

When There Is Nothing Left But Love

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Chapter 169

Upon hearing his words, I almost cast my phone aside. A few seconds later, I raised my voice and confronted the maniac, "John, what the hell is wrong with you? What have you installed on my phone?"

He replied nonchalantly, "It's just a form of simple spyware. You should stop getting worked up over such a trivial matter. I'm trying to keep an eye on you and ensure that everything is fine on your end. That's all."

"You're rotten to the core!" I could barely suppress the urge to smash my phone.

"Please calm down, Scarlett. I just want to keep an eye on you and ensure that you're fine. Isn't it great? I get to know what you're up to whenever I want!" He sounded aggrieved, speaking as if he meant no harm.

"You should stay away from me!" After I hung up the call, I rushed into the washroom and flushed my phone away without a second thought.

I was so angry that my heart wouldn't stop racing. I couldn't pinpoint the exact time he had installed the spyware on my phone.

After the farce, I wasn't in the mood to satisfy my cravings anymore. I went to the living room and took a seat on the couch to collect my thoughts because I was greatly infuriated.

Eventually, I fell asleep on the couch in the living room. When I woke up a little later, I noticed that there was a blanket over me.

Once I opened my eyes, Ashton and I exchanged glances because he was right in front of me.

I was taken aback by his presence and I greeted him immediately, "G-Good morning!"

"Why have you fallen asleep on the couch?" He broke the silence, asking me this question indifferently as if he was displeased.

"I couldn't bring myself to sleep last night. Therefore, I decided to come downstairs for a change of environment. I didn't expect to fall asleep on the couch as well."

He asked rhetorically with a poker face, "Are you trying to imply that you had a hard time sleeping by my side?"

I shook my head vigorously as I rebuked, "No! I was having a hard time sleeping! Hence, I came downstairs for a walk! T-That's—"

As he knew that something was wrong with me, he lifted me into his arms and comforted me, "Alright, I'm not blaming you. I'm just worried that you're going to catch a cold. If you can't bring yourself to sleep in the future, wake me up and get me to keep you company, okay?"

My mind was over all over the place because it was evident that he was trying to be tolerant of me again. He had always been a patient man and had given in to every request of mine.

I nodded and nestled in between his arms as I slowly returned to my usual self.

What happened in the morning and the night before was nothing more than a farce. After finishing our breakfast, we dropped by the cemetery. We arrived early, and it was a great day.

Ashton had readied the things that we had needed beforehand. He supported me and brought me up to my grandfather's grave because the road there was quite slippery.

The sun had already risen from behind the hills when we were about to arrive. We paused when we were merely a few feet away from the grave because someone else was in front of George's grave.

I furrowed my brows unwittingly as I had my eyes fixed on the woman in front of the grave.

Ashton also caught a glimpse of Rebecca, who had dressed up in a black tulle dress, in front of the grave. Perhaps it was because she had never put on a black dress whenever she was around me—it took me some time to figure out that it was Rebecca.

I turned around and asked Ashton once I noticed that Rebecca was the one in front of the grave, "Were you the one who told her that we'd be here today?"

"No!" After he answered my query, he approached her and asked indifferently, "Why are you here?"

"Why can't I be here? I have been missing Parker because he has been showing up in my dreams recently. I decided to drop by to visit Old Mr. Fuller after I paid Parker a visit."

She glanced in my direction and greeted me with a faint smile after she explained the goal of her visit. "I didn't expect to run into both of you here! What a coincidence!"

Truthfully, I felt awful all of a sudden. I had forgotten that Parker was buried in the same cemetery.

I took a few steps forward and placed the bouquet that Ashton had prepared in front of Grandpa's grave. Since I was heavily pregnant, I couldn't bow to pay tribute to him. Instead, I nodded to show my respect to him.

Staring at me with his abysmal pair of eyes, Ashton grasped my hand firmly as he wiped my tears dry.

"Don't cry. Otherwise, our child will be sad as well."

I nodded as I told my beloved grandfather, "Grandpa, Ashton and I will start a family soon. Perhaps we'll come as a family of three, the next time we drop by to pay you a visit. You can finally rest in peace."

Halfway through my speech, I turned to look at Ashton with an intimate gaze before orating, "You don't have to worry about me anymore because we're on good terms! He has been taking great care of me, and I believe that he'll be a great husband and a doting father!"

