

## A Farewell 211

### Chapter 211

Ian had told her that his company would be having a team–building event in Greenfield on Saturday. Sage didn't think it was a coincidence that Tiana and her colleagues had decided to come here.

Sage dragged Tiana aside and asked, "Come on! Fess up. Did you plan this ahead of time with

Ian?"

Tiana looked at her, puzzled. "What are you on about?"

"Don't play dumb with me." Sage glared at Tiana. "When did he get to you?"

After all, she had just met Tiana at the hospital the day before yesterday, and she hadn't mentioned anything about the team–building event.

Yet, all of a sudden, Tiana had decided to come here, and she didn't even tell her where they were going. She probably didn't want to arouse her suspicion.

Tiana smiled sheepishly when she noticed that Sage had figured it all out. "He didn't actually get to me. My colleagues and I genuinely planned to go on a road trip. Ian just mentioned that his company's team–building event would be held here. He invited us to join them, so I didn't stand on ceremony with him."

Sage rolled her eyes at Tiana. "I didn't take you as the kind who'd betray your best friend for a good deal'."

Tiana responded, "This isn't just any deal! Greenfield isn't cheap, you know? It's a 5–star- rated natural hot spring that's rich in minerals and can be used for recuperation and rehabilitation. It's practically made for you! Honest to God, I'm just looking out for you."

“Sure, I believe you,” Sage drawled.

“Of course! As you should.” Tiana then pushed Sage into the resort. “Besides, Ian isn’t some ferocious beast. He used to be your beloved husband!

Sage felt like punching someone in the face. “Tiana... I’ve already told you that’s all in the What’s the meaning of all this?

past.

“I’m sure you don’t have to cut off all contact with him even if you’re getting a divorce, right?” Tiana held onto her hand. “Besides, you guys are, technically, still married. You’ll still have to see him at home even if you don’t see him here.”

Even though that was true, Sage couldn’t shake the feeling that something was wrong.

“I guess it’s my fault. I let Calvin talk me into agreeing to this,” Tiana added.

Sage was surprised to learn that Calvin was in on this too. “How’d Calvin manage to talk you into this?” she asked.

Tiana explained that Calvin had brought up the incident at the bar the other night. He mentioned how Ian had gone out of his way to help them and had injured his waist in the process. Even though Ian didn’t deserve any credit for his actions, he should at least be given credit for his efforts.

Tiana continued, “He also said that Ian felt bad about leaving you behind at Holcomb Corporation’s party last time, so he wanted to take you out and cheer you up.”

Sage smiled wryly as she was reminded of how Ian had made it a point to explain himself to her regarding the incident at the party last time. She figured that it was probably Calvin’s doing as well.

Calvin sure had Ian's back. When Ian hated her, he stood up for him and gave her the boot. When Ian was reluctant to let her go, he came up with ideas to help him win her back.

"Forget about Ian. Since we're already here, we might as well enjoy ourselves!"

That made sense. Sage pinched Tiana and warned her, "Don't you dare let this happen again, or I'll give you a piece of my mind."

Tiana raised her hand and promised, "Don't worry, I won't let Ian get to me again. Unless he invites me and Wilson on a world tour that is!"

Sage was rendered speechless. The girls had been conversing for so long that Tiana's colleagues had already gone to the lobby to check-in.

"I didn't know we were staying here for the night." Sage looked at the room card in Tiana's hand. "I didn't bring anything since you didn't tell me ahead of time. I don't think I'll be able to stay over."

"No worries. A certain someone took care of it for you," Tiana quipped.

Then, she handed Sage a room card. "This is your room. Your belongings are already inside."

everything," Sage brooded.

"What would've happened if I hadn't agreed to come?" she asked.

Tiana responded, "Then, we'd just have to send your belongings back. Easy peasy."

Sage was at a loss for words.

The rooms here were all unique. It was mostly styled after the ancient Aztec civilization. Even the corridor floors were made of wooden strips. Sage's room wasn't on the same floor as Tiana's.

Sage found herself in a spacious room with a large bed when she opened the door. There were roses thoughtfully placed on the neatly made bed, and quite a few rose petals were scattered around. The various matching decorative items made the room look oddly romantic.

Her travel-size suitcase was beside the cabinet. Sage opened it and found her swimsuit, pajamas, other clothes, skincare, and makeup products. This was undoubtedly Wanda's handiwork. Sage realized that everyone, except herself, knew about her plans for the day.

Sage changed into her swimsuit and looked at herself in the mirror. She felt a little self-conscious as it was showing too much cleavage.

