Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1311

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1311

This time, she finally received an answer to her calls.

Toby's low voice sounded from behind her. "I'm here."

Sonia hurriedly turned around. After seeing him walking over with a solemn face, she let out a breath of relief before hurriedly asking, "Where did you go? Do you know that there's a fire outside?"

"I do." He swept a glance at the gates of the factory behind her.

The crimson flames had already spread to the small ventilation windows above the gates. Anyone would be able to notice it as long as they weren't blind.

"I left earlier because I heard something, and I went to take a look. Then, I saw that someone had locked the back door and set a fire outside," he replied with a dark look on his face.

Alarmed by his words, she repeated, "What? Someone set the back door on fire as well?"

Toby nodded.

Sonia became even more nervous. "Same here. I couldn't open the entrance with the remote key at all."

"Let's go and look at the other exits." Although Toby was furious that someone had started a fire, he was doing a better job keeping his composure than her. He took her hand in his before hurrying to look for other exits.

Without further ado, Sonia picked up her pace to match his. The main entrance and the back door were locked, so they could only pin their hopes on the fact that the other side entrances and some of the shorter windows hadn't been locked as well.

They soon arrived at a side entrance, where the fire outside was even bigger. Here, they could hear the crackling of the burning embers and could even feel the scorching heat of the flames. As Sonia looked at the side entrance in front of her, a bad feeling instantly emerged in her heart.

The structure of the factory was essentially metal. And reasonably speaking, if the fire was only lit at the front gate and back door, it would not have spread here so quickly.

Under normal circumstances, they were at the very center of the factory, and as the main and back entrances were at two opposite ends, the sound of the fire shouldn't be heard from the side entrance.

However, they were able to hear the sound of crackling flames and feel the temperature of the fire clearly from the side entrance. Evidently, someone had poured gasoline and set a fire outside the side entrance. Hence, she now suspected that this side entrance had also been tampered with.

Toby shared her sentiments as well, and his expression darkened even further. Although he suspected that the side entrance had been destroyed and they were unable to leave, they still had to give it a go as they were already there. After all, there might be exceptions.

Sonia had the same thoughts as him, and she immediately reached out to unlock the side entrance. However, the moment her hand came in contact with the metal, the heat immediately caused her to yelp in pain and hurriedly pull her hand back. Her face turned pale even.

"What's wrong?" Toby hurriedly grabbed her hand to examine it.

Sonia spread her palms open with red eyes, revealing her skin that had turned red from the heat. "I burned myself. I can't touch the lock; it's too hot."

Toby pursed his lips bitterly. "It seems that this place has been set on fire for a long time, or the lock wouldn't have become hot enough to burn someone at a single touch in such a short time. We can't use this exit anymore."

If a fire had been set outside, the lock would naturally have been destroyed as well, so there was no point in them being there anymore.

"Let's go somewhere else." He grabbed Sonia by her wrist, leading her to the other exits.

Now, all they could do was place their bets on the fact that the person who set the fire did not know all the exits of this factory and missed a door or a window. Only then could they escape.

As they walked, they kept calling the police. In case they weren't able to find an exit, they could only rely on external help.

In the time that followed, they continued to search for an escape route at various doors and windows, but they were all damaged and could not be opened without exception. Even after kicking with all his might, Toby could not force the doors open. Even the glass windows did not budge as they were bulletproof and could only be broken with professional equipment. However, they weren't available anywhere as the machines inside the factory were worth a fortune. All the equipment here was imported and was of high value, not to mention that this was a suburban area, which had always been a little chaotic. Hence, all the doors and windows were made with the most advanced break-resistant technology, and unless they had professional tools, it was absolutely impossible to break them with sheer strength.

All the doors and windows were destroyed, leaving no way to get out, and the remaining ones that were not destroyed were ventilation windows located several meters above their heads. These windows were too narrow and small for even a child to climb out, let alone the two adults. In other words, they were locked inside the large factory.

As the factory was vast and spanned several acres, they were both exhausted after running through all the entrances and exits. By this time, the fire outside had become bigger and nearly surrounded the entire factory. Although the fire had yet to spread indoors, it was only a matter of time before it did.

Standing in the open space inside the factory, they could feel the abnormally high temperature around them that radiated from the fires outside. Not only was the temperature spreading inside, but there were also thick clouds of black smoke.

Sonia let out a few coughs, tears rolling down her face from the intensity of her coughs.

Seeing that, Toby took out his handkerchief and covered her mouth and nose with it. "Use this, don't let the smoke get into your lungs."

This handkerchief had already been soaked with water when they were looking for the exit. Toby had a feeling that smoke would spread into the factory, so he had dampened the handkerchief earlier just for this moment. After covering her mouth and nose, Sonia instantly felt better and was no longer choking as hard.

As she pressed the handkerchief to her face, she turned to look at him with red eyes and asked, "What about you?"

Knowing that she was worried he didn't have anything to cover his nose with, Toby smiled at her before retrieving a piece of white cloth. "I have this piece of cloth that I ripped from my shirt earlier. Don't worry, I've soaked it too."

If there were a blanket nearby, he would've already soaked it and placed it over them.

Seeing that he also had something to cover his mouth and nose with, Sonia was slightly relieved, but the guilt and remorse in her heart were enough to crush her. "I'm sorry for bringing you into this mess. If I hadn't come to visit the factory, we wouldn't have to go through this at all."

"That's nonsense. I was the one who wanted to come with you; how are you bringing me into this mess?" Toby reached out and caressed her head, indicating her not to worry.

However, Sonia couldn't stop herself from overthinking, and tears rolled down her face as she said, "It's true. This is my factory, and someone set a fire here to take my life, and you got caught up in it because of me."

"How do you know that the person who started this fire is aiming for you and not me?" Toby looked at her pensively. "I'll have you know, I have more enemies than you."

"But this is my factory—"

"It doesn't matter whose place it is. What matters is the person who's present. If they're coming for me, they won't even care whose place I'm in. As long as there's a chance to lay their hands on me, they won't pass up on the opportunity. That's why you can't say that you've gotten me involved. If anything, it's more likely that I was the one who dragged you into this." Toby squeezed her hand.

At his words, Sonia gaped in silence, unable to refute him, for his words made too much sense.

"Then, who do you think it could be?" As she had been running all over the place, coupled with the fact that she had just inhaled some smoke, she felt a little dizzy and simply settled down on the ground.

In any case, all the exits were blocked. They might as well take a seat and conserve the last of their strength while waiting for help from the outside world. In the meantime, before the fire spread inside, they could even try to figure out who was behind the fire.

Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1312

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1312

Make the best of a bad situation, I guess, Sonia thought with a wry smile.

When Toby saw her sitting down, he didn't hesitate to follow suit. Though he was a bit of a germaphobe and would've never done something like sitting on the floor in the past, they were now in a desperate situation. Naturally, some of his principles needed not to be adhered to.

After taking a seat, he answered Sonia's question, "I'm not sure. I have too many enemies, from business rivals to family feuds. But if I had to narrow it down, there are

only a few people who strike me as most suspicious. One of them is Connor, and the other is the Lore Family."

"Connor and the Lore Family." Sonia lowered her eyes, repeating his words.

Toby turned the cloth around and continued, "It's not very likely that it's the Lore Family. They're now in a difficult position and they can barely save themselves, so they won't have much energy to deal with me. That leaves us with Connor. Although he's still in the hospital, he can order someone else to do his dirty work, so he's the most suspicious."

Sonia nodded, thinking that his words made sense. "Actually, I think that it might be my enemies, like the Gray Family for example."

"I don't think it's the Gray Family." Toby shook his head in disagreement.

Hearing that, she looked at him dubiously. "Why would you think so?"

"The investigation team has been investigating Triforce Enterprise. At first, they were ready to leave, but I created some trouble for the Gray Family by telling the investigation team about the collapse of the mine under Triforce Enterprise many years ago. Although they haven't found any decisive clues and evidence yet, Titus collapsed after days of panic and fear, and he was admitted to the hospital a few days ago. According to Tim, Titus may not be discharged this time and can only wait for a kidney donation. Unless he finds one, he can only await his death in the hospital. Now that Titus is rarely conscious every day, he doesn't have the energy to deal with you. Julia and Rina are all focused on him, so they don't have the time or the brains for it either."