Truth be told, my words were not intended for my grandfather at all—it was intended for Rebecca who was there.

Her face puckered in response as she tugged at the hem of Ashton's shirt and urged, "Ash, can you please drop by and pay Parker a visit as well? It has been quite some time since you've last visited."

I lowered my gaze because I was aware of Rebecca's petty scheme in leveraging the deceased to her favor in order to win Ashton over by reminding him of the good old days they had spent together.

Ashton looked at me in the eyes as though it was an attempt to acquire my consent to pay Parker a visit.

I peered at Grandpa's grave with a smile and offered, "Let's drop by and pay him a visit together! After all, he was one of your best friends, wasn't he? You should introduce us to one another!"

Rebecca had a grim expression on her face because I insisted on tagging along, yet she did a great job of suppressing her emotions.

Ashton grasped my hand as he asserted, "You're right! Let's go!"

The aforementioned grave was merely a short distance away because the cemetery wasn't a huge one. As soon as we arrived at Parker's grave, I saw the photo of a handsome young man inscribed. In spite of his attractive-looking face, it was evident that he had been having it tough, enduring a series of treatments.

As soon as we arrived at her brother's grave, Rebecca's eyes began to brim with tears. Eventually, it morphed into an intense wail. "Parker, I have brought Ash along with me!"

Thankfully, Ashton had another bouquet with him. He placed it in front of Parker's grave as he bowed to show his respect. After he was done, he stared at the photo on the grave.

I stood by Ashton's side and bowed to show my respect. In an attempt to figure out if Rebecca had put on another show in front of us, I peered at her the entire time we were there.

After a few minutes, Ashton suggested, "I believe that it's time to leave."

Rebecca couldn't snap out of her intense wailing session. She held on to Ashton's hand as she cried out in a husky voice, "Ash, Parker is no longer around to keep me safe! You're the only one whom I can rely on! Although I'm a member of the renowned Moore family, I didn't grow up alongside them! I was merely the long-lost daughter of the family. No matter how much they love me, I can't possibly reciprocate the affection because we aren't close at all!"

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"Ash, please take your friendship with Parker into consideration, and don't leave me alone! I need you by my side. Please, Ash! I don't need anything else apart from your companionship. Along with Jared and Joe, we can live a carefree life as we had used to, can't

we? I'll always be the innocent little girl that requires the guidance of the three reliable brothers of mine. Please don't leave me alone! I can't possibly live on my own!"

Ashton's initially indifferent look seemed to have eased up because he was affected by her words. Nobody would know him better than me—he had never enjoyed being alone; he couldn't bear to leave the needy ones alone either.

Rebecca's seemingly sincere words had touched him. He had always been alone ever since he was young. Although Ashton had his doting grandfather by his side, none of the things that his grandfather had done could compensate the man for his loss.

Therefore, he couldn't bear to forsake his friendship with Parker and his relationship with Rebecca because being needed would give him a sense of accomplishment that he desired. It would make him feel loved.

I stood by his side silently because I couldn't be sure as to how I was supposed to react. All along, I knew that I wasn't a match for Rebecca. I could never put on such a great show to deceive others.

As Ashton returned to her side and brought her up, casting a gentle gaze as if he could forget the things that she had done, I knew that my efforts were in vain.

Apart from the sound of Rebecca sniffing behind us, we were dead silent throughout the entire ride. It felt as though I could hear the ambient noise in the car.

In the end, I broke the silence, requesting once the car was brought to a halt at the junction, "Why don't you pull over at the bus station in front? I'll drop by a certain somewhere before making my way home."

Furrowing his brows, Ashton looked at me as he queried, "Where are you going?"

I tried my best to force a smile onto my face as I denoted, "I'll go for a walk and get Macy the mangoes that she's craving for before I make my way to the ward."

"I'll go with you!"

"No!"

I was afraid that I would lose my cool in front of them. Hence, I tried my best to regain my composure and stated, "It will be fine; the hospital is merely a few streets away. I won't get lost, okay? Y-You should drop Ms. Larson off before making your way over..."

He pursed his lips and gave it a thought for a few seconds. In the end, he gave in to my suggestion. "Alright."