She had bought this swimsuit intending to wear it to the hot springs with Ian. After Ian outright rejected her, she hid it away and never wore it again. She had no idea that she would look so... seductive and sexy.

Just then, there was a knock on the door. Sage assumed it was Tiana, so she opened the door and asked, "Tiana, do you think this swimsuit-" She stopped herself short because she noticed that the person standing before her wasn't Tiana, but the tall and handsome Ian!

He was dressed casually that day, sporting a white polo shirt and black trousers. It made him look less serious than usual and more relaxed and laid back.

Shouldn't he be soaking in the hot springs or enjoying the finer things in life with his employees at this hour? Why was he here?

Ian's dark eyes were also locked onto Sage. The snugness of her swimsuit hugged her curves and made her waist look incredibly slender. The black fabric accentuated her fair and slender limbs. Sage was like a human siren, captivating and soul-stirring.

Involuntarily, his Adam's apple bobbed, and he felt parched.

“What are you looking at?” Sage snapped, realizing that she was practically half-naked in front of Ian. She covered her chest and tried to close the door, but he beat her to it. He stepped into the room and closed the door behind him.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Sage demanded, backing away warily.

Ian’s gaze was still glued to her waist. His voice was hoarse as he asked, “Are you planning to

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“No wonder she told me I didn’t have to prepare anything. Ian had already taken care of everything,” Sage brooded.

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felt when he caught her changing last time.

Her cheeks flushed with anger. "Mind your own business!" Then, she turned on her heel and went straight into the bathroom, locking the door behind her.

Why did that jerk always appear at the most inappropriate time? He didn't even say who he was when he knocked on the door. She didn't even have time to wrap herself up in a towel

before she opened the door.

Sage was too embarrassed to be seen in her current state. She hid her face in embarrassment as she thought of his dark and lust-filled gaze.

A moment later, there was a knock on the bathroom door.

"What now?" Sage snapped.

Ian sounded like he had regained his composure. "I had someone bring over another swimsuit for you. Do you want to open the door so you can take it, or should I leave it outside for you?"

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"Leave it behind the door and get out of here!" Sage fumed.

Ian stopped in his tracks for a moment. "I'll wait for you in the hallway."

Then, he set the bag down. Not long after, the door outside closed with a soft thud.

Sage breathed a sigh of relief. She smacked her flushed cheeks before slipping into the new swimsuit. The swimsuit Ian had gotten her was much more modest. It covered her shoulders and reached just below her knees. She felt much more comfortable in it.

Sage still wrapped herself in a bath towel before opening the door with her phone in hand. Sure enough, Ian was waiting for her in the hallway. His dark eyes lingered on her for a moment when she stepped out of her room.

His lips parted when he noticed her fair, slender legs, but he chose not to comment on them. Instead, he said, "Let's head downstairs. Ms. Ford and her colleagues are chilling in the hot springs."

Sage still felt a little uneasy. "I can manage on my own. I don't need you to escort me."

Ian responded, "I've booked this resort out today. Most of the people here are my employees. You're my wife, so I can't just ignore you."

"When do you not ignore me?" she mused.

"I was at fault in the past. I'll make it up to you," he said lowly as if he had read her mind. He was acting as if they hadn't fought at Holcomb Estate yesterday.

Sage couldn't be bothered about what he thought. Everything would be over in a few days, after all.

There were plenty of Holcomb Corporation's employees at the resort. Sage ran into several groups of them on her way to the hot springs. The employees greeted her and Ian politely when they saw them. Many of the women looked at her with envy.

There was no denying that Ian was a high-value man. He had a good family background, figure, and looks. Unfortunately, his character fell short.

Lost in thought, she didn't realize she had already arrived at the hot springs. The resort had a variety of hot spring pools. There was a lounge area up ahead, as well as steam rooms, a large swimming pool, and more..

Sage spotted Tiana and her colleagues munching on snacks from a distance. She was so eager to join them that she failed to notice the stairs beneath her feet. Missing a step, she stumbled and almost fell.

"Watch out!" Ian, acting instinctively, reached out to pull her back.

Her bath towel slipped off as she tumbled into his arms. His breath hitched in his throat when her soft form pressed against him. The lust he had just managed to suppress upstairs erupted anew, coursing through his veins.



Ian tightened his hold around Sage's waist. It was just as soft and slender as he had imagined.

"What on earth are you doing? Unhand me!" she whispered, struggling discreetly. "Can't you slow down and watch where you're going?" Ian chided, but he didn't let go of her. "Everyone's watching us. Let me go!" she fumed.

The couple was standing at the highest point of the hot spring area. Everyone could see them if they just looked up. He must have been out of his mind to embrace her so intimately in public.

