



Charles's POV:

I did not want to retreat. In fact, I wanted to get even closer. As Scarlett and I stared into each other's eyes, I felt an overwhelming desire to hold her.

But before I could, she pressed her hand against my chest and pushed me away.

She opened her mouth. She looked like she wanted to say something but decided against it. Suddenly, the thought of her fanatic French pursuer crossed my mind, and it pissed me off.

Did she also push him away when he tried to hold her?

Or was it only me that she did not want close?

All these thoughts shoved me to the brink of my sanity, and the more I looked at Scarlett, the more I wanted to grab her, kiss her, and take her. I wanted to own her as a husband should his wife.

But then, as if the universe were conspiring against me, my phone rang.

I cursed under my breath. I wanted to reject the call, but seeing Rita's name, I picked up.

Only then did I realize how ridiculous I was being just now.

I loved Rita. What the hell was I thinking wanting Scarlett like that?

"Hello?" I loosened my tie and walked away from the bed. I took a few deep, steady breaths before answering Rita's call.

"Hi, Charles. I'm not feeling so well today. I feel so exhausted that I can't even walk. I'm scared, Charles. I feel like I'm about to die. Am I going to die?"

"It's all right, Rita. You'll be fine. You just need to rest."

"I don't want to be home alone. Will you come keep me company, please?"

As I listened to Rita choke her pleas to me over the phone, I turned my head to look at Scarlett. She had gotten up from bed and was now tidying up her clothes.

She caught a cold last night and had been burning up

since this morning, but I had never heard her complain. She moved about and did what she had to do like she was not sick.

It made me wonder how she and Rita could be so different when they were both women.

"I have something important to deal with at the office today, and I don't think I can get out of it. Just don't think too much, okay? Get some rest. You'll feel better after you take a nap."

I tried my best to comfort Rita. I felt guilty about not coming to her, but at the same time, I did not want to see her today. There was only too much of her sobbing and worrying that I could take. I did not want to spend my free time absorbing her negative energy.

I hung up the phone and looked at Scarlett. "Are you feeling better?"

"What?" She was so stunned by my question that she dropped some of her clothes on the way to her suitcase.

"I'm asking if you're feeling better," I repeated myself, which I did not normally do. Still, I tried convincing myself that I was not making concessions for Scarlett out of romantic love. She was still my family. I still cared about her.

Scarlett's POV:

"Are you feeling better?" Charles asked. I failed to respond immediately because I was not expecting the question. I dropped some of my clothes that I was packing and hurriedly picked them up. Rita just called him. He should be running off to her right now instead of asking about how I felt.

After all, I was just a woman who was destined to be a tiny speck in his past. I was nothing but a mere passer-by in his infinite world.

"I'm fine." I nodded and forced a smile.

Charles watched me put away my clothes for a while and did not say anything. Then, he finally turned around to leave. I did not know if it was the throbbing headache that got me all fired up, but after I put all my clothes away, I called after him and boldly asked, "Aren't you tired of popping in and out on me and Rita like this?"

Charles stopped but did not answer.

"You love her, don't you? Then go to her and stay with her. Let's just make this easy on all three of us." I had been married to Charles for three years, but not once had I regarded myself as his real wife. I was just

a bump in the road toward his true destiny—Rita. I did not understand why he was still trying to delay the inevitable, and it was starting to frustrate me.

I loved him, but I did not appreciate being strung along like this.

"Why are you in such a rush to go through the divorce formalities?" Charles turned around and flashed me a disdainful frown.

My heart leapt to my throat, but I refused to back down. I straightened my back and retorted, "A divorce is what you want, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I don't want things to end between us without me fulfilling my duties as a husband first,"

Charles replied abruptly.

What did he mean by that?

As an uncomfortable silence hung in the air between us, I racked my brain for some possible answers.

Did he want us to officially consummate our marriage?

I immediately dismissed the thought. Maybe I had misunderstood what he was trying to say.

Before I could say anything else, Charles spoke again in haste. "Getting a divorce is more complicated than you think, Scarlett. Besides, Grandpa keeps our marriage certificate. Even if we both sign the papers right now, it won't be official instantly. It will take a long time to go through due process."

Hearing that, I could not help feeling disappointed and then angry. I understood that our divorce was meant



to go through due process. What I did not understand was why he was delaying turning the signed papers in to start the process. I felt like he was trying to manipulate me.

Was he trying to keep me in his life for as long as he could because he knew that I loved him enough to cater to his every whim?

I gnashed my teeth together and kept my furious gaze fixed on him. I looked desperately for a hint of mockery in his eyes, but I did not see it.

"Are you hungry? Do you want something to eat?"  
Once again, he was acting like he truly cared about me. At this moment, he must be doing it out of guilt.

I refused directly and looked away.

"No, I'm fine. Just go see Rita. She's the one you

should be worried about right now."

"I haven't signed the divorce agreement yet. We're still married. I'm still obliged to take care of you while you're sick," Charles said impatiently.

"But you don't love me, do you? I don't need your pity, Charles. We'll be back to being strangers again soon. The best way for us to get along with each other is to not disturb each other. You understand, don't you?"

I loved him but not enough to put myself through unspeakable pain. I still had my pride. I did not need Charles to feel sorry for me, and if this were the only kind of relationship I could have with him, then I would rather be on my own.

"I wish you and Rita all the happiness in the world." I looked at him and gave him my sincerest well wishes.

"That's incredibly kind of you, Scarlett." I saw brief flashes of pain, anger, and grief in Charles's eyes. His tone sounded a bit sarcastic, but I thought that it was just because a lot of people had been telling him what to do lately and he was sick of it. After all, he was a domineering man, and he did not like relinquishing control, especially of his personal affairs.

"I'm going back to bed. I'm tired. You should go to Rita." Without waiting for Charles's reply, I crawled back under the covers and closed my eyes.

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