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He raised his eyebrows. "The tickets to K City for the evening have already been booked. Have you forgotten?"

If he had not brought this up, I definitely would have forgotten.

I was dumbfounded for a moment and then I asked, "What must I bring with me?"

"Nothing!" He put his arm around my waist. "Joseph has arranged everything. We'll be staying for a few days. I'll bring you to meet Aunt Sally!"

"Should we go for another check-up?" The baby is almost seven months old. It didn't develop so well in the early stages. Since we are not familiar with K City, would it not be better to do a check-up before we leave?

Perhaps he knew what bothered me as he said, "Dr. Ludwick has arranged for an obstetrician and gynecologist to come with us. I have also arranged for a doctor in K City, so don't worry."

I just nodded and thought for a while, "Macy and Dr. Crest are still in the hospital. When we go off, who will take care of them?"

"Jared has recuperated well. He just has to stay in the hospital for a few more days. The doctor for Macy said that she can be discharged. If you are worried about her, let her come with us." He had thought of everything so well that I was at a loss for words for a while.

After pondering over it, I asked, "Shall we not go to the family home and say goodbye to Uncle Charlie and Aunt Helen?"

He stopped talking and looked at me. His dark eyes gazed at me for a long time and then he asked, "Scarlett, you don't want to go to K City, do you?"

I was stunned and shook my head. "No, it's just that I'm used to staying here in J City. It's basically strange to go to K City. Besides, I don't sleep well now. I'm afraid it's going to get worse in K City."

I didn't like it and I didn't want to go. Rebecca's biological parents were both there and their power and authority were based there. I had a bad omen that I might get blown up in bits if I go there.

"I have contacted the doctor. This time I won't be there for a long time, at most one month. After seeing Aunt Sally and the doctor, we'll come back. We won't stay for long. You are not well and you need treatment, both for you and for the child. I know that Dr. Kane is with you but both of you are friends. A doctor's judgement may be affected by personal emotions!"

He said this in a very sincere tone so I didn't and couldn't deny it.

Looking down at the palm of my hand, I nodded, "Well, I'll go with your arrangements! What time is the flight tonight?" Later, I would go and see Macy and Jackson. We summoned Jackson back from afar so, I definitely couldn't go off to K City without seeing him.

"Six o'clock!"

I nodded and said plainly, "In a while, I shall go to see Macy."

"I'll go with you!"

I thought of refusing him. Then, I remembered that he needed to see Jared, so I didn't say anything.

After breakfast, I went into the kitchen and started cooking the pasta for John. Mrs. Eriksen refused to let me breathe in the oily fumes and forced me out. I did not protest but just asked her to cook three portions.

It was not far from our villa to the hospital and Ashton's driving was safe and fast so we reached our destination very quickly.

He got a phone call while we were in the lift. We were supposed to visit Macy's ward first but it was improper for him to talk while visiting so he remained at the staircase while I went ahead.

As I entered the ward, Macy looked at me with eyes full of expectation and she said pitifully, "You're here finally. I'm afraid I'll become a permanent part of the hospital. Please help me with the discharge procedures later. I don't want to stay in the hospital anymore. I'm going to suffocate and die here."

She was too funny for words. I handed her the pasta and said, "It's freshly cooked so eat it now. It will turn soggy after a while. Just enjoy it and I will send the other two portions now."

"Two portions? Whom are they for?" She looked at me with a face full of curiosity.

"John and Jared!"

She gaped. "I know Jared is hospitalized. What happened to John?"

This was giving me a headache as it was not easy to explain so I replied, "Ashton beat him up. I'll come back later and tell you about it."

Coming out of the ward, I bumped into Joe and Rebecca. She cast me a glance that was both calm and nonchalant. I always felt that she had changed a lot, seemingly more at peace with herself.

Passing the lunch boxed into Joe's hand, I said, "Mr. Quinn, you don't mind bringing these to Dr. Crest's room, do you?"

Joe raised his eyebrows. "You made them?"

"It was Ashton!" With that, he took the food containers. I did not say much but went to the surgical ward.

John seemed especially good at berating people. At the door of the ward, I could hear him telling the nurse to get out in a very cold tone.