Even though he heard her, he still didn't let go of her. Instead, he whispered huskily in her ear, "Just stay still. I'll let go of you in a moment.

Her body stiffened when she heard that, probably because she felt something hard pressing against her abdomen....

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Ian was aroused in public.

Sage's cheeks turned crimson as his erection pressed against her abdomen. The couple was locked in an embrace. There were a lot of people peering at them from the hot spring pools below. Some even pulled out their phones and took pictures of them.

Sage felt like she was going to die of embarrassment. Yet, she dared not move, as she was worried that Ian would act on his urges. How could this shameless man get an erection in public? Sage shot daggers at Ian.

Ian lifted her when he noticed her annoyed expression. He supported her buttocks with one hand and wrapped his arm around her waist before walking toward the nearest pool.

Their bodies pressed snugly against each other as he walked. His erection showed no signs of waning. Instead, it proudly asserted itself and became more prominent with each step.

Of course, she felt it. Sage was so embarrassed that even her earlobes turned red. Afraid that others would catch on, she buried her head in Jan's chest.

She shouldn't have gone that day. If only she had stayed at home, or better yet, left the moment she arrived. She shouldn't have listened to Tiana's nonsense.

There was no way she could treat Ian as if he wasn't there. There was no way she could have a good time there. All she wanted to do now was to find a hole to crawl into.

Ian caught a whiff of the sweet scent of her hair as her face was buried in his chest, and he felt like he was about to lose control.

"Why is your" Sage lifted her head from his chest when she sensed the pulsating throb of his arousal. Her cheeks were flushed red, and her eyes narrowed into slits. She was so embarrassed that she was on the verge of tears.

His heart was racing. He

control himself. "Hang in there. We're almost there," Ian said hoarsely.

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What did he mean by "hang in there"? That sounded so weird.

"You jerkface." Her face was flushed with anger as she glared at Ian. She wanted to bite bi

"We'll go straight back to our room if you give me that look again," he threatened huskily, his words laced with desire.

Sage had a feeling he would follow through on his threat if she continued to provoke him. Hence, she lowered her head in embarrassment and demanded, "Hurry up and walk faster, then!"

"I will," he murmured before planting a kiss on her hair.

Sage was sure that plenty of people had seen what had just happened. She couldn't understand how a simple trip to the hot springs had turned into such an awkward and peculiar situation.

Both of them were feeling flushed by the time they reached the edge of the hot spring pool. Ian carried her into the hot spring.

Sage was eager to swim away, but he kept his hold on her because there were a few other people in the pool.

Fortunately, those around them were astute. All of them got up and went to another pool when they noticed their boss and his wife's affectionate behavior. Sage was so embarrassed that she wanted to crawl into a hole.

Just then, Ian's phone rang. The resort's employees were very considerate, providing each guest with a waterproof, transparent phone pouch.

While he reached for his phone, she swiftly wriggled free from him and climbed out of the hot spring pool to find Tiana. However, Ian caught hold of her foot.

"What now?" Sage clenched her fists. Even though she was no match for Ian, she wouldn't show him any mercy if he dared to take advantage of her.

"Get me a towel," he said lowly. Ian hadn't changed out of his regular clothes before getting into the pool. It would be inappropriate for him to go out like that.

Sage shot daggers at him. "How am I supposed to get it for you when you're holding onto me?"

Her delicate foot was soft and smooth. It was small enough for him to cup in one hand. He let go of her when he sensed her frustration and resistance.

There were towels strewn across the poolside rack. Despite her annoyance, she took one and tossed it to Ian. Then, she wrapped another one around herself and darted away to find Tiana.

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Ian felt a twinge of regret for letting her go when he looked at Sage. Even though she was wearing a modest swimsuit, it failed to cover her slender, long legs and curves.

“Ian, are you listening?” Calvin called out again.

Ian looked away, his tone tinged with irritation. “What is it?”

“Why are you so cranky? What? Are you pent-up?” Calvin teased. Little did he know that his joke would hit a nerve.

“In the future, just call Terry when you need something. Don’t call me ever again!” Ian then hung up the phone on him.

Calvin was left hanging, puzzled. What did he do wrong? Why couldn’t he call Ian anymore?

Meanwhile, Sage found Tiana. The latter had sent her colleagues away as if she knew the former would come looking for her. Tiana sat in the rose pond, holding her phone with a grin. “What are you laughing at? You’re going to get me killed!” Sage grumbled as she eased into the pool..