"So, that's the case." Sonia nodded. "I really didn't know that."

For some reason, her heart inexplicably tightened a little in discomfort when she heard that Titus would most likely only be able to lie in a hospital bed until he died. However, this feeling left as quickly as it came, and it barely affected her.

"Even if it's not the Grays, what about that one person? Tina, who's been hiding without showing herself." Sonia clenched her fist.

She had a hunch that it was highly likely to be Tina.

Upon hearing the name, Toby narrowed his eyes. "It's not impossible, but here's the problem: Our decision to come to this factory was a sudden one. These people can't know where we're going before we leave, so they can't start a fire to harm us. After all, gasoline is something that must be transported here in advance and hidden away. With the size of the factory, they'd definitely need a considerable amount of gasoline, and they'd require a car to transport it. If the person who started the fire had followed us, it's unlikely that we didn't hear the car coming. And even if we did hear the car, we'd go outside to take a look. By then, wouldn't their plan fail?"

His words caused Sonia to jolt in surprise. "Are you saying that we didn't hear any cars that were transporting the gasoline because the gasoline had been transported here long before we arrived and that the reason why they did that is that the person who started the fire knew a long time ago that we were coming here?"

"Not bad." Toby nodded in approval. "That's why the person who started the fire may be someone around you. They knew beforehand that you planned on coming here, and they set everything up."

"The people around me..." Her eyes turned red as she spoke. "Quite a lot of people around me knew that I would be coming here. Besides my current secretary, the manager of the factory knew as well."

"Then, that means that one of these two people leaked your whereabouts." Toby pursed his lips.

Hearing that, Sonia clenched her fist even harder, her nails digging into her palm as she said, "They... betrayed me."

"It's not necessarily a betrayal; it's also possible that someone might have overheard it and passed it on. Either way, we'll know exactly what happened when we get out." Toby relaxed her palm, reassuring her, "Don't pinch yourself anymore. There's no medicine here; you'll get infected if you hurt yourself."

"I'm sorry." Sonia bit her lower lip and once again descended into self-loathing. "Looks like I'm still the one who dragged you into this mess. The person who started the fire was aware of my itinerary and was coming for me."

"As I said, that's not necessarily true." Toby shook his head and continued, "Everybody knows that I go to your company almost every day to send you to and from work. So, to take revenge against me, someone can place a spy by your side. The person behind this knows that you'll come here in the afternoon; it's possible that they prepared the gasoline earlier just to see if I'll come with you, and if I do, then it means that their plan would be successful. If I don't show up, they can always remove the stuff. The probability is fifty-fifty, and there is no reason for them not to give it a try, just in case they hit the jackpot and succeed."

"But..." Sonia pursed her red lips.

Although she felt that he had a point, she still had a gut feeling in her heart that told her she was the reason this was happening. However, she chose not to say it aloud. She knew very well that if she did, he would find a way to take the blame on himself to cheer her up so that she would not feel guilty and blame herself.

What can I say about this man...

Just as Sonia was feeling both touched and guilty, Toby's expression suddenly turned pale as he broke into a coughing fit.

She hurriedly stopped her frantic train of thought and checked on him. "What's wrong, Toby?" she asked hastily.

He coughed a little more before turning around to look at her. His face had turned deathly pale, but he still sent her a reassuring smile. "I'm fine. The smoke is just suffocating me."

"The smoke is suffocating you?" Sonia looked around their surroundings.

Indeed, the fire had not spread inside, and it might not necessarily be able to. After all, the entire factory was essentially a metal structure, and the fire couldn't incinerate metal as the burning point could not be reached. Hence, she no longer had to worry that she and Toby would be burned alive.

This was something that she just realized. Otherwise, the fire would have gotten in long ago, and it would not have taken so long either. However, even if they would not be burned to death, if they could not get out soon enough, they would still be roasted alive by the sheer heat of the flames through the metal walls of the factory, or they would suffocate from the smoke. In short, no matter which one it was, if nobody came to save them, death was the only thing that awaited them.

Hence, Sonia had been in constant panic throughout this time. Even though the heat wasn't enough to roast them alive still, and the smoke wasn't thick enough to smolder and choke them to death yet, she was unable to put her mind at ease. She also knew that even the handkerchief in her hand would not last long, and she had to constantly soak it in water from time to time.

However, it was not time for that yet, and the handkerchief could still be used, so she was not much affected by the smoke. If so, why was Toby coughing so much from the smoke? Was it the difference in the materials of the handkerchief and his shirt? Did the shirt dry too quickly, or was it too breathable?

Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1313

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1313

"Let me check," Sonia said as she touched the cloth.

Much to her surprise, the cloth was still wet and did not dry even a little.

It meant that its air permeability was exceptional.

"Use mine instead," Sonia stated as she handed her handkerchief to him, intending to take the cloth in his hand away.

The man, however, was unwilling to do this. He held onto the cloth even tighter than before and denied her any chance of grabbing it.

That rendered her anxious and angry at the same time. "Toby Fuller, please stop thinking about me now that things have already come to this. Take a look at how bad your cough is right now!"

He was coughing so violently that his face had turned pale.

If this continued, she feared that he might cough up blood, as it always happened in the movies.

What should she do if their men weren't there to save them if that happened?

She wasn't a doctor and had no idea how to handle such a situation!

On the other hand, Toby raised his gaze and offered Sonia a feeble smile. "It's okay. It's better if I cough alone than if we both cough."

"That won't do. I am fine now; we'll talk about other things later. You are the one who is affected now, so you should take this and cover your nose and mouth! Toby Fuller, do you hear me?" Sonia yelled while insisting on moving his hand away.

She wanted to remove his hand from his mouth and nose and replace it with her handkerchief.

However, before she could do that, the man started coughing worse than before. It was as she feared—Toby started coughing up blood.

Sonia's eyes narrowed and she experienced a headrush when she saw the blood on the ground. "Blood..." she murmured tremblingly. She couldn't understand why such a thing occurred. Why is there blood? He was merely coughing a couple of times earlier! Though the coughs were bad, they weren't severe enough to cause blood to be coughed up! In the movies, people who typically cough up blood are those who have advanced lung cancer or have seriously damaged organs. But Toby has none of those! How did it become so bad that he vomited blood when he was only choking on smoke?

Sonia was utterly terrified and panicked at this point. "Why are you spitting blood, Toby? Please don't scare me!"

Seeing Sonia's anxious expression and tearful face, Toby slightly moved his lips, wanting to reassure her that he was all right. However, as soon as he opened his mouth, another mouthful of blood poured out instead of consoling words.

He was experiencing such intense pain in his heart that his entire body was shivering. At the same time, he also felt so chilly that he was having trouble breathing.

Sonia shrieked in terror once more at the sight of the blood. Why is he vomiting blood again? "Toby, what's wrong with you? Please don't frighten me..."

In a completely panicked state, she quickly hugged his unbalanced body while trying to pinch various acupuncture points on his body.

She was utterly clueless as to why he had vomited blood.

The only thing she could do now was to perform a simple first-aid procedure.

Though she was aware that this first-aid technique probably wouldn't help Toby in his current condition, she decided that it was better than doing nothing.

He, on the other hand, lay in Sonia's arms as he blinked feebly.

He didn't anticipate being in such a situation himself either, but he was aware of the precise cause of this. The heavy smoke traveled to his lungs from between his mouth and nose, then to his heart.

The lungs and the heart were connected. His heart had already been hurt after his fall from the cliff and hitting the water previously.

Though the water's surface was supple and falling into it from a great height wouldn't cause death, the surface would harden because of the tremendous surface pressure the instant a person or an object struck it from a great height.

This was why many divers had bruises on their bodies and looked as if they had been beaten up. It was exactly because of that episode that Toby's heart was damaged once more.

