian assumed she was just lying through her teeth.

"I'm meeting up with Tiana," she responded.

"Well, you can always invite her to come along," he suggested.

"She's not into hot springs."

Ian pursed his lips when he noticed her indifference. In the end, he headed upstairs without saying another word.

Sage could still feel the warmth of his hand on her waist. Hence, she brushed her clothes off in disgust and went into the kitchen to find Wanda. She forgot all about the incident after slurping down a bowl of chicken soup and gnawing on a couple of drumsticks.

"I'm full, Wanda. You don't have to call me for dinner later."

"Mrs. Holcomb, why don't you want to eat with Mr. Holcomb?" Wanda inquired, puzzled.

She noticed that Ian had changed a lot recently. He had moved back to the master bedroom. Last night, when he noticed that Sage wasn't home yet, he asked her to call Sage and even went to pick her up himself. He also carried her upstairs.

Because of this, Wanda wondered why Sage seemed to be drifting further from him. Now, she didn't even want to have dinner with him.

Sage couldn't be bothered to explain herself to Wanda. "I have other things to attend to." Then, she went upstairs.