“What did I do? I brought you here to soak in the hot springs, not to cozy up to Ian!” Tiana teased. “You guys hugged it out like you never wanted to let go of each other. Those who didn’t know any better would’ve thought you guys were newlyweds rather than on the brink of divorce.”

Sage’s face began to heat up again as she thought about what had just happened. Things weren’t as it seemed, but she couldn’t tell Tiana that Ian was aroused, so she had to go with her nonsense.

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“Oh, look who’s blushing now?” Tiana continued. “You have no idea how envious and jealous my colleagues were just now. The girls were squealing next to me, telling me they couldn’t take it anymore

and that they wanted to get married and fall in love. I almost went deaf!" "Cut it out!" Sage splashed water on Tiana. "It's all your fault! You tricked me into coming here, and you won't even share a room with me! I don't care. I'm sleeping with you tonight!" Even though Ian's luggage wasn't in her room, she still felt a little uneasy. After all, she wouldn't stand a chance against him if he had those urges again. It was safer to stay with

Tiana.

Tiana wiped the water off her phone pouch and refused. "No way! Wilson will be here tonight. I can't have you interrupting our quality time together!"

Sage was fuming. "But you clearly said Wilson was busy when we set off!"

"Yeah, he was tied up this morning, but he's free tonight," Tiana responded. Then, her eyes up when she noticed something. She hurriedly picked up her phone and took a closer look before exclaiming, "Look, Sage! Someone just posted a photo of you and Ian!"

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"What photo?" Sage had a bad feeling about this. She leaned over to take a look. Sure enough,

it was Ian holding her close.

In the photo, Ian was lifting her effortlessly with one hand while the other arm was wrapped around her waist. He was also lowering his head to plant a kiss on her head.

Maybe it was the angle of the shot, but a ray of sunlight shone down on them when Ian kissed her. It made the image look very aesthetically pleasing.

"Tsk tsk, with your looks, even a casual photo becomes cinematic," Tiana exclaimed. "Look at these comments! You can tell how work up everyone is."

Of course, Sage took notice. Half of the group wished they had such a connection, while the other half gushed about how beautiful and sweet she and Ian looked in the photo.

Some also said that they thought she and Ian didn't have a good relationship at the company's party last time, but it seemed as if they were mistaken. They even vowed to ship them.

Sage couldn't help but scoff about how naive these people were. All of a sudden, she realized something was amiss. She snatched Tiana's phone...

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"Isn't this Holcomb Corporation's employee group? What are you doing here?" Sage asked as she stared at Tiana.

Tiana took her phone back and continued to scroll through the comments with gusto. "It's not a work group. It's a gossip group that the employees set up separately. Calvin roped me in." Sage was amused. "Wow. Your networking skills sure are impressive. Not only are you close to Calvin, but you've also wormed your way into Holcomb Corporation, huh?"

Tiana shrugged. "I'm just here for the latest gossip. Don't worry. No one knows we're friends, so everyone here is free to speak their mind."

Sage was at a loss for words.

Meanwhile, Ivy was leafing through documents in one of the resort's rooms when she was interrupted by a series of notifications on her phone.

The wound on her forehead hadn't fully healed yet, so she couldn't risk getting it wet, let alone indulge in the saunas. Hence, she didn't join the others downstairs and instead focused on the project she had found for Henry.

Ivy picked up her phone to see what the commotion was about. Her smile instantly froze after she unlocked her phone and saw the photos of Ian and Sage. There were several photos of them hugging each other intimately. In the photos, Ian was looking at Sage tenderly.

Gripping her phone tightly, she wished she could crush it. Ivy had checked with Ian's secretary before coming here to confirm that Ian was alone. So why was Sage here? Why were she and Ian publicly displaying their affection?

Ivy forced herself to calm down and messaged Delilah. "I asked you to patch things up with Sage. Why haven't you made any progress?"

She couldn't take the initiative to do anything because no one had given her any information about Sage.

Delilah immediately gave Ivy a call. "Ms. Shekdotter, Sage is wary of me. She doesn't listen to anything I say, so we can't rush things."

"What are you going to do about it then?" Ivy asked harshly.

Delilah responded, "Don't worry. I took your advice and re-established business relations with the Joyner family. Once everything is settled, I'll visit Mr. Joyner Senior more often. Sage will surely come around then."

"Why did she suddenly distance herself from you?" Ivy inquired, her brows knitted.

Delilah answered, "I have no idea. When you posted on social media last time, I suggested we go and teach you a lesson, but she didn't budge at all. I was indignant and went alone, but she turned against me after I sent her the recorded video. Also, I feel like she's become much more intelligent and assertive."