Tim once said that Toby's heart was incapable of being defiled by any pollution and was not in a condition to experience even the slightest damage to it anymore.

However, the smoke he had just ingested contained a variety of chemical compounds. All of those were the kind of contaminants that he could not allow to taint his heart. As a result of this, his damaged heart was overburdened and started to exhibit symptoms.

Toby initially believed that the worst thing to happen was that his heart would hurt but unexpectedly, he started coughing up blood.

It seemed that this time, in addition to Sonia being extremely terrified, Toby was also unable to keep his heart problem a secret from her any longer.

A bitter smile appeared on his face. Then, he raised his hand to caress Sonia's face, attempting to calm her down and remind her to cover her nose and mouth first.

Otherwise, she would suffer as well.

However, despite his best efforts, the excruciating pain in his heart was tormenting him to the point where he could no longer do anything. Such pain was something that people would prefer death over it.

It was only then that they could be relieved of their misery.

Hence, before his hand could touch Sonia's face, the pain in his heart deprived him of any energy in his limbs, and his hand simply fell to the ground.

Toby was in Sonia's arms and he began coughing so violently that he ran out of breath. His eyes were also blurred, and he could no longer see clearly.

Sonia started crying as the sight of him in such a fragile state worried her. "Toby, wake up! Don't sleep! Do you hear me? You cannot fall asleep!"

She was utterly terrified that if he went unconscious, he would never be able to open his eyes again, much like the way the movies frequently depicted.

If he was merely being choked by the smoke, she wouldn't be so terrified, but he vomited blood!

"Please, Toby, don't shut your eyes. Open your eyes and look at me! Please!" Sonia repeatedly shook his body helplessly.

Toby heard her pleas and felt her fear too. He truly wished to listen to her and open his eyes, but his eyelids were too heavy for him to do so.

He knew he had to let her down this time.

If Lady Luck did not smile at him, this would be the end of his life, but if by some stroke of luck, he managed to survive, he hoped that she would not be upset with him. After all, he did not deliberately refuse to open his eyes and look at her.

Toby eventually passed out while still in Sonia's arms. If not for his sporadic cough, Sonia would have thought that he had passed away.

Although he was still alive, she was concerned about his condition because she was unsure of how long he could last.

She could even feel that he was really in a bad shape.

With Toby in her arms, she shouted in despair, "Please, is anyone there?! Please help us!"

How she wished someone was outside at this very moment to save her and Toby.

At the same time, she regretted being here and her decision to let Toby come with her.

If he didn't follow her, she would be the only one trapped if a fire broke out, not him.

It was growing darker around them. The smoke was also getting thicker and Sonia, who had not been covering her nose and mouth for a while, inhaled a lot of smoke as well and began coughing. The coughs were increasingly hurting her lungs.

However, she paid no attention to her predicament and proceeded to tightly cover Toby's mouth and nose with her handkerchief so that Toby, who was already in a horrible state, might inhale less smoke.

And the price she paid was that she inhaled increasingly more smoke while her coughing was getting severe. Her eyes were also affected as tears flowed endlessly until her vision clouded and her head started spinning.

Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1314

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1314

She knew she could not last much longer too.

The smoke was simply too intense that anyone would surely pass out within seconds and suffocate to death before they could be rescued.

Even Sonia could feel that her breathing was erratic, her mind was blank, and she might lose consciousness at any moment.

But she knew she could not pass out, at least for now.

She had to hold on so that when aid arrived, she could yell for it, allowing the rescuers to swiftly find Toby and her.

If she passed out now, the rescuers would have no idea where to look for them and would have to waste a lot of time trying to locate them.

That delay would perhaps cost them both their lives!

Hence, she had to hold on.

Sonia securely held Toby in one hand while pinching her thigh with the other to keep herself awake and prevent herself from passing out.

No matter how difficult it was for her to breathe or how badly she coughed, she would not allow herself to faint.

Because it wasn't only her life at stake; Toby's life was too!

At the same time, Asher was nearby the factory, standing in the shadows. He chuckled madly as he stared at the blazing fire in front of him.

Burn! The fiercer the better!

Burn the two people inside to death!

Asher was the arsonist. He hated Sonia as well as Toby, the man who was always behind her.

From the start, Toby was not on the list of people Asher wanted to kill; it was only Sonia.

But this time, Toby was the one who insisted on getting involved. That being the case, Asher reasoned that the duo could both meet their death together.

Toby deserves this for constantly supporting that woman, enabling her to tightly grip all the power.

Without him, that woman would not be my match at all. I could have chased her out from Paradigm long ago!

So, Toby Fuller is my enemy as well.

Asher was giddy with joy at having killed both of his adversaries at once.

However, at this very moment, firefighter sirens began to sound not far away.

Asher's face turned from one of excitement to one of disappointment as he turned his head to look in the direction of the sirens.

When he saw a few firefighter trucks making their way toward the factory, he was outrageous. This meant that someone was coming to rescue Sonia and Toby, signifying the failure of his plan.

"Damn it!" Asher angrily yelled.

He knew they would call the police, but he did not take it to heart as he thought that the police would not be coming anytime soon since they were in a rural region.

Furthermore, it was now rush hour and there were traffic jams everywhere. It was entirely possible that when the police arrived, the factory had collapsed and the couple Asher hated was burned to ashes.

As such, he was not at all concerned that they would call the police.

But things didn't turn out the way he had hoped. The police showed up quickly after Toby and Sonia made their report.

The factory had just been surrounded by fire on its exterior and the fire had not yet spread inside. The factory was spacious, and it seemed possible that neither Sonia nor Toby had yet experienced anything fatal.

That enraged Asher, but he knew there was nothing he could do to alter the situation.

He could only find some solace in the fact that even if the two of them inside hadn't yet died, they would surely be suffocating.

The most important thing for him now was to leave this place right away. If he stayed any longer, things would turn ugly very quickly.

He had to escape now so that he would have the chance to deal with them in the future.

Hence, Asher gave the firefighter trucks one last gloomy glance before crouching down and going toward the direction where his car was at.

Not long after he left, the firefighter trucks stopped in front of the factory and the firefighters hurried down to put out the flames and begin their rescue.

Tom was here as well. When he saw the blazing flames, sweat broke out all over his head as he quickly raced to the front and shouted for both Sonia and Toby with his loudspeaker.

At the same time, Sonia had already reached her limits. Her head and eyelids were all too heavy for her.

She looked at Toby, her expression dejected. Though her vision was already blurry, and it made it difficult for her to see clearly, she continued to fix her gaze firmly on the man.

Caressing Toby's scorching face, she mumbled with a bitter smile, "It seems that we are unable to get out now and will perish here. I am sorry to have implicated you..."

Truth was, Sonia had no fear of dying.

But she was afraid of implicating others. She was also concerned about how those still alive would feel if she or Toby passed away.

Grandma, Toby's parents, and the rest will undoubtedly be devastated whereas Asher, Connor, and the Grays would be so happy!

"I genuinely have never thought that I would die in such an aggrieved way," Sonia said to herself while trying to draw a breath with her mouth, which made her cough even more.

But that was all she could do. Her nose was wholly blocked, and no air could go through, which was why she could only breathe with her mouth.

She had anticipated her demise—be it from natural causes, a disease, or even the Grays when she was competing with them.

However, it had never occurred to her that she would die in a fire that one of her adversaries had started rather than any one of the causes she considered possible.

What an irony.

Her body began to crumble as she could no longer hang on.

At this instant, she vaguely heard a sound.

What sound is that?

Sonia's mind was blurry, and she could not reason what sound that was.

But that wasn't the point. The crucial thing was that she heard something outside!

She had no idea whether the sound came from the arsonist or someone else, but this remained a hope for her.

What if it is indeed from someone else and not the arsonist?

With this sudden rush of adrenaline, Sonia hugged Toby closer and shouted with all of her strength in the direction of the sound, "I'm here! We're here! Please save us! I will reward you greatly when we are saved!"