The nurse came out of the ward looking ashen. When she saw me, she pulled my hand and said, "Ms. Stovall, something urgent has come up at home so, I am unable to continue working here. Please will you contact another nurse quickly?"

"Letty, are you here?" From inside the bedroom came John's voice.

The nurse left without saying much.

Entering the ward, I saw John on the hospital bed with a mobile phone in his hand. Seeing me, his gloomy face started smiling "You've got the pasta ready?"

I nodded as I passed the pasta to him, "Don't make things difficult for the nurses. Tonight I'm leaving for K City with Ashton. We'll be there for some time. You'd better get someone to come and take care of you."

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He was taken aback. "What are you and Ashton doing in K City?"

I didn't explain much to him. Besides, he was not seriously injured. Staying in the hospital was just a ploy to get my sympathy. I looked at him and said plainly, "Some business to deal with!"

As I turned around to leave, he raised his voice, with a bit of coldness, "You'd better leave Ashton soon."

I frowned, not wanting to engage in further conversation with him.

When I returned to Macy's ward, she had finished eating the pasta. She had been medicated and was up by herself, peeling the green mangoes I had brought for her.

Seeing me back in her ward, she acted really silly. "Babe, where did you get these green mangoes? They taste exactly like those from the tree in the garden back in R Province.

I sat down beside her and watched her eat quite a few at one go. I couldn't help but feel worried. "You're eating too many. Are you okay?"

She shook her head. "I can finish all that you brought!"

I was speechless. John had brought quite a lot and I almost took all the green mangoes here.

The main reason was that she ate a portion of pasta and then so many green mangoes. Will this affect the baby she is carrying?

"Darn it, you're eating like a horse!" Jackson walked in and exclaimed when he saw the way Macy was eating.

Seeing Nick coming together with him, I felt surprised. "Mr. Harrison, are you with Jackson most of the time?"

Macy was a busybody. With her hands full of green mangoes and looking at the two men, she put on an evil smile. "Are you two doing it?"

"Doing what?" Jackson looked at her and asked, "You'd better stop eating or else you'll die of overeating. Eat less but more frequently. Be careful of your eating habits, Macy."

She sneered and ignored him but turned her attention on Nick. "Mr. Harrison, are you here to visit me?"

Nick looked at me and smiled gently. "Yeah!" It was obviously perfunctory.

Macy curled her lips and kept quiet.

Nick looked at me and asked, "Are you going to K City?"

I glanced at Jackson. This guy told him everything. Nodding my head, I replied, "I'll be there for a few days and will be back soon."

He nodded, "That's good. I have to go over to run an errand. What time are you leaving?"

"My flight is at six in the evening."

"F****!" Jackson cursed, "Why didn't you mention it earlier?"

I was stunned. "What business do you have there?"

"I could go with you!" When Macy gave him a contemptuous look, he rubbed his nose. "If I had known that you were going to K City, I would have returned to M Country to work."

"Too many things happened in the past few days so I forgot all about it." Then, I looked at Nick and asked, "When are you going to K City?"

"I'll go tomorrow!" He raised his eyebrows. "Perhaps, we'll meet again in a few days' time."

Seeing that we were all leaving, Macy complained, "None of you will be in J City so what am I supposed to do here? That's it. I'm going back to the village and staying there."

Jackson found a seat and sat down. Looking at me, he asked, "Did Ashton plan to take you to a doctor in K City?"

I nodded, "That's part of the plan but not the only reason."

After we had chatted for a while, Ashton came over and asked us to have lunch together.

Macy was well enough to move around but not Jared.

Naturally, I asked, "Is Dr. Crest well enough to move around freely?"

"He's a doctor so he knows better!"

Having said that, I did not have much to say. It was just that when both our friends got together for lunch, the atmosphere might get odd.

Ashton booked a restaurant and we had a big private room in which Nick and Jackson seemed to have an unending list of topics to discuss.

Macy was all focused on the food while Joe was busy looking after Rebecca.

Rebecca tried hard to serve Ashton with some dishes while I took a few mouthfuls of food that he got for me.

It was extremely boring.

Everyone at the table knew each other but didn't meet often. The only stranger was Jackson.