She paused before continuing, "This time, I won't underestimate her anymore. That is why I intend to get to Mr. Joyner Senior."

Ivy had also noticed that. Sage had become much sharper. She wasn't as easily provoked anymore, and she no longer acted impulsively. She also seemed uninterested in Ian.

However, Ivy wasn't buying it. There was no way that Sage would have no feelings for Ian. She must've just become more manipulative and realized that men always wanted what they couldn't have. That must be the reason why Ian had started to see her in a different light.

Based on the current situation, it was clear that it was no longer possible to make Tan hate or distance himself from Sage.

Ivy had never been able to figure out what was on Ian's mind. Apart from being annoyed, he had never wanted to get a divorce, even though Sage had done a lot of foolish things. If he wanted a divorce, he had plenty of ways to go about it, even if his grandmother was trying to stop him.

Since it was impossible to get through to Ian, she might as well start with Sage. After all, it was much easier to get a woman to give up than a man.

Ivy calmed down, and her tone softened. "Keep up the good work, and rest assured, you'll be duly rewarded for your efforts."

"Will do. Besides, you've never let me down. Oh, by the way, I'll need your help to negotiate the terms with 'my father's friend' to seal the deal with the Joyners," Delilah said.

Ivy nodded. "I understand."

Then, she made two more phone calls before turning off her laptop and changing into a new set of clothes.

Meanwhile, Calvin arrived at Greenfield Resort. "What's the meaning of this, Ian? Why can't I call you? Do I seriously have to go through Mr. Zane to get to you?"

Ian was lounging under the sunshade and feeling very calm. He couldn't be bothered to waste his breath on Calvin. "What brings you here?" he asked lazily.

Calvin responded, "I was going to tell you I couldn't make it because I have to have dinner with my old man tonight. Yet, your words got under my skin, so I decided to come over and hash it out with you!"



## Chapter 217

Ian looked up at Calvin, who had already changed into swimming trunks and was now wearing sunglasses. He strutted around like a peacock flaunting its feathers, drawing the admiring glances of many girls.

“Are you done? If so, you’re free to go,” Ian said, dismissing him.

Unabashed, Calvin said, “Since I’ve come all this way, and it’s still early, it’d be a shame if I didn’t soak in this 5–star natural hot spring.”

Ian wasn’t the least bit surprised by his shamelessness. Plus, he couldn’t be bothered to deal with him. He simply ordered, “Stay away from me.” He found Calvin’s ostentatiousness embarrassing.

“Where’s Mrs. Holcomb, Ian?” Calvin was unfazed by his attitude. He snickered. “I heard you guys were recently seen canoodling in public. Is that true?”

The thought of Sage’s supple body and the way her cheeks flushed while she was pressed against him reignited Ian’s desire. He crossed his long legs and said, “That’s none of your business.”

“You’re so heartless, Ian. How could you prioritize hoes over bros?” Calvin lamented, “I was the one who convinced Ms. Ford to bring Mrs. Holcomb here. Yet, you’re not even willing to share such a joyous moment with me!”

“Shut up,” Ian snapped, annoyed. He looked ahead and noticed Sage and Tiana getting out of the pool and heading for the dining area. He couldn’t help but stare at Sage as she walked away. Her hair was slightly damp, her curves were accentuated, and her fair skin was glowing under the sunlight. Sage looked like a mermaid who had just emerged from the sea.

Ian had never found Sage particularly attractive in the past. Why did he suddenly think she looked so much better now? He even felt uneasy when other men’s gazes lingered on her.

Calvin followed Ian's gaze and spotted Sage and Tiana. The girls were both wrapped in towels and laughing so hard that their eyes crinkled. "Aren't you hungry, Ian? Don't you want to grab something to eat?" he asked pointedly.

Ian looked up at him. "Are you hungry?"

Calvin was aware that Ian just couldn't bring himself to admit that he wanted to be near Sage, so he nodded. "I'm starving. Would you mind grabbing a bite with me?"

Ian begrudgingly rose to his feet. "Let's go."

Calvin trotted over to Tiana and Sage and took off his sunglasses with a flourish. "Hey, ladies!" "What are you doing here, Calvin? I thought you said you were busy today," Tiana greeted

him.

Calvin felt a little dejected. After all, he was a handsome guy with a killer body. He wondered why Tiana was able to greet him so comfortably.

Sage, on the other hand, blushed and turned away when she noticed Ian. That was the kind of

reaction one would expect from a girl when she ran into a handsome guy.

Sage couldn't bring herself to look Ian in the eye. He was wearing nothing but a pair of swimming trunks and had a towel draped over his shoulders. He had broad shoulders and narrow hips. His

muscles were toned but not overly so.