She yelled, but the large factory space eventually muffled her voice, preventing it from traveling out at all.

Tom, on the other hand, was becoming worried as well after receiving no response.

He had no idea how long the fire had been burning but he was aware that the longer it took, the more likely Sonia and Toby would die, especially since he was getting no response at all at the moment.

With no other option, Tom pulled out his phone and called Toby, praying in his heart that the man was carrying his phone and could answer the call.

He feared that Toby's phone was lost in the fire. If that were the case, Tom genuinely didn't know what else he could do.

"Come on... Please be alive and answer the call," he murmured while waiting for the phone to be answered.

Meanwhile, in the factory, Sonia's heart sank into despair when she noticed that there was no longer any sound coming from the outside.

There's no sound now...

It is all silent...

Has the person outside left?

Or perhaps the arsonist purposefully made a noise to give us false hope before driving us to despair when I yelled for help?

A hopeless smile appeared on Sonia's face.

We've lost all hope now.

It seems like we are destined to die here.

But why? I don't want to die just yet!

Her hopeless smile gradually turned into mocking laughter.

Suddenly, a sound rang again. This time, the sound was louder and most importantly, it seemed close, as if it rang from somewhere near them.

After some time, Sonia recognized that it was music.

Why would there be music playing nearby?

Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1315

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1315

And this music is so familiar! Where exactly is it coming from?

Sonia's mind was so foggy that she couldn't recall that the music was Toby's ringtone.

It wasn't until after the phone rang for quite a while that she finally remembered.

Oh! It's the phone!

Someone is calling Toby!

She anxiously moved her body to look for Toby's phone.

Her vision was already unclear as though a thin membrane was covering her eyes. Hence, she could only use her hearing to locate the phone.

Luckily, she managed to find the phone and answered it. "Hello?"

She had breathed in so much smoke that her voice was utterly hoarse, yet Tom on the other end of the line could still recognize her voice. "Miss Reed, it's you! You are all still alive! That's great!"

He was so happy that tears began to fall.

Throughout his entire journey here, he was genuinely concerned that something would happen to both Sonia and Toby.

Especially when he arrived and saw the raging fire, he was so terrified that he felt as though his soul was leaving him.

Now that he heard Sonia's voice, he finally felt relieved.

They are alive! That's good enough!

"Tom?" Sonia took a moment to recognize Tom's voice and when she did, she became agitated. "Tom, is that you?"

"Yes, Miss Reed. It's me!" Tom answered while nodding his head.

Sonia was nearly in tears from happiness. "Quick, Tom, come and get us now! Open the factory door. Toby has passed out and he even threw up blood just now, so please be fast!"

Tom could hear Sonia's desperation and pleas in her voice.

She sincerely hoped that someone would hurry to open the door and take Toby to the hospital.

Any delay would cost Toby his life.

When Tom heard that Toby had fainted and even vomited blood, his countenance changed as he dashed to the firefighters while shouting, "Someone fainted in the factory! Save them now!"

The firefighters were already prying open the door. When they heard that someone had fainted, they quickly sped up and severed the door lock with their machine.

In no time, the door was open. Tom wanted to rush inside to save those trapped within, but the firefighters stopped him since he did not have the tools nor the knowledge necessary to do so. The remainder of the team then hurried inside to look for those who were trapped.

Meanwhile, Sonia knew that Tom was outside when she heard the door being forced open and let out a feeble smile before finally passing out in relief.

At that moment, she knew both Toby and she wouldn't die.

She had been monitoring Toby's condition. He was still breathing, albeit weakly.

But she believed he would be fine.

They had successfully gone through so many difficult situations, and she believed that he wouldn't be defeated this time as well.

Sirens wailed loudly as the ambulance sped down the road toward First World Hospital.

Tim had earlier received Tom's call about the incident and had arranged for the emergency room to be available. He was also waiting for the ambulance at the hospital entrance and quickly hurried up when the ambulance arrived.

Sonia alighted from the ambulance first. Tim approached her to see how she was doing, but Tom stopped him. "Please check President Fuller's condition first, Dr. Lancaster. Miss Reed's condition isn't that complicated. She has inhaled too much smoke and just needs to clear her lungs. President Fuller's condition is way more serious. He vomited blood and the doctor in the ambulance said it has something to do with his heart, so please give President Fuller a check-up first!" Tom gripped Tim's sleeves tightly and pleaded with reddened eyes.

"What?" Tim wanted to shake off Tom's hands since he was a stickler for hygiene. However, as soon as he heard Tom's words, he was stunned for a while before hastily moving forward to check Toby's situation.

Toby was already put on a drip. The medical equipment in the ambulance was limited, so they could only utilize the drip to temporarily stabilize his condition.

His condition did not get any better.

Truth was, Tim wasn't concerned about Toby's condition. The only person he cared about was Sonia.

However, Toby was, after all, Sonia's lover. If anything happened to him, Sonia wouldn't be happy either.

Hence, to prevent her from becoming sorrowful in the future, Tim could only leave her aside to check on Toby first.

But of course, before he did that, he sent her to the emergency room and had already asked other doctors to check on her.

He then walked over to Toby's stretcher and examined the man. Tim's face turned grave when he checked him over.

That didn't go unnoticed. Tom's heart sank when he saw Tim's grim expression and he asked, "Dr. Lancaster, how is President Fuller?"

Tim ignored him and immediately climbed on the stretcher. Kneeling across Toby's body, he began performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the man. While he was doing so, he repeatedly yelled, "Get the resuscitation room ready!

It was more concerning to be sent to the resuscitation room than the emergency room.

Those sent to the emergency room were in critical condition and could still be saved, whereas those sent to the resuscitation room could very well die.

As such, when Tom heard that, he felt his mind turn blank and he almost collapsed to the floor.

Fortunately, throughout his many years with Toby, Tom encountered all sorts of different situations and was able to regain his composure and quickly followed behind.

News of President Fuller's situation can never be leaked. I have to stop any speculations or otherwise, the media will make a big thing out of it. There are so many different groups in the company, each harboring their own evil intentions, and once they learn about it, they will undoubtedly create trouble.

Not to mention, our rivals in the market will make things difficult for us.

As President Fuller's right-hand man, I have to get these settled before he recovers.

First, I have to calm down, Tom thought to himself. I can't collapse just because President Fuller is in a bad shape.

Who else can handle these situations if I pass out?

While keeping up with the emergency rescue team, Tom continued to make phone calls. Within minutes, he had already made multiple phone calls about the incident.

A few necessary arrangements had been made by him when Toby was sent into the resuscitation room.

Not only the public, Old Mrs. Fuller and Jean cannot know about President Fuller's condition too.

Old Mrs. Fuller is already frail. What if she becomes too agitated and passes away after knowing it?

Jean too. Though she cares about President Fuller, she is a blabbermouth. It will be troublesome if she leaks the news.

I better keep this from them both.

With his phone clutched tightly in his hand, Tom paced outside the resuscitation room, anxiously waiting for updates about Toby's condition.

At this point, a firefighter captain and a police inspector walked toward him.

Seeing them, Tom took a deep breath to calm himself before walking to them and said, "Hello."

The two officers took a glance at the resuscitation room with the red light on and asked, "How is your superior?"

"He just went in. I don't know about the actual situation yet," Tom shook his head and dejectedly answered.

"How about the other person, Miss Reed?"

"She'll be all right. She simply needs the dust in her lungs to be cleansed."

The two officers nodded when they heard that. "We are glad to hear that."

Then, the firefighter captain continued, "We are here to let you know that the fire has been put out, but the factory's exterior is completely damaged. The equipment is safe inside thanks to the largely metallic walls, but the electrical circuits and water pipelines need to be replaced."

This was the best outcome they could hope for.

They had put out numerous fires previously, but this was the first time that so many assets could be saved from a fire of this intensity.

"Noted. Thank you," Tom responded and shook the captain's hand.

Then, he looked at the inspector.

Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1316

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1316

The inspector reached his hand out, shook Tom's, and said, "Hello, Tom. I am here to brief you about the preliminary investigation of the fire."