Subconsciously, I sucked in a deep breath because it felt as though a heavy boulder had been lifted off of my shoulders.

Once I got out of the car, I bade them farewell with a bright and gentle grin, behaving as though everything was fine while I waved at them as they departed.

As their car disappeared on the bustling streets, I started feeling nauseous, as though I would puke at any given point in time. It felt awful because my heart wrenched.

I tried to reach for my phone to get in touch with Jackson, but I suddenly recalled that I had flushed my phone away the previous night.

As I walked along the green, I started to feel weak because of the scorching sun that was on top of me.

A few minutes later, I couldn't bring myself to walk any further. I took a seat by the road and buried my face in my palms as I began to weep.

At that moment, I blamed myself for being such a fragile woman. It wasn't a big deal at all, yet I behaved as though something serious had occurred.

I couldn't stand the heat anymore and I thought that I was seeing things when I caught a glimpse of Jackson in front of me. Soon, I muttered, "Jackson, I'm not feeling good."

He raised his voice and reprimanded me. Nevertheless, he leaned over and lifted me up, bringing me into his car. "What happened? Why are you alone on the streets in the middle of such a hot day? You might have passed out from a heatstroke!"

I finally returned to my usual self after I was brought into the cool environment that was filled with chilling air. It took me a few seconds to grasp the situation. In the end, I asked, "Why are you here?"

He handed over a few pieces of wet tissue to me as he explained, "I was on my way to visit Macy. Unfortunately, I've encountered my pathetic and pregnant friend who's crying on the streets beneath the sun."

I avoided his gaze and wiped my face clean after I took the wet tissues from him. I stared at the man in the front passenger seat wide-eyed as soon as I caught a glimpse of him. "Mr. Harrison, why are you here?"

Nick craned over and asked, "I'm getting him to give me a ride. What about you? Why are you crying on the streets when you are heavily pregnant?"

I pursed my lips and diverted their attention immediately, instructing Jackson, "Hey! Let's drop by another place before heading over to Macy's ward."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Tech Square! I have accidentally broken my phone!"

Jackson nodded and steered the driver's wheel, turning in another direction from the designated route to the hospital.

Initially, I thought that I would get myself the latest version of the brand I had been using, but Nick suggested, "Why don't you get a domestic brand instead? It's better in terms of functions and price."

After I got myself a new phone and a new contact number, we dropped by to check on Macy and Jared. Once I was done, I walked out of Jared's ward and noticed that Jackson and Nick were smoking while they were engaged in a conversation.

Nick seemed to be infuriated as he glared at Jackson in a hostile manner.

I rushed over and got in their way, making a request for Jackson to do me a favor. "Hey! Can you please keep Macy company when I'm gone? I have to leave soon because I have something to tend to!"

Before Jackson could respond, Nick put out his cigarette and walked toward me. "I'll go with you!"

Although I wasn't sure what was going on between them both, I was pretty sure that they were in the middle of a conflict. Hence, I told Nick, "I'm not driving. I'll be hailing a cab instead. I think that you should wait for Jackson."

Jackson looked in Nick's direction and stated, "Yes! You should wait for me!"

With an upset expression, Nick responded, "I have a lot of things on my schedule! I don't have time for you!"

"Are you indicating that I am wasting your time?"

I was at a loss for words and I decided to stay out of their conflict. There wasn't anything I could do about it.

Thus, I departed silently and told Macy that I would be leaving before I headed back to the villa.

Initially, I wanted to join the yoga class that was scheduled to be held in the afternoon, but the class would require the husband to be around. Since Ashton had to keep Rebecca

company, I thought that he wouldn't have time for me. In the end, I hailed a cab home because I didn't want to go through the tormenting experience anymore.

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Once I reached home and saw the black Bentley that was parked in front of the entrance, I couldn't be sure if I were disgusted or infuriated.

John alighted from the ride as he greeted me with a courteous smile, "Hey! I have been waiting for you! Where have you been? Why have you switched off your phone?"

I stood right where I was statically and clenched my fists with all my might in order to suppress my emotions. "Why are you here?"

"I'm here to visit you... and the baby..." Once he finished his sentence, he stared at my tummy as though he was up to no good.

I disliked the uncanny sensation that he had often brought along whenever he showed up in front of me. "Fine! Since you've already met us, can you leave?"