Even though she had seen him shirtless before, the dim bedroom lighting made it difficult for her to get a good look at him. Sage couldn't bring herself to look at him... especially his long, powerful legs and the impressive bulge beneath his swimming trunks.

“Join us, Mr. Holcomb!” Tiana said casually.

Even though Calvin was a little hurt, his senses were still keen. “Ms. Ford, the grilled seafood over there looks amazing. Let’s get some!”

Tiana got his drift. “Sure. Sage, you should get some snacks over here with Mr. Holcomb.”

Sage hurriedly said, “I’ll go with you guys!”

“No, it’s alright. We’ve got this.” With that, Tiana and Calvin walked off, chatting away. Sage was at a loss for words.

Ian smiled when he noticed her ears turn red. “Mrs. Holcomb, would you mind getting me something to eat? After all, you know what I like.”

Sure enough, she raised her head and glared at him. “Do you not have hands? Why should I help you?”

Ian was unfazed. He walked over to her and took her plate. “Let me help you, then.”

There were a lot of Holcomb Corporation’s employees in the dining area. Even though they greeted the bickering couple respectfully, they kept sneaking glances at them.

Sage could feel their gazes on them. She assumed he was doing it on purpose. He clearly knew that there were a lot of his employees around, and that was why he approached her and acted all

chivalrously.

Sage pushed him away. “I don’t need your help. I can manage on my own.” Before she could withdraw her hand, she heard him let out a muffled groan, and she saw his forehead crease.

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Sage lowered her head and noticed a bruise on Ian's waist. He must've gotten it from bumping into the corner of the table when he carried her out of the bar.

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She didn't think much of it when Calvin mentioned it the other day. But looking at it now, the bruise stood out starkly against Ian's fair skin. Sage could only imagine how painful it must've been at the time.

"If you feel bad about it, why don't you apply the ointment for me tonight?" Ian suggested. However, Sage, who was sporting a look of concern just a moment ago, immediately rolled her eyes at him. "Dream on." He was rendered speechless.

The food was in the form of a buffet. Sage reluctantly accepted Ian's offer to carry the plates while she chose the food. Their 'loving' behavior attracted a lot of attention.

Everyone in Holcomb Corporation would undoubtedly know how deeply in love she and Ian were after that day.

Tiana and Calvin returned with several stacks of barbecue after Ian and Sage sat down at the table with their food.

"I'm starving! Soaking in the hot springs sure makes you hungry!" Tiana exclaimed as she handed Sage two enormous grilled prawns. "I got you your favorites. Aren't I considerate?" Sage was well aware that she was attempting to make amends for what had happened earlier, so she glared at Tiana. "Mhm, you are oh so considerate. Thank you!"

"Don't mention it. Let's eat!" Tiana immediately started gnawing on a drumstick.

Peeling shrimp was a bit of a chore, so Sage decided to go for a drumstick instead. After all, it was just as delicious and didn't need to be peeled.

"Mrs. Holcomb, I thought Ms. Ford said you loved grilled shrimp the most. Why aren't you eating them?" Calvin asked.

Sage took a bite of the drumstick and mumbled, "I'm too lazy to peel the shrimp."

Tiana chuckled. "Oh, she's the kind of person who finds it troublesome to peel the shrimp for herself, but she would gladly peel a whole plateful for a certain someone."

Sage glared at Tiana. "Oh, hush it you."

All of a sudden, Ian remembered that whenever he had gone home for dinner in the past, the shrimp on the plate had always been peeled. The shrimp were always arranged around the plate with decorative flowers and a small dish of condiments in the center. It looked like a work of art.

When he sat down at the table, Sage would even dip the shrimp in the condiment and place them in his bowl. Her eyes sparkled as she looked at him and said, "Ian, these shrimp are very fresh. You should have some more!"

However, he was afraid that she would send them to his office every day if she thought he liked them, so he would pick the shrimp out of his plate, throw them into the bone dish, and

coldly say, "I don't like shrimp."

Ian felt a little stuffy when he thought about the past. He reached out and took the plate of shrimp in front of Sage.

"What do you think you're doing?" Sage looked at him, puzzled.

Ian responded calmly, "I thought you didn't like to peel them?"

Sage had a feeling that Ian remembered how she used to peel them for him when he heard Tiana's words. Hence, she hastily pushed another plate of prawns in front of him and said, "That's so considerate of you, Mr. Holcomb. Why don't you peel these as well? I'd love to eat them."