"Please go ahead," Tom responded with a nod.

"Our experts' team examined the area and concluded that it was arson. Thirty-plus gasoline barrels, over a dozen separate footprints, the tire prints of two different lorries, as well as those of one private vehicle, have all been discovered nearby. This leads us to believe that these individuals, under the direction of the mastermind who was driving the private car, were the ones who doused the factory in gasoline and lit it ablaze.

Tom was pleased to hear such an investigation result.

After all, the police force had already done their best in deducing the total number of arsonists and the fact that there was a mastermind behind them.

"I understand, but what I want to know now is when the police will be able to identify the mastermind. I will give the police force three days. If there is no result after three days, I will report to your superior and ask them to form a special task force to look into this matter. Inspector, I am sure you are aware that the Fuller Group is capable enough to do this," Tom stated seriously as he looked at the inspector.

His words rendered the inspector a little awkward. After all, this fell under their jurisdiction. With Tom warning them that he would send someone else to investigate if they were unable to produce any results, he was failing to show them enough respect and trust.

Hence, they had to accomplish something for Tom this time by any means necessary.

"Don't worry, Tom. Three days are more than enough. The tire prints and gasoline barrels are the key to identifying those offenders. We will pass the barrels to the Identification Bureau for them to scan any fingerprints on them. If they can't find any, we will then look into where the barrels were purchased. Once we find the seller, it won't take long for us to identify the purchaser. The same holds for the tire prints. Though the lorries are quite difficult to locate, the private vehicle is different. Our preliminary investigation suggests that the car is a Rolls-Royce. Although it is not of the highest grade, it still costs a few million and only a few people in Seafield can afford it. As long as we thoroughly verify all the purchasers within the country, the mastermind will be revealed. Rest assured that we will present you and President Fuller with a satisfying outcome."

After hearing what the inspector said, Tom finally adopted a nicer demeanor and said apologetically, "Inspector, I apologize for my inappropriate attitude toward you earlier. Given my superior's current state, I desperately want to find the mastermind, hence the agitated attitude. Please bear with me and don't take it to heart."

The inspector's annoyance faded away after he heard Tom's apology. "It's fine. We understand how you're feeling now. Don't worry; we will surely get the mastermind in three days."

"I'll leave it to you, then," Tom said as he bowed to them. Then, as if he suddenly thought of something, he said, "Oh, and one more thing—please don't leak this matter out."

"Don't worry, Tom. We would've kept this incident under wraps even without you reminding us to do so. After all, we won't reveal anything before we get the matter fully investigated. Making it public serves no purpose for our investigation."

'That's good."

Tom then sent the both of them to the elevator before turning around and returning to the outside of the resuscitation room, waiting for Toby to be released.

And of course, he kept himself occupied too. While waiting, he made all the necessary arrangements to conceal the incident.

Fortunately, Sonia's factory was built in a quiet place in a rural area and had not begun its operations yet. Hence, there were no witnesses as no one was around.

Someone from the museum nearby might have seen the smoke, but this was something he could settle by making several calls.

Whatever happened, he could not allow the fire, and the fact that Sonia and Toby were hurt in it, to be known to the public.

Otherwise, all sorts of issues would crop up.

When he finished contacting the person from Paradigm, who was the last on his list to contact, he finally felt relieved. Putting his phone down, he raised his head and looked at the door of the resuscitation room.

He had no idea when Toby would be released, but from Tim's solemn expression earlier, it appeared that the resuscitation process would take some time.

Hence, Tom decided to head to the emergency section first.

President Fuller loves Miss Reed with all his heart and soul. Thus, I must take note of Miss Reed's condition as well.

Or else, I will be in big trouble if President Fuller asks me about Miss Reed when he wakes up later.

With this in his mind, Tom rubbed his temples before tiredly rushing to the emergency department.

It was already past 9.00PM but he had not eaten yet. He had been running around all day, so he was very hungry and worn out.

But even so, he was unable to relax and have a meal. He was in no mood for those when Toby and Sonia were both still in serious condition.

Luckily for Tom, the moment he came to the emergency department, the door to the room opened.

Seeing that, Tom immediately grabbed the elbow of one of the nurses who came out and asked, "Hi, how's the condition of the patient inside?"

Pulling her arm away from his grasp, she commented, "Don't worry. The patient inside is fine. She had a respiratory infection and lung blockage as a result of inhaling too much carbon dioxide and other chemicals. We have cleared her lungs and respiratory tract, so she is fine now. She will recover after a few days of rest. However, her eyes were affected quite badly and she will need to undergo special treatment. Even if she recovers from the treatment, her vision will still be impaired and she will need to wear special glasses or have a cornea transplant."

Tom was taken aback. "That's very serious!"

A cornea transplant?

"Yes." The nurse nodded and added, "The usual response when our eyes are being exposed to strong smoke is to close them. However, the condition of this woman's eyes shows that she had opened her eyes throughout the entire incident."

Tom remained silent and he felt melancholic upon hearing that.

It's not because she wasn't afraid. It was surely because of President Fuller.

President Fuller must have passed out in Miss Reed's arms. She was afraid that she could not monitor his situation if she closed her eyes, hence she forced her eyes open for the entire time despite feeling uncomfortable.

This couple...

"I see." Tom looked at the emergency room behind the nurse and asked, "She will be sent to the ward later, right?"

The nurse nodded in response. "Yes. She is already out of danger and we will send her to the regular ward later."

"All right. I'll complete the admission procedure, then," Tom said before turning around and leaving the emergency room.

He then arranged for two first-class wards for Sonia and Toby. Soon after, Sonia was brought in.

Tom stayed with her for a while and decided to hire a woman helper to look after Sonia. After all, it wasn't appropriate for a man like him to look after her.

After doing everything he could and making sure that Sonia would be fine after recuperating, he left the ward in relief and went back to the area outside the resuscitation room.

Finally, after more than an hour of waiting, the red light above the door dimmed.

When Tom noticed that, he swiftly stood up. Fists tightly clenched, he intently fixed his eyes on the door.

The door was then opened. Dressed in a set of green surgical scrubs, Tim was the first to exit the room.

"Dr. Lancaster!" Tom immediately called out to him.

Tim halted his steps and removed his mask. Without waiting for Tom to ask, he reported Toby's condition. "President Fuller has been saved and is out of danger for the time being."

Instead of feeling relieved, Tom furrowed his brows even more when he heard that. "Out of danger for the time being? Do you mean that President Fuller is not completely out of danger yet?"

Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1317

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1317

"That's correct." Tim pushed his glasses up gracefully with his slim middle finger, looking like a pretentious man.

To be exact, he would be a pretentious scum if he donned a suit.

Meanwhile, Tom stumbled two steps forward as if he had taken a tremendous blow. "How could this be?" he questioned with glassy eyes.

"Why not?" Tim crossed his arms and said calmly, "Toby's heart has already been damaged due to the previous incident. Before this incident, he could still live normally for a year or two until the delivery of a replacement heart, provided he avoided all forms of stimulation and intense exercise. However, the smoke stimulated his heart and he breathed in many of the smoke's toxic components. As a result, the heart's damage worsened. If you hadn't gotten him to the hospital in time, he'd be in the morgue instead of being temporarily rescued."

Tom clutched his hair in dismay as his eyes turned red. "What will become of President Fuller?"

"He'll most likely be bedridden or in a wheelchair. Nonetheless, he is susceptible to cardiac arrest and death on the spot, and the possibilities are not slim."

Tom flushed as he heard that. "In other words, if President Fuller did not have the heart replacement operation, he would never be able to stand up again and may die at any time."

Tim nodded at that. "That's correct. I did say Toby's safety is only temporary."

As a result, despite being a man, Tom started crying.

Tim was appalled by Tom's reaction. "Stop sobbing! Toby is not yet dead. Instead of crying, you should inquire about the carrier of his predetermined heart. Kill the carrier and airlift the heart over if possible. Then, I'll replace Toby's heart right away. Your president will recover after that. That's it. He'll be admitted to the intensive care unit for observation for a few days. After that, if nothing abnormal occurs, I will consider allowing him to remain in the general ward. Alright, then. I'll take your leave. I need to check on Sonia."