If I had the choice to stay away from him for the rest of my life, I would accept the offer without a second thought.

I walked past him as I made my way into the villa. Nevertheless, he came after me, standing in my way as I was about to reach the house. He smirked viciously as he stated, "Scarlett, are you going to treat me in such a manner for the rest of our lives? I'm not your foe—I'm your beloved brother! We're supposed to be each other's strongest backing on this planet! Why have you pushed me away over and over again?"

For the last time, I tried my best to suppress my emotions as I asked, "Am I supposed to treat you differently? John, you're aware of our relationship, aren't you? Are we really siblings? Are you sure that I am the one who has pushed you away? How can you say this when you're the one who has left me behind! It's all your fault! You're the reason that we're no longer close! You have turned into a selfish, vicious, and cunning man over the years!"

Previously, when Grandma brought him back to R Province, I was thrilled because I thought that I finally had another sibling and someone to keep me company! However, as time went by, I noticed that I was wrong because his deeds had sent chills running down my spine!

When he heard my words, he replied with a bitter smile as though he found himself hilarious and pathetic at the same time. "Are you going to forsake me as well?"

I avoided the helpless man's gaze as I murmured, "I have no intention of forsaking you, but..."

"Great! Letty, as long as you're not going to forsake me, I believe that we'll patch things up and return to the good old days soon!" His expression morphed as soon as he heard my reply. He returned to the car and brought me a basket of tomatoes.

Grinning, he repeated, "I am aware that you are craving for the fruits and vegetables that we used to have back in R Province! Do you remember that I had bought the plot of land? I have planted your favorite fruits and vegetables using the seeds that have been left behind by Grandma! I have brought you your favorite tomatoes and mangoes today!"

For a moment, I felt rather confused when I looked at him because he seemed to be different from his usual indifferent and blood-lusting self. I was clueless about the reason that had done all those things behind my back.

I couldn't be sure if it were one of his attempts to deceive me again, but I couldn't bear to turn him down when I saw the bright and innocent grin on his face.

In the end, he brought the basket of fruits into the courtyard of the villa and told me, "If you like it, I'll occasionally drop by and hand it over to you! Also, if you feel like making a trip back to R Province, feel free to get in touch with me! Let's make a trip together!"

I felt a prickling sensation behind my eyes because John seemed to have been alone all this while. I finally figured out that he wasn't lying when he told me that he had been feeling alone.

In order to avoid weeping in front of him, I took a deep breath to calm myself and replied cheerfully, "Mmm! It's getting late. You should return to where you've come from."

Perhaps humans had always been social beings that had to rely on one another to get through the tough moments in life.

Since there wasn't anyone that we could rely on, at the end of the day, we were just two lonely souls on this planet.

He stared at me in the eyes to express his joy. Before I could reciprocate his affection, he leaped over and held me firmly in between his arms. "Letty, I hope that our relationship will remain this way forever!"

I was silent for a few seconds, taking in the man's embrace as I stared at the Jeep that was closing in behind him.

Ashton! Why is he back?

Ashton got out of his car and rushed over to my side swiftly, dragging me away from John before I could push the latter away. Thankfully, John's car was nearby. Otherwise, I would have been sent flying by the powerful force.

As soon as I stopped myself from staggering, Ashton's punch had landed on John's face. It was a fatal blow, and John's face turned swollen while his lips began to bleed.

Ashton pinned John to the ground and delivered him several punches in the face before he could even grasp the situation.

I rushed over to stop Ashton immediately, yet he turned around and stared at me with his bloodlust pair of eyes. "If you don't want me to send him to hell, stay right where you are!"

Immediately, I brought myself to an abrupt halt. Thankfully, John had returned to his senses. He wiped the blood off his lips and started ridiculing Ashton in return. "Is threatening a defenseless woman all that you're capable of? Ashton, why don't you keep your words and send me to hell?"

"Are you challenging me and pushing your luck?" The moment he finished his rhetorical question, Ashton started delivering another few blows on John's face.

I couldn't bear it anymore because John was rendered defenseless by the aggressive Ashton. In another attempt to stop them, I yelled hysterically, "Ashton, stop it! He's going to die for real!"