She figured she wouldn't have the chance to boss fan around in the future, so she might as well make the most of this opportunity and have him serve her.

He pursed his lips and decided to peel all of them. After peeling the first one, he was about to place it on the plate when Calvin said, "Mrs. Holcomb has been wanting to eat them for a while now, Ian. Hurry up and feed her!"

Just as Sage was about to speak up, he continued, "Mrs. Holcomb, I'm sure your hands are dirty from holding the drumstick. Why don't you just sit back and let Ian serve you?"

He then winked at Ian. The latter calmly took the shrimp and brought it to Sage's mouth. Tiana and Calvin were both staring at her at that moment.

Sage had a feeling that they wouldn't be able to suppress their smiles if she continued to act coy. So, she opened her mouth and took a bite of the shrimp.

"Is it sweet?" Tiana asked.

Sage gave her a light kick under the table. "Why don't you have one and find out?"

"Oh, no. I couldn't possibly eat anymore. I'm so full just from looking at you guys," Tiana teased.

"Keep going, Ian. I'm thoroughly enjoying the show," Calvin chimed in. Tiana burst out laughing.

Ivy happened to see Ian feeding Sage when she walked over to the buffet area. It was obvious that he was indulging her, even though he was doing it begrudgingly.

Suppressing the emotions bubbling in her heart, she approached the group, who were having a good time and said, "Hi, Ian, Mrs. Holcomb, and Mr. Luther. Would you mind if I joined you?"

Sage turned to look at Ivy, who was dressed plainly and had minimal makeup. The smile on her face faded slightly as she had no intention of conversing with the woman.

Calvin was the one who responded instead. "Sorry, Ms. Shekdotter, but Mrs. Holcomb's friend is also here. Your presence might make her feel a little uncomfortable."

Ivy looked at Tiana when she heard that. "Oh, you must be Mrs. Holcomb's friend. I was busy and hadn't been able to come downstairs earlier to greet you. I apologize for that."

Tiana had never met Ivy before, but she could guess who she was from her expression and Sage's reaction.

"Ms. Shekdotter? Oh, you must be Mr. Holcomb's subordinate. Don't you think the way you address people is a little funny? I mean, you're well aware that you have to address Sage as Mrs. Holcomb. Yet, you're calling Mr. Holcomb by his first name?" Tiana couldn't help but

comment.

Sage was aware that Tiana's remark would upset Ian, but she couldn't care less and had no plans to stop Tiana.

"Ms. Ford, you might not be aware of this, but Ms. Shekdotter and Ian have known each other since they were teenagers. They are good friends, so she's used to calling him Ian," Calvin explained.

Ivy's expression remained unchanged. "Ms. Ford is right. It was my oversight. I'll be more careful next time," she said with a smile.

"Mr. Holcomb, are you free right now? I have something urgent to discuss with you." Ivy looked at Ian calmly.

Seeing the bags under her eyes, Ian knew why she had been busy lately. He couldn't bring himself to send her away, so he said, "Sit down. We can talk while we eat."

Ivy shook her head when she glanced at Sage, who was wearing a poker face. "It's alright. Let's talk like this. I'll leave as soon as I'm done, so you guys can carry

on."

"You shouldn't have come here and bothered us if you knew you would ruin everyone's mood.

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Sage was annoyed by Ivy's pretentious behavior. She then turned to Tiana and said, "Let's move, Tiana. The air seems better over there."

"Sure thing." Tiana stood up.

Ian's gaze followed Sage, but she didn't even spare him a glance. Instead, she and Tiana took a seat at the farthest table from/Ivy.

Calvin hesitated for a moment before rising to his feet. "Ian, since you and Ms. Shekdotter have business to discuss, I'll leave you guys to it. I get a headache whenever you talk about

work."

He hurried over to Sage and Tiana's table since Ian didn't stop him. Ivy apologized to Ian after the three of them left. "I'm so sorry, Ian. I didn't mean to interrupt you guys."

Ian remained unfazed. "It's fine. Sit down and tell me what's going on." Her stomach growled

as soon as she sat down. Ivy blushed in embarrassment.

"You haven't eaten?" he asked.



She nodded. "I was so busy that I forgot to eat."

"I know you're eager to succeed, but you don't need to push yourself so hard. You should forget about work now that you're here," he advised.

Ivy smiled gently. "I don't think I'm pushing myself too hard. I'm just doing what I'm supposed to do. Besides, I'm injured, and I can't be exposed to water at the moment, so I might as well work. By the way, about the project—"

"It can

wait. Eat first."

"Alright." She touched her stomach and picked up her cutlery.