He ignored Tom and departed after speaking.

Tom didn't mind that Tim was leaving because he was still thinking about what Tim had just said.

The man proposed killing the heart's carrier and transporting it to Toby for a heart transplant. Despite the remarks being frightening and cruel, Tom had no choice but to consider the suggestion.

Before the incident, Tom would have thought Tim's suggestion was too severe and he would have refused to support it.

Even if the carrier could not be cured, he had the right to life as long as he was not dead.

Furthermore, whereas Toby had two years left, the carrier only had half a year. Toby could wait for the carrier to die before taking his heart, allowing the carrier to rest in peace.

However, Tom had now changed his mind. The carrier could live for three or four months, but Toby could not. So, the carrier must...

Tom clenched his hands into fists. Please don't call me cruel. I don't want President Fuller to die.

Humans were selfish by nature. Tom admired Toby and considered him to be his best buddy. Furthermore, Toby bestowed glory and fortune on Tom. No matter what happened, Tom would never let Toby die.

As a result, Tom was forced to sacrifice the carrier.

He closed his eyes tightly as he reflected on what he had to do. When he opened his eyes again, his gaze was icy and determined.

He then took out his cell phone and dialed an international number.

The phone was answered swiftly. "Mr. Brown," the callee answered.

"How is the carrier doing?" Tom lowered his eyes, and it was hard to see his expression.

The person on the other end responded, "Same old. He is only awake for a short period each day."

"Did the doctor say how long he can live?" Tom inquired.

'Three months," the person answered after some contemplation.

"I see." Tom nodded and prompted, "Is the carrier awake now?"

"He is. He just finished eating and is talking to his family."

"All right," Tom said hoarsely before falling silent.

After a brief pause, he gritted his teeth and stated his intentions. "When the carrier's family departs, speak with the carrier. We desperately need his heart right now."

The person on the other end of the line turned pale with horror when he heard that. "What? Do you mean you want the carrier..."

"Yes." Tom nodded and muttered, "It so happens that his country is pro-euthanasia."

"I know, but—"

"There's nothing to be concerned about. He doesn't have much time left. He only has three months, so there's not much difference between living and dying. I understand this is against international law, but something has happened to President Fuller," Tom stated.

The callee was also an employee for Toby assigned to keep an eye on the carrier to ensure that the carrier's heart was not injured.

As such, the callee became concerned when he learned that Toby had been involved in an incident. "What's the matter with President Fuller?"

"His heart has been affected by external forces, but he is now being resuscitated. However, President Fuller will not last long and may perish anytime. Do you get what I'm saying? If I could, I wouldn't be so cruel, but when President Fuller's life is in jeopardy, I'd rather sacrifice others for him." Tom grimaced and clenched his teeth.

The callee understood and could relate to Tom. He would have made the same decision if it had been his choice. After all, he was also Toby's employee. "Got it. I'll take care of it."

Tom hummed and stated, "Of course, we will not be too harsh on the carrier. We must provide him with adequate compensation. We will do everything in our power to grant his wish so that he can leave without regret."

"Okay, I'll forward it on. Don't worry, Mr. Brown. Consider it done."

As soon as the callee finished speaking, he hung up the phone.

Tom also put the phone down and clutched it. Then, he lowered his eyes and whispered, "I'm sorry..."

It was the first time he had done something like this, so his conscience was troubled.

However, Tom had no regrets.

He only hoped Toby wouldn't blame him for taking the liberty.

Tom sighed and rubbed his face before concentrating on waiting for Toby to emerge and following him to the ICU.

About an hour later, Tom received a response from abroad. The carrier agreed to the request.

That was unquestionably wonderful news.

Tom finally smiled for the first time this evening.

The response was that the carrier would choose euthanasia after two days because he wanted to say farewell to his family.

In addition, the carrier's compensation option was straightforward—it was money. He desired a substantial sum of money for his family. He hoped his family would live comfortably after his death and not worry about money ever again.

They were impoverished and frequently worried about their financial status. The carrier's wife was clueless and his children were little. He had no idea if his family would survive if he died.

As such, he wanted to leave a substantial sum of money to his family before his death to ensure they would not worry about funds in the future.

That wasn't asking too much. It was reasonable in this case.

Hence, Tom consented to the proposal without hesitation. He also gave them a house in addition to money.

"Two days." Tom sighed. "President Fuller will survive after that."

Tom peered through the ICU's glass wall at Toby, who was hooked up to a ventilator. He could finally relax because the stress was gone.

As he relaxed, hunger and exhaustion hit him simultaneously, causing him to go limp and embarrassingly collapse to the ground in a heap.

Read Novel Boss Your Wife's Asking For A Divorce Again Chapter 1318

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1318

On the other hand, Asher had been secretly following the factory fire's subsequent development since his departure.

I want to know what happened to Toby and Sonia and whether they are injured or have died as I hoped! It would be preferable if they died, but I'll be happy if they are hurt too. Of course, it would be best to burn them beyond recognition.

Asher sat in front of a computer with a glass of red wine, pondering calmly while frequently refreshing the browser to read about the fire's consequences.

However, no matter how hard he looked, there was no news of a fire on the Internet.

He couldn't know how Toby and Sonia were without the news and this irritated him.

Logically speaking, that should not happen.

It was the information age. As a result, everything would be quickly uploaded on the Internet and made public.

It was unfathomable that the factory fire incident had not been widely publicized even after such a long time, given how serious it was. The media would surely have written articles on it.

Of course, Asher was no dummy. He instantly realized that someone had intervened to put out the fire and suppress the information.

As such, there was no news on the Internet.

The Fuller Group was the only entity capable of doing it. Nobody else had the authority to keep the news from leaking.

At that thought, Asher furiously banged the wine glass on the table.

Without the news and not knowing Toby and Sonia's situation, it was akin to Asher being blind and not knowing what to do next.

However, it was not the end of the world.

Asher took out his phone and called his men, asking them to go to the big hospitals and see whether they had admitted a couple rescued from a fire.

He could still figure out the couple's situation as long as he knew that.

After issuing the command, Asher made phone calls to others he knew, asking if they had heard about the fire that night.

Of course, when he asked, he skillfully avoided mentioning the incident at the Paradigm Factory. Instead, he inquired whether there was a fire anywhere that night.

However, Asher received only a negative response.

It was clear from this that the Fuller Group had rigorously prohibited the news from escaping, so much so that even the inner circle was unaware of it.

Of course, he also knew why the Fuller Group had hidden the news.

Asher intended to spread the news online to cause the company difficulties.

However, he was fully aware that he would be caught red-handed if he did this. He would be apprehended by the Internet police very quickly.

After all, only the person who started the fire would know and broadcast the news online after the company had taken such measures.

So, all he could do was helplessly watch while the Fuller Group blocked the news. He was unable to accept it.

Asher's mood plummeted after getting the news from the prior phone conversation.

They had previously asked if any of the larger hospitals had admitted patients rescued from the fire tonight, and the answer was yes.

After all, there would be fires breaking out all over the place, including Seafield.

However, the places that his guys enquired about were not the factory. The people who sought medical attention were either a family of three or elderly men, and none of them matched Toby and Sonia's descriptions.

It was the same as having no news at all.

At that point, Asher turned gloomy and he raised his head to drink the entire cup of wine in one gulp, knowing that it was impossible to know Toby and Sonia's situation that night.

Well, I'll work it out tomorrow, Asher thought with displeasure.

However, before he could inquire about Toby's and Sonia's status, he was arrested the next day at the entrance of Paradigm Co. by the police.

It surprised everyone in Paradigm and the paparazzi that waited outside regardless of the weather.

The word that the president of Paradigm Co. had been arrested quickly spread like wildfire and it became much more popular than Lynette's murder case.

"What's the problem? Another wealthy individual detained? Rich folks are frequently arrested these days."