Sitting between Macy and me, Jared looked pale as he still needed to be hospitalized.

He did not speak much and spoke even less now. His gaze fixed on Macy most of the time. Seeing that she was eating without any control, he frowned and said, "Eating too much is bad for your digestive system."

Macy lifted her eyes and glanced at him. She replied with an indifferent expression in a plain voice, "Alright!"

And then, she continued to eat.

That was her character. Seeing that she paid no heed, Jared did not say anymore and just frowned.

Rebecca looked at me, and with a well-controlled and pleasant expression, she spoke gracefully, "Ms. Stovall, would you like to introduce your friend to us?"

She meant Jackson!

Jackson was always babbling and he might even seem to be too carefree. However, he was even more protective of his friends than Macy.

He knew about what happened between Rebecca and Ashton.

From the time we sat down till now, he has been talking to Nick, but his eyes had been looking towards Rebecca, waiting to find a chance to blast her.

At this opportunity, Jackson said, "You must be the legendary Rebecca, right? The one who snatches someone's man by crying, and got accepted into a family by lying?"

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Given the size of the table, he had to raise his voice so everyone could hear.

All eyes were on Rebecca for a while. It was awkward, and nobody spoke, but she took it all in stride. Her face was frozen in an elegant smile, yet she did not seem angered.

"You're surrounded by such upstanding and cultured people, Ms. Stovall," said Joe. "I've barely said a few words, and they're already engaging with me ad hominem.

"Oh, spare us the fancy accusations! Ad hominem indeed!" sneered Jackson. "You're Joe Quinn, I assume. Look, if you want to protect her so badly, then just marry her! Stop her from moping around and pining for someone else's husband like a lovesick puppy."

"Ah, that's human nature, isn't it?" responded Macy. "The grass is always greener on the other side. Forbidden fruit will always taste sweeter if you can't have it for yourself."

I was taken aback by the resentment in her eyes when she looked at Jared. Whatever their history was, it seemed to run quite deep.

Ashton's face sank. "Well, I think pregnant women shouldn't tarry in such hectic places," he said mildly. "Let's all just resume eating."

Rebecca looked aggrievedly at me, but said nothing.

I massaged my temples. That remark was obviously directed at me. Few knew about Macy's pregnancy, but my belly was bulging.

"What a bold display of favoritism!" retorted Jackson smugly.

Nick glanced at me with a mild expression. Having also noticed that Jackson had passed over a dish to him, he frowned with some displeasure. "You know that I don't like fish."

"You will once you eat it!" Jackson seemed to be in relatively decent spirits. He was constantly pestering Nick to try new things, but his actions seemed ambiguous.

It was odd, considering how it was only a meal.

Jared had initially required to remain in hospital, but he refused to stay there since he was already nearing a complete recovery. To compensate for this, he employed a personal doctor to see to his needs. Macy was much better now so she insisted on being discharged.

Jackson turned around and tossed the car keys at me. "I'm also getting ready to depart for M Country. Please call me any time, should you have any problems."

Ashton and I had a plane to catch so we went straight back to the villa to pack.

It was ten o'clock at night by the time we reached K City. Someone had been assigned to pick us up from the airport in a black limousine.

Ashton was juggling with the luggage and me when suddenly, a middle-aged man exited the car. In a very respectful tone, he gave Ashton a heartfelt greeting.

Ashton nodded at him and handed our luggage to him before helping me into the car. I was drowsy but still managed to catch the introduction Ashton provided. The man was Croyden, his aunt's butler.

I gave him a slight nod to greet him but soon dozed off on Ashton's shoulder. It might have been the long flight, coupled with the running around all day. In no time, I fell into a deep slumber.

I didn't even wake up when Ashton brought me to our room.

When I woke up the next day, I was dumbstruck. The furnishings in the room seemed oddly familiar. I was sure that we were already in K City, so what was all this?

While I noticed the similarities between the furnishings in the bedroom and what we had in the J City villa, these items seemed to be newer and more up-to-date. It was likely that the designs were a bit less popular due to how new they were.

I lay down for a while longer to get rid of the drowsiness before finally getting up. The layout of the bedroom was the same as that of the villa we lived in. Even the toiletries were brands that I used frequently, arranged per Ashton's instructions.