The scene of the incident that had occurred when we were children flashed back in my mind while I stood aside, witnessing the entire fight that had ended up with John being the defenseless victim. Back when we were younger, I was bullied and cornered by a bunch of delinquents. John rushed over to my rescue and took the beating on my behalf in the nick of time.

He was a man of few words, yet after he defended me, he comforted me and assured me, "Don't worry! It doesn't hurt at all! You don't have to be sad!"

Nevertheless, the more he assured me that things would be fine, the more I wailed. Once we made our way home, he finally told us that his leg was broken during the intense fight.

Grandma could barely suppress her wrath and she almost taught the kids a lesson on our behalf.

In order to keep me safe from the delinquents, he would ignore his injuries and make his way to my school because he was afraid that they would show up after school. Since he had brought along a knife with him, the delinquents were often intimidated by him and they soon decided to stay away from us.

Since Ashton showed no signs of stopping while John was about to pass out due to the serious injuries, I stopped hesitating and reached out for the baton that was available in the courtyard. I made up my mind and swung it in Ashton's direction with all of my might.

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Although I was afraid of John, instinctively, I couldn't bear to forsake him because we used to spend a lot of time together back in the day—he was a brother from another mother of mine in spite of the vicious things that he had done over the years.

Ashton's body stiffened all of a sudden. He turned around and stared at me in disbelief. The initially wrathful man stopped and lost himself in the process of thought, with disappointment being written all over his face.

I stared at him and cast the baton that I had with me aside. As my vision blurred due to the torrents of grief that rushed out of my eyes, I got down on my knees and begged, "Stop it! He's going to die for real!"

Ashton moved his lips in an attempt to say something, yet he seemed to be at a loss for words.

Mrs. Eriksen rushed out as soon as she heard the commotion. She shouted when she caught a glimpse of the horrifying scene. "Oh, God! What's going on? What the hell is wrong with all of you?"

I ignored Ashton as I rushed over to John's side.

His entire face was drenched in blood as he lay on the ground statically, behaving as though he had passed out.

"Hey! Are you okay? I'll rush you to the hospital at once!" I tried to check on his leg because I recalled that Ashton had delivered a few kicks on his leg that had gone through a few surgical operations before.

The gravely injured man stopped me as he assured me with a bright grin, "It's fine! Don't worry! It doesn't hurt at all!"

He shouldn't have repeated the words of assurance that he used to tell me. I ended up wailing in front of him as tears gushed down my cheeks uncontrollably.

I tried to help him up, but I was abruptly dragged away by a powerful force. Ashton glared at me and warned me, "You should stay away from him because he's fine!"

Although I could feel Ashton's wrath, I couldn't possibly leave John alone when he needed me by his side during such a crisis. As a matter of fact, he had to go through a few surgical operations to regain the capability to walk normally because of me.

Ashton didn't bother to hold back against him at all. I was afraid that I wouldn't get to stay away from John for the rest of my life if he were diagnosed with any kind of long-term sequelae as a result of Ashton's brutality.

"Ashton, can't you see that he's hurt?" I tried to shrug him off because I was slightly infuriated. "Why have you beaten him up? If there's anything that irritates you, why don't you come at me instead? Is it necessary for you to take things out on him?"

"A-Argh..." John started coughing and he puked a few mouthfuls of blood a few seconds later.

I panicked and attempted to shrug Ashton off once more, but due to the difference between our strengths, I couldn't get his hands off of mine at all.

Glaring at him in the eyes, I raised my voice and demanded, "Ashton, let go of me!"

He cast a stern gaze in return and insisted, "I want you to get inside at once!"

Since he showed no intention of setting me free, I leaned over and bit onto his arms while glaring at him to express my determination.

In spite of the racking sensation that I had brought upon him, he didn't even budge as though it wasn't a big deal at all.

As I was afraid that something bad would happen to John soon, I moved away from Ashton and enunciated my warning, "If you refuse to move away from him, it's time for you to forget about our child!"

I tried to smash my tummy with my hand once I warned him, but he managed to get ahead of me as he stopped me in the nick of time. He lugged me over and replied in a callous tone, "Scarlett, I can't believe that you're going to resort to such an extreme measure for his sake!"

The wrathful man couldn't suppress his emotions any longer—he grasped my hands without holding back his strength.