"I'm not sure. What is the reason for this person's arrest? Is this another murder?"

"It's not impossible. These wealthy individuals are ruthless. Just wait and see. The cops will publish a statement soon and we'll know why by then."

While the netizens were discussing it, Paradigm Co.'s personnel scanned their social media. When the corporation's leaders saw it, they didn't say anything because they were also intrigued.

However, no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't determine why Asher was taken away.

Rita was the only one who knew.

The night before, Rita had gotten a call from Tom. He informed her that the factory had been set on fire. She was stunned at the time. She later discovered that Sonia had passed out in the fire. Rita was utterly frightened and wanted to see Sonia right away.

However, Tom stopped her. He stated that Sonia would be unable to work at Paradigm for some time. To avoid informing the public about the incident, as well as the news of Toby and Sonia being injured in the fire, he required Rita to explain to the company that Sonia had gone on an important business trip and was not in Seafield.

Rita was Sonia's secretary. Therefore, her words had weight and credibility among the employees.

Rita realized that if everyone knew what had happened to the chairperson, the company would panic and something horrible would happen.

As such, she obeyed Tom and forced herself to calm down to keep the company stable. She then appeared at the office early in the morning to inform everyone that Sonia had gone on a business trip.

The employees didn't give it much thought.

However, before Rita could relax, she learned that Asher had been arrested.

Asher's arrest immediately made her realize the truth about the fire last night.

"You b*stard!" Rita angrily cursed before picking up her luggage and leaving the office for Bayside Residence.

Tom suggested that once Rita had stabilized the business, she should pack some clothes and daily essentials for Sonia and send them to the hospital.

After all, Sonia was expected to be in the hospital for an extended period.

Rita moved swiftly and arrived at the hospital two hours later.

Tom was waiting for her at the elevator.

"Mr. Brown, is Miss Reed okay?" she inquired as she approached.

"Miss Reed is fine. However, her eyes were harmed. She may require surgery in the future. Don't worry, though. She will fully recover from the surgery, "Tom responded.

Rita nodded as they entered the elevator and she exhaled a sigh of relief. "That's great. Except for her eyes, she is fortunate to have escaped the fire uninjured. I can't have asked for more. Where has President Fuller gone? How is he doing?"

Tom moved his lips. He was in a bad mood and didn't say anything.

Rita's heart skipped a beat when she realized Toby's wounds might be catastrophic.

However, Rita had no idea how horrible it was.

As such, she didn't ask any more questions because doing so would make her sad.

She handed Tom one of the two bags. "This is President Fuller's stuff, Mr. Brown."

"I appreciate it." Tom nodded and accepted it.

He couldn't leave the hospital, so he asked Rita to bring the items over.

Rita waved her hand and said, "It's nothing."

The elevator arrived with a ding.

After they exited the elevator, Tom pointed to a ward in front of them. "Miss Reed is in that ward. You are welcome to visit her. She most likely hasn't awakened yet. I'll be with President Fuller for now."

With that, he turned and walked in the opposite direction.

Rita took a deep breath as she peered up at the signboard in that direction.

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Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 1319

President Fuller is in the intensive care unit?!

Rita was terrified by the realization.

That explains Mr. Brown's thunderous expression earlier. President Fuller's situation is far worse than I had anticipated. I believed he had a somewhat worse injury than Miss Reed, but it seems that it is way beyond my expectations. It's surely a potentially fatal injury. Did he get harmed because he was constantly defending Miss Reed? They were both present at the fire. Although President Fuller was seriously injured, Miss Reed was merely injured in the eye. He surely suffered the pain alone for the sake of Miss Reed. What a gentleman.

Rita grieved before returning her attention to Sonia's ward.

At that point, a middle-aged woman opened the ward door for Rita. She was the nurse Tom had hired to care for Sonia.

Rita entered the room, dropped her belongings, and then stood beside the bed to gaze at Sonia.

Sonia was deathly pale and her eyes were wrapped with gauze. It was a pitiful sight and it made Rita sad.

After Rita asked the nurse about Sonia, Tim came over in a white coat.

"Has Sonia awakened yet?" he inquired.

"Not yet," the nurse responded with a shake of her head.

Tim nodded to indicate his understanding before moving forward to check on Sonia's drip.

He decided that there was no problem with it and put his hand in his coat's pocket. "Contact us immediately when Sonia awakens."

"Will do, doctor."

Tim grunted before turning to go.

He was on his way to check on Toby.

The moment he got to work, Tim had to take care of Toby and Sonia, so it was tiring for him.

Rita didn't want to leave the hospital because she wanted to wait for Sonia to wake up so she could tell her all she had learned, especially about Asher's arrest.

As such, Rita sat by the bed to accompany Sonia. She would check the Internet now and then to see if the police had published any statements.

The visit lasted until noon when Sonia eventually reacted by coughing a couple of times in pain.

When the nurse noticed this, she quickly poured a glass of warm water.

Rita also placed her cell phone down and took a step forward. "Miss Reed."

"Rita?" Sonia inquired. She could not open her eyes, but she could hear Rita's voice.

However, her voice sounded like a pair of busted bellows. It sounded bad, raspy, and feeble. Her throat ached as she talked, and she coughed even harder.

"Miss Reed, please don't say anything and sip some water first." With the help of the nurse, Rita assisted Sonia in leaning on the bed. She then handed over the glass.

Rita took Sonia's hand at the same time so that Sonia could hold the cup correctly.

However, Sonia was becoming concerned. "What's the matter with my eyes?"

She was about to open her eyes when she realized they wouldn't open no matter what. Something, which she thought was a bandage, covered her eyes.

Her eyes were bandaged, which led her to believe that she was blind.

Am I... blind?

When she noticed Sonia becoming worried, Rita realized what was happening and quickly calmed her down. "Don't be concerned. Your vision is fine. They were smoked yesterday, so your eyes are damaged. You are currently receiving treatment, but you will be okay after that."

She did not inform Sonia that she would require eye surgery in the future.

Miss Reed is struggling. She might break down if she comes to know the truth.

Sonia was relieved to learn that her eyes were fine.

She didn't suspect Rita was lying to her and didn't want to do so either.

After all, she wanted to think nothing was wrong with her eyes. At the very least, she felt a lot better deep down.

"Please, Miss Reed, have a sip of water. Your throat will feel better, "Rita told Sonia after witnessing the latter settle down.

Sonia agreed and drank the water because she was thirsty.

She drank quickly and finished the glass in a few gulps. However, it was insufficient for her. It was only when the nurse poured a couple more drinks did Sonia feel better.

"Do you feel better?" Rita asked while taking the glass from her.

Sonia nodded weakly and leaned against the bed. "Much better."

Her throat wasn't as sore as it had been and her voice was getting better, though it still sounded scratchy.

"Am I in the hospital?" Sonia asked while touching the gauze over her eyes.

The smell of disinfectant made her conclude that she was in the hospital.

Rita nodded and responded, "Yes. You collapsed at the fire site. You were then taken to the hospital. Please be assured, though. You are fine and will be released after a few days of rest."

"And how about Toby?" Sonia inquired hastily as she clutched Rita's hand.

She was all right, but she wasn't certain about Toby.

Back then, he vomited a lot of blood.

Sonia's grip was hard, yet Rita was not upset and did not shake her off.

She knew that Sonia was concerned about Toby and was terrified of hearing unpleasant news.

That was why Sonia was so nervous.

Rita gently patted the back of Sonia's hand as she murmured, "Don't be concerned, Miss Reed. President Fuller is no longer in jeopardy…"

Rita felt bad for saying it.

After all, Toby was in the ICU. The ICU was a facility for extremely ill patients and the patients there were not necessarily safe.

Rita only said this to appease Sonia.

However, she had never been adept at lying, so whatever she said was bound to be flawed.

Of course, Sonia quickly noticed the falsehood. Although she couldn't see Rita, she raised her head to 'gaze' at her. "Are you telling the truth? Tell me what really happened to Toby, Rita."

Her tone was tense and emotional.