When I stepped out of the bathroom, I saw Ashton standing there in a full suit. He smiled and asked, "Did you sleep well last night?"

I nodded and gave him the once-over. He was dressed in his usual all-black, custom-designed suit, just like everything else he owned. "Have you considered wearing other colors?"

I had bought him clothing in other colors before, but they were all hanging in the closet, untouched.

He arched a brow and walked towards me. "I can try!" With that, he proceeded to tug my arm towards the exit.

I froze for a moment. "At least let me get dressed!"

"Go have breakfast first. You can change after eating!"

I frowned. "Aren't we at your aunt's place?"

He shook his head and took my hand. "It's too hectic over there and crowded to boot. For that reason, I bought this place. I was concerned that you wouldn't be able to sleep well. The bedroom has been designed according to the villa in J City, but it is much larger. It'll also be easier to cater to the arrival of the baby."

His thoughtful consideration surprised me. Immediately, I felt warmth bloom in my heart. Smiling at him, I asked, "Is Mrs. Eriksen here too?"

"No." Pulling me out of the bedroom, he said, "Someone needs to manage things in J City. However, I've hired some part-time staff, a personal doctor, and housekeepers to tend to your needs. They live in the next block."

I didn't understand what he meant initially but learnt later that it had to do with the layout of the grounds itself. It was a large, elegant Oriental-style building divided into three main blocks. The main building, where Ashton and I lived, was two-story high. The other two buildings housed the doctor, the housekeepers, and a few bodyguards.

The whole place was also beautifully landscaped. A rockery and water feature adorned the main house and garden, but it was also filled with seasonal fruits and vegetables. The backyard was mostly filled with fruit trees. Extra care was taken to include flowers and plants that were in season to decorate both areas.

It was a large place. After breakfast, Ashton led me on a tour of the place and told me to get dressed. We were going to visit his aunt.

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This was my first time in K City. Being the country's capital, it came with rich historical background. Not only did it pay homage to its rich past, but it also served to usher in its even brighter future.

However, such a large city meant that it came with its own set of problems, namely traffic. Ashton had one hand on the steering wheel while his other drummed impatiently against the steering wheel.

I looked at the scenery outside the car window distractedly. I may have seemed calm on the outside, but I was actually quite nervous.

I had never met Ashton's aunt before.

The city center was a glorious sight. In an area where every square inch of land was worth a lot of money, they had also developed natural green pockets and parks. The people who lived here were super-rich with their cars dotting the parking lots.

When I got out of the car, I noticed that even shrubs and trees in the area were exotic. There was also an eye-catching lily pond in the center, where pink and white lilies were in full bloom.

Ashton took me along a cobblestone path. As we walked up the stairs, we soon reached another stately-looking Oriental-style villa.

In the two years that I'd been with Ashton, I'd seen plenty of luxurious villas. The property in front of me was particularly outstanding and overwhelming.

Standing at the gate was a very composed woman who looked to be in her thirties. She wore a dress the color of ink, embroidered with daisies.

As soon as she saw us, she greeted us with a joyous smile. "Well, I'd been expecting you both for breakfast instead! Since you took so long to arrive, we can only have lunch."

"I apologize. The traffic was terrible!" replied Ashton, looking sheepishly at her.

His gaze returned to me. All this while, he hadn't let go of my hand yet. "This is my wife, Scarlett."

The woman looked at me indulgently as her smile widened. She pulled me towards her for a closer look. "So she is the woman father chose? She has an elegant and good-natured air, plus she also looks beautiful even though she's with child!"

I grinned and said, "Hello, Aunt Sally."

George Fuller only had three children in his lifetime. Out of the three, two were sons. The eldest died young, leaving only one other male in his wake. The second son was more carefree and wasn't particularly interested in corporate affairs. Little else was known about his daughter, Sally Fuller.

With all the introductions out of the way, Aunt Sally then led us both into the villa. With its white walls and black tiles, the building had a simple color palette. However, there was no denying that the materials and overall design were top-notch.