"Ashton, please allow me to send him to the hospital!" At that point in time, there wasn't anything that I could do about it anymore. I had to resort to something else and beg him to be merciful since he showed no signs of giving in to my threats.

As soon as he felt my tears on his hand, he loosened his grip. I tried to beg him to show us some mercy once more. "I'll return once he's in the hospital! I won't go anywhere without your consent! I'll allow you to do anything that you want with me! Please!"

The wrathful man chuckled. "Ha! Are you begging me because of some unworthy jerk? Scarlett, you never fail to surprise me!"

"Letty, you don't have to beg him! I'm fine!" John struggled as he tried to bring himself up from the ground.

He staggered and fell to the ground. Judging from the wincing expression on his face, I was pretty sure that he must have been gravely injured.

I couldn't stand to leave him alone anymore. When Ashton had his guard down, I shrugged him off and rushed over to John's side. After I helped him up, I sniffled and offered, "I'll rush you to the hospital at once."

I lowered my gaze because I couldn't bring myself to look at Ashton anymore. It was no easy task, yet I managed to bring John back to his car.

Mrs. Eriksen heaved a long sigh, telling me, "I'll be waiting for you, okay?"

I nodded as I rushed over to the driver's seat, departing as soon as I got the car started.

After John was rushed to the hospital, I took a seat on the bench in the corridor. I couldn't be sure if I felt awful due to the chilling breeze or the feud that had occurred.

Things weren't supposed to turn out as such, yet it seemed to have gotten to the point of no return.

I spent an hour outside of the operating theater, waiting for John. At long last, the nurse brought him out as they made their way to his ward.

Meanwhile, the doctor instructed me to deal with the paperwork to get him hospitalized. Hence, I stopped the doctor because no one told me how John's conditions were. "Doctor, how is the patient? Is there going to be any long-term sequelae?"

The doctor smiled and assured me, "It's not a big deal, but it's going to take some time for his wounds to recover. With that being said, I was made aware that the patient's leg had

gone through surgical operations. I need to send the patient for a simple X-Ray examination to figure out his true condition."

I nodded vigorously and expressed my gratitude before I headed over to the ward.

Since anesthesia had been administered, John lay on the bed as he was rendered incapable of movement. He seemed to be in a great mood as his lips curved upwards once I showed up in the ward. "Please have a seat and keep me company!"

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I paid no heed to his request and told him, "You should get someone else to drop by and take care of you. It's getting late. I need to return home soon."

Since the sky had already gotten pitch-black, I really had to return to Ashton soon. To be frank, I wasn't sure what would occur once I reached home.

John's expression darkened almost instantly. He replied petulantly, "Do you think that I have anyone else to rely on apart from you? Since you have something else to tend to, feel free to leave!"

I was at a loss for words due to his response. He behaved as though he would give up on himself again. Frowning, I offered, "I'll get you a caretaker to keep an eye on you."

"Scarlett! Are you holding a grudge against me? Do you want me dead? Are you going to leave me alone as well?"

"No!" Truthfully, he had never brought upon my misery, yet I couldn't move on from the things he had done.

The sulky man added, "You do realize that you're the only one I can rely on, don't you? Over the past five years, I resisted the urge to approach you because I didn't want to get in your way and ruin your blissful life. Initially, I thought that I would make it through the darkest moments of my life on my own, but I was wrong—I didn't expect to encounter you in A City."

He lowered his gaze and stared at his wounded hand, acting all gloomy. "Ever since we'd last met, I've come to realize that I no longer wish to be separated from you any further! Can we return to the good old days? Let's keep one another company for the rest of our lives! What do you think?"

I couldn't bring myself to answer him because I knew that he had a ruined childhood—he had been spending his entire life searching for a place to call home.

"John, I have gotten married to someone else and I've started my own family. I don't mind having you in my life, but you should know your place and refrain from going overboard."

"What's so great about Ashton? He's a cruel and violent man! He doesn't even love you! Why do you want to spend the rest of your life with such a man?"

We needed to stop. Otherwise, he would go berserk again. "You should take good care of yourself for the time being. I'll go get you a caretaker to keep an eye on you."

Before he could stop me again, I rushed out of the ward and headed over to the nurse station, asking them to take care of him.