Why is Rita lying? Is it possible that Toby is...

Sonia felt disoriented as her heart skipped a beat. Her body trembled and she was on the verge of passing out.

It startled Rita and the nurse.

"Miss Reed!" Rita rushed to Sonia's aid.

Sonia then burst into tears.

Toby is dead! He is no longer alive!

She refused to accept this fact. However, the image of Toby collapsing after vomiting blood was still fresh in her mind.

At that time, she was worried that her beloved would leave her.

Moreover, Rita lied to her, so Sonia did not believe that Toby was all right.

Under these circumstances, it was normal for one to lie since they would not want the survivor to get upset and frustrated, especially if the said survivor was in the hospital.

This was the reason that Sonia was convinced Toby had died.

When Rita saw Sonia cry in despair and desolation, she realized Sonia had misunderstood something, so she felt embarrassed.

After all, Rita was well aware that her remarks had caused Sonia to misinterpret things.

It was ultimately her fault.

As such, Rita scratched her head in embarrassment. "Please don't cry, Miss Reed. President Fuller is still alive."

Sonia choked on her sobs before grabbing Rita's hand as if it were a lifeline. She then hurriedly inquired, "What did you say? Is Toby still alive? Are you telling me the truth? You're not lying to me, are you?"

Sonia saw a glimmer of optimism amid misery and didn't want that hope to be dashed.

Otherwise, she would be devastated.

"That is correct. What I mentioned is correct. I did not deceive you. President Fuller is still alive," Rita responded solemnly.

As a result, Sonia wept with joy as she alternated between crying and laughing.

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That's fantastic! Toby is not dead. He is still alive and well!

Sonia was trembling with joy.

After witnessing her in that state, Rita did not think she was insane. She reasoned this was because Sonia was happy.

When Sonia eventually calmed down, Rita handed her a tissue. "Miss Reed, please wipe your tears. Don't cry anymore since it's harmful to your eyes."

"Okay." Sonia took a deep breath and used the tissue to wipe away the tears that had spilled beneath the gauze. "Since Toby is not dead, why did you talk in that tone earlier?" she asked again.

"Well, President Fuller is still alive, but he is currently in the ICU," Rita replied as she touched the tip of her nose.

"ICU?" Sonia's voice abruptly raised.

"Yes." Rita gave a nod.

"What became of him? What happened? Tell me, please," Sonia hastily inquired.

However, Rita shook her head. "I have no idea what happened to President Fuller since Mr. Brown did not tell me."

"Where has Mr. Brown gone?" Sonia inquired once more.

"He's in the company of President Fuller."

"Please give me your cell phone. No, you call Mr. Brown and tell him to come over. I need to know what's going on with Toby. I won't be at ease as long as I stay oblivious about his condition." Sonia gave the order.

Then, she realized it was too slow, so she threw the blanket away from herself. "No, I'll have to find him myself."

However, as she did so, she experienced acute dizziness. She fell back on the bed in an instant.

As a result, Rita hurriedly stated, "Please, Miss Reed, calm down. You haven't eaten anything since yesterday. The doctor cleaned your lung and airway, so your body is still recovering. As a result, you're unable to travel. You should get some rest. I'll contact Mr. Brown."

Sonia also realized her body was weak, so she stopped pushing herself. "You call him, then," she said while waving her hand.

"Okay. I'll do it right now." Rita then took out her cell phone and dialed Tom's number.

When he found out Sonia was awake, he promised to visit her soon. Then, he inquired about her situation and calmly hung up the phone.

"Miss Reed, Mr. Brown will be here shortly."

"Okay." Sonia nodded.

Rita took a seat next to her. "Miss Reed, the person who ignited the fire has been apprehended by the police."

Sonia sharply raised her head when she heard that. "What did you say? Was the perpetrator apprehended?"

"That's right," Rita answered as she nodded.

"Who was it?" Sonia clenched her teeth, hating the perpetrator with a vengeance.

Toby would not be suffering if it weren't for that perpetrator!

"It's President Dafoe," Rita said as her gaze fixed on Sonia.

"Is that Asher Dafoe?" Sonia was taken aback when she heard this.

"Yes."

"That's him!"

Sonia tightened her fist as her cheeks heated with rage. "Yes, I should've considered that sooner. Asher gave me a spiteful look during our meeting yesterday. I expected him to set a trap for me during the meeting, but he didn't do anything until the end, so I laid down my guard!"

At that moment, she regretted, blamed herself, and felt guilty at the same time. All kinds of emotions tried to overwhelm her. The perpetrator was going after me, not Toby. That means I dragged Toby down.

She was heartbroken and despised Asher. "Is he in police custody?" She fisted her hand.

"Yes," Rita responded with a nod.

"How come the cops found him so soon this time?" Sonia inquired once more.

At that, Rita shook her head. "I'm not sure about that, but Mr. Brown should. You can ask him later."

Sonia grunted, indicating that she understood.

Rita continued, "Miss Reed, President Dafoe was arrested at the company's entry. Thus, this has an impact on our business. Do you want to make a statement?"

Sonia nodded. "Assume Asher Dafoe got drunk and set fire to a factory. Don't reveal the particular reason, or it would be tricky."

If the public learned that Asher intended to burn Sonia to death because he was unhappy with her, it would have a terrible impact on Paradigm.

The public image of Paradigm's executive would deteriorate, and people would loathe Paradigm, particularly the government. It was not appropriate for the company.

"Don't be concerned, Miss Reed. I see what you're saying. Mr. Brown suppressed the news last night because he was afraid the public would find out about you and President Fuller's injuries. The general public is still unaware of what had occurred," Rita stated as she picked up her phone.

"That's great," Sonia whispered.

Soon, Paradigm's statement was distributed.

Netizens following the story were surprised to learn that Asher had been drinking and burned down a factory.

"Hey, are rich people this insane?"

"He set fire to a factory at random. Well, he played with fire and burned himself."

Asher was being mocked on the internet.

Naturally, some people suspected things were not as simple as they appeared. They were persuaded that there was something they were unaware of.

Connor, too, had a feeling something was awry. "Look into that," he told his assistant in another private hospital.

After responding, Xander made a phone call. He responded after completing the call, "I've requested someone to look into it. There should be some news soon."

"Okay." Connor sat on the bed and bent his leg to place his hand on his knee. He tapped his leg with a commanding expression. "How is Anya doing?"

"She hasn't woken up since she was beaten," Xander dismissively said when asked about her.

Anya was liked by Boss, who considered her his daughter, so I assumed she would be wise. However, she is useless. Everything Boss spent on her was a waste of money.

Connor grunted, indicating that he understood. Then, with dark eyes, he continued, "This woman lied to me about the Lore Family, especially Lynette, being a decent pawn. I didn't expect the Lores to be useless, and they collapsed before I could accomplish anything. Lynette was so ridiculous that she got arrested right away. To think I trusted her and put together several plans, but they all fell through. I would have snapped her neck if she hadn't still been useful."

"There's no rush. You can still break her neck when you achieve your goal," said Xander.

Connor chuckled at that. "That's true."

Tom soon arrived at Sonia's unit in First World Hospital with Tim.

Hearing the footsteps, she knew they had arrived and instantly attempted to inquire about Toby.

On the other hand, Tim interrupted her. "There's no need to be hasty. Let me first check on your injury." As he said that, he checked on Sonia despite her impatience.

"Miss Reed, please cooperate with the examination. President Fuller won't be concerned about you when he awakens and sees you have healed."

Sonia ceased resisting as soon as those words were spoken. That's correct. Toby's character dictates he will fuss over me after he wakes up despite his injury. I need to rest so he won't be too distracted to worry about me.

As a result, she obediently lay down. The examination went considerably more smoothly in an instant.

After the examination, Tim nodded in approval. "Not bad. Except for the eyes, you will recover fully in two days."

Everyone was relieved when they heard that.

The nurse inquired what Sonia could eat to determine what she could buy for her. After the nurse left, Sonia finally asked, "Mr. Brown, how is Toby?"