

Chapter 9

"Why do you look so pale?" Thomas asked Jessamine. Then, he glanced at Thaddeus and said, "You, come with me too."

Thomas led them both into the study. His eyes were sharp enough to catch the scratches on Jessamine's arm. They were the result of the two thugs throwing her to the ground. "How did you hurt yourself there?"

Jessamine smiled demurely and said, "They don't hurt, Grandpa."

Thomas looked at Thaddeus. "I want you to tell me how Jessie got hurt there."

Thaddeus looked at Jessamine. It was only then that he noticed the scratches and bruises on her right arm. He could feel the pain even just looking at them. He found he couldn't answer Thomas' question at all.

Thaddeus recalled how he'd pinned Jessamine to the bed last night and gripped her arms tightly. She hadn't made a sound—was she that good at suppressing her pain?

Thomas started lecturing him. "Your wife's injured, yet you know nothing about it. How can you call yourself her husband? If you're not gonna dote on your wife, are you gonna let some other man do it?"

Jessamine spoke up for Thaddeus. "It really doesn't hurt, Grandpa. That's why I didn't tell him about it."

Thomas scoffed. "Honestly. When are you two gonna give me a great-grandchild?"

The atmosphere froze for a second. At that moment, Thaddeus's phone rang. He left the study to answer the call, which was from Jordan.

"Mr. Holt, I have an update on the thing you wanted me to investigate. Mrs. Holt hasn't been in contact with anyone special lately, aside from someone named Malcolm Larkin. She had a two-minute-long phone call with him.

"There's one more thing, though. She went to a bar to deliver something to Ms. Sasha last night, and she made a trip to the police station on her way home. After that, a policeman dropped her off at Jardin Estate in his own car."

Jordan paused and then continued, "Oh, Malcolm Larkin's a middle-schooler. Once Mrs. Holt was sure he wasn't the person she was looking for, she didn't contact him anymore."

Thaddeus asked curiously, "Why did she go to the police station?"

Jordan faltered, feeling a little afraid of telling him the truth. After a moment, he said hesitantly, "Last night, Mrs. Holt was almost ... sexually assaulted."

A bomb exploded in Thaddeus' mind. His heart twisted painfully as he recalled how out of the ordinary she'd acted and the odd clothes she'd had on last night.

Why hadn't she told him anything? He was the first person she should've asked for help when encountering something like that. Did she think he was nothing but a decorative piece?

How dared someone try to lay a hand on his wife? Did they have a death wish?

"I want to know the details."

Jordan could sense Thaddeus' rage even over the phone. He said, "The police have already arrested the two thugs, and it even made the news. I'll send you a link to the article."

Then, Jordan hung up. Shortly after that, Thaddeus received a link from him.

When Jessamine came out of the study, she saw Thaddeus sitting on the couch and staring at his phone. He exuded frostiness.

There were more people in the living room now. She greeted them and sat obediently beside Thaddeus, grabbing a throw pillow and holding it.

After all the dry-heaving and the chat with Thomas, she was exhausted. It was taking all of her strength to keep this act up.

When Thaddeus' mother, Heather Tate, saw how tired Jessamine was and the traces below her neck, she smiled. "Judging from the way you look now, Jessie, I wonder whether you're pregnant. Remember to be careful during the first trimester, okay?"

At her words, the maids stopped everything they were doing. Several gazes landed on Jessamine.

Even Thaddeus put his phone down to stare at her. Her dry-heaving only made the situation more suspicious now.

Jessamine smiled awkwardly at suddenly becoming the center of attention. Her face was red as she explained, "It's not like that, Mom. I was just a little carsick earlier. I'll be better after getting some rest."

Heather was a little disappointed to hear that things weren't as she guessed. Still, she said kindly, "It's fine. You two are still young, anyway. There's plenty of time for you guys to have kids.

"Why don't you head upstairs to get some rest if you're not feeling well? Ted can call you down for dinner later when it's ready."