Tiana couldn't help but feel annoyed as she watched Ivy eat. "That woman's so shameless! She over. I thought she said she had business to know she's not welcome here, yet she still came discuss with Ian. Why is she helping herself to our food? We're the ones who brought them!"

"Ms. Ford, Ian is only being polite to Ms. Shekdotter because he owes her and her father a favor. Ian and Ms. Shekdotter are basically bros," Calvin explained.

However, deep down, he was also cursing Ian. Why did that idiot allow Ivy to stay? It was as if he didn't notice that Sage was unhappy. Even if work was important, couldn't he have asked Ivy to get back to him later?

The atmosphere had been wonderful just now. Sage even ate the shrimp he fed her. With a bit more effort, he would've been able to win her over.

"She doesn't seem like she's just Mr. Holcomb's friend," Tiana grumbled. "She's more like two-faced bitch."

Sage chuckled inwardly. Indeed, she wasn't just Ian's friend. In her previous life, Ivy had gradually won Ian over with her gentleness.

"No! We can't just sit here and do nothing!" Tiana abruptly stood up.

Sage looked at her. "What are you planning this time?"

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"I queued for ages to get those prawns! Why should I let them have it?" Tiana said as got ready to walk over and bring the food over.

Sage stopped Tiana. "That's enough. Don't do such childish things."

"How's that childish? If she wants something to eat, she can go get her own food. Why does she get to enjoy the fruits of our labor?"

Sage found her comment amusing. After all, that phrase hit home. In her previous life, Ivy did not have any conflicts with her. She effortlessly replaced her and became Ian's wife because of his feelings for Ivy. One could say she got it all handed to her on a silver platter.

"Would you like to have those, Ms. Ford? I'll go get them for you!" Calvin volunteered enthusiastically.

Tiana had no choice but to give up on snatching the food back. "Thank you."

"Don't mention it. It's no trouble at all."

'Sage, no wonder you used to be so bothered by her presence. She's very annoying," Tiana said after Calvin left.

“Isn’t this your first time meeting her? How’re you already so repulsed by her?” Sage inquired with amusement.

Tiana responded, “The thing is... she’s too good at playing the game. She’s clearly doing things that make people uncomfortable. Yet, she manages to make men feel like she’s the victim who’s forgiving and all.”

Sage agreed with that wholeheartedly. Ivy was the kind of person who could stay calm and collected when she faced challenges and make everyone think that she was dignified and magnanimous.

“You were outstanding just now! You didn’t even flinch when Ivy came to find Ian. You even stopped me from starting a fight!” Tiana teased, “The old you would’ve flipped the table if you saw Ivy dining together with Ian.

“I probably wouldn’t have allowed them to get to that point,” Sage brooded. Sage had a feeling that the old her would’ve driven Ivy away as soon as she showed up.

“Enough about Ivy. She can do whatever she wants. After all, it has nothing to do with me. Did Wilson explain why he didn’t greet you yesterday after you got home?”

Tiana shook her head. “He’s so busy every day... There’s no way he’d remember such a small thing. It’s just like I said, there were too many people around, and he would have inconvenienced everyone if he stopped in his tracks.”

“Tiana, you’re sharp as a tack. Why can’t you see that there’s a problem with the way you and your husband interact?” Sage asked.

“What’s the problem?” Tiana smiled contentedly. “I know we aren’t as lovey–dovey as other couples, but he’s just like that. He doesn’t care much about things outside of work. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been able to nab a high–value man like him.”

Sage was rendered speechless. People who were blinded by love sure did have their unique way of looking at things. She didn’t want to push Tiana any further since she seemed content. “Look at you, all free to worry about my affairs now,” Tiana teased. “By the way, thanks for reminding me to get a gold bracelet for my mother–in–law last time.

“When I accompanied her to visit our relatives the other day, someone complimented the bracelet’s quality and said it fit her very well. She was so pleased that she gave me a gold necklace when we got home!” However, she still nagged her to have a baby after that.

In her previous life, Tiana’s mother-in-law did not treat her well, let alone give her jewelry. In this life, Wilson’s first love didn’t get transferred to his hospital, and his parents weren’t giving Tiana such a hard time, which was a good change. Sage felt slightly relieved.

After Calvin brought over some more food, the three of them had a good time eating and chatting. The time flew by, and Ian and Ivy were nowhere to be seen. As they were finishing up, Calvin’s phone pinged.

“Ian sent me a message saying that he needed to handle some paperwork, so he went back to his room.”

Then, he said, “Mrs. Holcomb, Ms. Ford, I have to head back to prepare for dinner with my father now. Let’s hang out together next time.”