Next to the villa was an open-air yard area. From here, I could see someone sitting under a sunshade, drinking tea with a book in his hands. Next to him lay a large gray Tibetan mastiff. I wasn't particularly fond of dogs, especially large ones like this intimidated me.

I couldn't help but lean against Ashton, instinctively clutching his elbow.

Having noticed my reaction, Ashton paused to glance at what triggered it before looking away.

"That's your Uncle Benjamin's son, Marcus," said Sally with a smile. "You're both of the same age, Ashton."

Ashton nodded and said nothing else.

I had been feeling odd since I entered the villa. Sally looked to be only a few years older than Ashton, yet when she introduced Marcus, she referred to him as 'your uncle Benjamin's son'.

Ashton had never even mentioned anything about Sally Fuller. Although I had my doubts, I couldn't just blurt my thoughts out and ask questions. That would've been tactless.

As we entered the foyer, I couldn't help but glance at Marcus, who was still lounging on the deck. He was dressed in an off-white shirt and gray slacks with white household slippers. Marcus exuded an air of elegance and gentility, despite the attire he was clad in.

A man like this would've been the perfect catch for any woman.

Suddenly, I heard my name being called in the distance. Putting aside my thoughts, I hastily continued down the foyer.

"You're pregnant, dearest," said Sally with a gentle smile. "You should watch your movement."

I nodded. My scalp prickled as I had the feeling that someone was watching me. Instinctively, I turned around.

Marcus had been looking at me, his gaze clear as day. As our eyes met, I was stunned. I smiled on impulse and nodded slightly, hoping that it would pass for a greeting.

He furrowed his brows at me for a moment and went back to his book.

The foyer leading into the living room was bright and luxuriously decorated. An expensive and well-maintained grand piano was placed near the staircase, further highlighting the sophistication of the decor.

Sally instructed her staff to set about preparing lunch before inviting us all to have a seat in the living room. 'Your Uncle Benjamin is at the office, but he'll be back soon.'

She then directed her gaze at me before asking, "You're seven months pregnant, right? Do you know when the baby is due?"

I smiled at her gently before glancing at Ashton. "Yes, he's had everything arranged."

Sally nodded. The grin on her face was enough to warm anyone's heart.

After a brief chat, Sally ushered us into the backyard for some tea. Although the two were family, Ashton did not speak much, so Sally had to fill in most of the gaps.

She asked about all sorts of things. From the Fullers to the company and of other updates, but the one thing she hadn't asked about was Old Mr. Fuller.

Ashton's responses were brief and made for sufficient banter as he answered each of those questions. A cursory glance in Sally's direction made me notice that she had red-rimmed eyes. I gingerly got up and said, "Why don't you both catch up, Aunt Sally? I've been sitting for too long, and my back feels a little uncomfortable."

Sally got up as well, with some concern etched on her face. "We have a personal doctor employed here. Shall I ask him to take a look at you?"

I quickly shook my head. "There's no need, really! I'll just take a walk. Please, continue."

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Ashton glanced at me and said, "Alright, but do be careful."

Seeing this, Sally smiled at me with gratitude in her eyes. If Ashton were unwilling to discuss the Fullers, I couldn't just interject on her behalf. As such, this was a private matter within the family. A person as elegant or composed as Sally would definitely not want me around to witness her impending faux-pas.

I decided to take a stroll, marveling at the size of the yard. I followed a cobblestone path and soon found a shady place to sit in silence and observe my surroundings.

However, Marcus's arrival immediately shattered the silence that I had been enjoying.

A tall and slender figure loomed over me with a condescending look in his eyes.

For the sake of maintaining decorum, I got up and greeted him with a smile.

He furrowed his brows again, still clutching the book he was reading earlier. His gaze fell onto my swollen belly before asking, "A Fuller child?"

I was a little taken aback by how abruptly he had asked about the child in my belly. I paused to collect my thoughts before nodding at him. "Well, I'm Scarlett. Nice to meet you."

He nodded and didn't say much, but there was no mistaking the hostility beneath his lowered gaze.

His reaction made me feel puzzled. I wonder why he was so hostile towards me, seeing as we've never met?

Fortunately, he simply grunted a response at me and left.

By the time we had lunch, it was already two in the afternoon.