I had no choice but to hail a cab back because I had used John's car in order to rush him to the hospital. After I reached the villa, I stood in front of the entrance for some time.

To be frank, I was anxious and couldn't be sure if I could face Ashton.

Nevertheless, it was only a matter of time before I would have to face him in person.

After I brought myself in, I noticed that there was barely any source of illumination in the living room; nonetheless, someone was in the kitchen—it must have been Mrs. Eriksen because she had always enjoyed baking and cooking during her free time.

Perhaps she was in the middle of trying out several new recipes that she had come across on the internet. After I got changed into a pair of indoor sandals, I walked into the living room as I soon noticed that no one was around.

I heaved a sigh of relief as I made my way toward the kitchen. Mrs. Eriksen turned around wide-eyed because she was taken aback by my presence. “Oh, God! Letty! Can you make some noise the next time you approach me? You’ve just given me the shock of my life!”

She patted her chest to comfort herself as she queried, “Did you just arrive? Are you hungry? Come over and check out the things that I’ve prepared for you!” Immediately after she returned to her usual sprightly self, she headed over and showed me the things she had prepared.

I caught a whiff of a pleasant scent and heard my stomach growling. “Mrs. Eriksen, what is it? It smells great!”

She smiled as she started to tell me about her latest recipe. “It’s a potato casserole! I have added some homegrown rosemary as the key condiment! I believe that it gives the entire dish an aromatic fragrance. It’s almost ready. You should head over to the dining hall and wait for me.”

Mrs. Eriksen didn’t want me to be anywhere near the kitchen because she claimed that it would be hard for pregnant women to get used to the stench in the kitchen.

I did as instructed and headed over to the dining hall in anticipation of my meal that was going to be served shortly.

After a few minutes, she showed up in the dining hall with a serving of the freshly baked potato casserole. "It's fresh out of the oven. You should wait for a while because it's scorching hot."

She placed it in front of me and looked at me as if she had something to tell me.

I caught the odd look of hers and decided to be the proactive one. "Mrs. Eriksen, what is it about? Feel free to tell me about the things that are bothering you."

She replied with a sheepish grin, "Letty, I shouldn't poke my nose into your business, but I can't possibly allow things between you and Mr. Ashton to head south anymore. I used to go through the things that you're currently going through, and I don't want you to end up miserable like me. I have to stop you before things between both of you get to the point of no return. Otherwise, I'm afraid that the late Mr. Fuller will cast the blame on me."

I responded with a faint smile because I knew that she had brought it up for my sake. "Mrs. Eriksen, you don't have to be afraid. Over the years, you've been the one who has taken care of me during my days here. I have long thought of you as a senior of mine. Feel free to share whatever you have in mind with me. I'll definitely take it into consideration and give it a thought."

She heaved a long sigh as she eventually told me of the issue that had been bothering her. "Ever since Mr. Ashton returned, he locked himself up in the study room. I saw his back drenched in blood. Can you please serve him his dinner and talk things through with him? If it's possible, please check on his wound on my behalf because he paid no heed to the things that I had told him. As a married couple, both of you should stop fighting over such trivial issues and stop holding a grudge against one another. Open up to one another. Otherwise, it will accumulate and blow up in the near future."

I nodded and told Mrs. Eriksen to get me a serving of the potato casserole immediately because I was worried about Ashton's wound. "I'll head over and check on him at once."

Mrs. Erikson chuckled as she uttered, "It's fine! You should prioritize yourself over him. I'm sure that you must be starving after such a long day since you're heavily pregnant. Take your time and finish your meal before you head over to check on him."

I knew that she was worried about me. Seeing as such, I took my time and finished my meal as I was instructed. In the end, I told her, "You don't have to worry, Mrs. Eriksen. I'll finish my meal before I head upstairs."

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Seeing this, Mrs. Eriksen walked into the kitchen, smiling.

Meanwhile, outside the study.

I hesitated for a while, then raised my hand to knock on the door.

After a moment, a low voice came from inside, "Mrs. Eriksen, you go and rest. I'm not hungry!"

"It's me!" I said, almost biting my lip, feeling so anxious that I nearly sweated.

There was a short silence. After a while, the low voice spoke loudly, "Come in!"

I sighed with relief. Then, I pushed the door open. I glanced at the good-looking yet unapproachable man seated at the desk.