There were only five of us present at the table. Apart from Sally, Ashton, and myself, there were two others, Marcus and Benjamin, both of whom were formally introduced then.

At a glance, Benjamin appeared to be in his fifties, at least. He also seemed to be surprisingly warm and gentle despite being a middle-aged man in an industry as ruthless as business or finance.

For people like Benjamin and Sally to appear together in public as husband and wife, I'm assuming they were prone to gossip. After all, the visual image they both conjured was startling. Benjamin looked much older than the more youthful Sally.

However, all other queries I had instantly vanished the moment a woman named Sharon appeared.

What was initially a quiet and harmonious meal was disrupted by the arrival of this middle-aged woman who clearly meant to start a fight. Her eyes were full of tears, her voice hoarse, but that did not stop her. "Listen here, Benjamin White. I can ignore your dalliances with your mistress and still put up with you being with her, but this is going too far. Why did you will the company to this woman instead of your flesh and blood? Yes, have you forgotten about him? Our son? Are you hell-bent on making him the joke of K City?"

The woman shuddered and looked venomously at Sally. "Sally Fuller, just what have you done? I know that I haven't been able to compete with you for the last ten years! You've already ruined my marriage and my family, so why are you now targeting my son?"

Sally was quite surprised at the revelation. She turned to look at Benjamin with a frown and asked, "When did you will the company to me?"

"Sooner or later, they will be yours. I'm getting older and won't be around for much longer." Benjamin sighed dejectedly and looked at Sharon. "I have not neglected our son. Marc will inherit all of my other assets, so he'll have a promising future in M Country when the day arrives."

Sharon was still unsatisfied with the explanation and could only see red. "This company was something we built and managed together over the years. Why are you giving it to an outsider?"

"Sally is not an outsider. She is my wife." As he said this, his tired gaze fell on Marcus. Warily, he said, "Take your mother home."

Marcus arched a brow with an impassive yet dangerous look on his face. "Home? Doesn't she live here?"

"You—" Before he could finish, Benjamin lapsed into a coughing fit. In a panic, Sally immediately rushed to his side and tried to ease his discomfort. "I don't want to have

anything to do with the company," said Sally, seemingly distraught. "Please stop forcing him. He's already in poor health! Just go home and leave us be."

This was directed at both Marcus and Sharon.

Sharon could only stare resentfully at the couple. In a huff, she quickly grabbed Marcus's hand. With a shaky voice, Sharon asked him to take her home.

Marcus observed Benjamin and Sally with a grim expression on his face. He sat there unmovingly for a while, contemplating his actions. If not for how upset Sharon was, he would've likely taken out more of his anger on the couple.

Ashton and I weren't meant to witness this. This was a private family spat, after all. I released the breath I had been holding instinctively. Having seen what just happened, I now understood why Grandpa did not want to acknowledge Aunt Sally's presence.

All three generations of the Fullers made a name for themselves by joining the army and have received praise for their meritorious service to the nation. They were raised with good values, but things took a different turn when Grandpa led the family. He didn't want the future generations to be living such dangerous lives anymore. Thus, he left the army and founded the Fuller Corporation, steering the family towards business ventures instead.

I wasn't blind to why Sharon came here and kicked up such a big fuss. From what I gathered, Benjamin's son was in his thirties, yet Sally was only thirty-five years old. I could tell that their marriage was definitely not a simple one.

The unfortunate incident suddenly made the atmosphere deeply uncomfortable for everyone present. What was supposed to be a pleasant meal turned into a disaster in the end.

The doctor employed at the villa was later called into Benjamin's room as Sally accompanied him.

With that, evening had already approached. Benjamin was already feeling better and was fast asleep. Sally breathed a sigh of relief and looked guiltily at Ashton. It was evident that she blamed herself for this. "I apologize for my oversight. It's my fault that lunch was ruined."

Ashton didn't respond immediately but merely studied her for a brief moment. Coolly, he asked, "Do you regret it?"

Sally could only smile bitterly at the question. "Regret? It's too late for that. It's been so many years now and life goes on."

Ashton pursed his lips and didn't have much else to say. Tugging my arm, he looked at Sally and said, "Well, I think it's about time for us to head back."