Holding the bowl of soup, I paused and said, "Mrs. Eriksen said you haven't eaten anything. She made this fish soup. Would you like to take it? "

As I spoke, I walked up to him and put the bowl next to him. Then, my eyes fell on his back.

It was the same suit as before since it was black and there was nothing else except for the faint mark from the spade.

I was about to ask if he suffered any injuries but I stopped when I saw him staring at me blankly.

I was a little frustrated.

"Why are you back?" He frowned and the expression on his face was distant and remote.

I lowered my head. After all, I panicked in this matter and didn't handle it well. I paused and said, "Ashton, I'm sorry but I can't leave him alone. If you are still angry now, you may hit me or scold me."

"Hah!" He laughed, coldly, "How likely is it for me to scold or hit you?"

Looking at him, I nodded very seriously, "Yes. If you are angry, you can hit me!"

"Hit you?" He laughed hysterically, "Scarlett, when did you learn to give a carrot after giving a smack? You have become more cunning over the years of working in Fuller Corporation."

Uh-oh!

"Why don't you take the soup first and fill your stomach? If you don't take any food, it is harmful to your health!" Now, I can only be gentle with him. If I push him too hard, I'm afraid...

At this moment, there was an extremely gloomy expression on his face. It was almost comparable to the gathering of dark clouds before the coming of a storm.

"Will you explain what happened between you and John?"

I frowned as always when this matter was brought up as it would make me irritable. That was all in the past and I was not willing to recount everything in detail to anyone.

Seeing his distant expression, I couldn't help but knit my eyebrows, saying softly, "John and I were both children adopted by Grandma. He was a few years older than I was and we grew up together. Later, something happened and he left us. He disappeared and didn't show up until now."

I did not want to go into the details as I was not willing to dig up too much pain from the past.

He narrowed his eyes. "Are you childhood sweethearts or love between siblings? Or is it both?"

I frowned and glared at him as I was getting annoyed. "He was my elder brother and that was all!"

"Ha!" He sneered. "This elder brother treats his younger sister in a very unusual way, hugging and embracing. If he is your elder brother, why didn't you say so right from the beginning?"

"It was not necessary," I said quite angrily, "It's late. You'd better get some rest after taking the soup. I'm going to bed now."

I didn't want to quarrel with him as I didn't think it was necessary. There were many instances where I chose to leave as I couldn't control myself.

Inside my bedroom, I was unable to sleep immediately so I went out to the balcony and sat on the swing while staring blankly at the scenery outside the window.

Ashton came in and fixed his eyes on me for a moment. I knew he was suppressing his anger and he didn't want to quarrel with me.

Seeing him enter the bathroom, I couldn't help but sigh. Sometimes, pregnant women get angry easily and I had no control over it.

Ashton showered very quickly. When he came out, he only had a towel wrapped around his lower body and the translucent water drops rolled down the sexy texture of his chest and abdomen.

As he dried his hair with the towel, I noticed the bruise on his back where I had hit him with a shovel. I got up and went out of the bedroom to find the first aid kit in the living room.

When I returned to the bedroom, Ashton was already lying on the bed, reading. Seeing me holding the first aid kit in my hand, he raised his brows and asked, "What's the matter?"

"I'm going to apply ointment on your back." I went to his side, took out some ointment for bruises, and told him, "Your back is blue and black, so let me rub some medicine on it."

He glanced at the ointment and sat up with his back toward me.

I placed some of the ointment on the palm of my hand and rubbed it gently on his back. For fear of causing him pain, I didn't use much force. This medicine had an extremely unpleasant smell.

After a moment, he turned his deep dark gaze toward me. "You can rub harder!"

Taken aback, I burst out, "Aren't you afraid of pain?"

He lowered his eyebrows and his guard. "When you hit me, did you not think that I could feel the pain?"

At his words, my hand paused and I looked down, not knowing how to reply to him. In silence, I continued rubbing the ointment for him.

After some time, I kept the first aid kit and washed my hands.

I took a quick shower and went to bed. Recently, he had taken up the habit of sleeping nude and when I rolled over, I accidentally touched his nether regions.

I was startled for a moment and instinctively glanced at him. He didn't respond but continued to read his book calmly