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I hummed a response but didn't probe further. Instead, my mind drifted to Danny and I said, "Nora, since I won't be in A City for several days, I trust you to take care of that matter I mentioned to you before. By the way, there's also Danny. I met him in an alley a while ago. He looked like a pitiful mess, so I told him to come to me if he needs anything. I may need your help on that since I won't be around for the time being."

Even through the phone, I could feel her pouting as she answered, "Alright, alright. I got it. Honestly, you're too kind for your own good. People like Danny are already beyond saving. Why are you getting yourself involved with him? You'll only bring unnecessary trouble to yourself."

I chuckled softly and merely said, "Thanks for your help, anyway. I'll make it up to you!"

She sighed again. "I know."

After we ended the call, the taxi coincidently arrived at the airport. I got off and took my suitcase before heading toward the boarding gates. When I was collecting my ticket, I inadvertently spotted a friend.

Well, maybe not a friend... she's more like an acquaintance.

After collecting her ticket, Tessa scanned her surroundings, as if hiding from someone. Then, she walked toward the international boarding gate.

She's going abroad? Where?

I wasn't close with her to begin with, so I didn't intend to approach her and pry for information. As the distance between us increased, I headed to the terminal to wait for my flight.

At some point in time, I had unwittingly developed a habit of reading a book before boarding a plane and all the way to my destination. But I was happy about it since it was a good habit.

The flight lasted for four hours. By the time I arrived in K City, it was already quite late. I fished out my phone and checked my WhatsApp. Even though I didn't receive any messages from Ashton, I didn't feel that sad about it.

It was eight o'clock in the evening and I wondered if Summer was still awake. After giving it some thought, I dismissed the idea of calling her and took a cab to a hotel, planning to see Summer the next morning instead.

When I reached the hotel, I approached the front desk to settle the check-in procedures. To my dismay, the lady working the desk was quite slow at her job. She spoke on the phone while handling my check-in information, and would occasionally throw apologetic glances at me.

I wasn't exactly in a hurry, so I would smile in response without rushing her.

After she put down the phone, she sent me another apologetic look and stated, "I'm sorry, Miss. Our hotel is fully booked. We can't check you in anymore."

I was dumbfounded. "But it's only eight."

She smiled and patiently explained, "Well, Independence Day is coming soon, so our hotel is mostly receiving tourists groups lately. Individual guests usually have to arrive earlier to book a room, so I'm really sorry!"

It hit me just then. There would be an Independence Day Parade. Not to mention, K City had a large population. Adding on the momentous occasion that was just around the corner, most hotels would basically be overcrowded.

Thinking that most of the hotels were in the same situation, I hesitated for a while before calling Emery. Fortunately, she answered after the first ring. "You finally called me! For a moment there, I thought you'd disappeared!"

I chuckled and went straight to the point. "I have a situation right now and might need your help."

"Tell me. What is it? I'll do everything in my power to help you!" she responded earnestly.

A laugh escaped my lips at her flair for drama and I elaborated, "I'm in K City now. All the hotels are fully booked, so I might have to stay at your house for a few days."

"What the f*ck?" she cursed without restraint. "Scarlett, I treat you as one of my own, but here you are, treating me like a d*mn outsider! You really are something, huh? Anyway, where are you now? I'll come and pick you up. We have so many rooms at the Moore Residence, you could've come straight here and picked one. But you just had to go to a hotel. Seriously?"

I cut to the chase and simply sent her my location.

Luckily, traffic wasn't heavy and she reached not long after.

Her red Lexus sportscar pulled to a stop in front of the hotel entrance, garnering a lot of attention. She rolled down her window and peered at me. "Get in, hot stuff!"

Tickled pink by her rowdy behavior, I giggled before motioning at my suitcase. "Will it fit into your car?"

She pursed her lips and swore loudly, "Well, f*ck! Why is your suitcase so big? Are you moving a corpse?"

After a short pause, she suggested, "I'll get Hunter to come over to pick it up later. Let's go home first." Then, she politely gave the hotel doorman some instructions and even thanked him with a large tip.

In the car, she scrutinized me with a frown on her face. "Where have you been? Why did you leave without saying a word? Do you and Ashton both have the habit of doing this?"

I rolled my eyes at her and changed the subject. "Everyone's been doing fine, I presume?"

"My brother and sister-in-law seemed to have aged a whole decade. If it wasn't for Summer, I think they would've agreed to die together to atone for their sins. Cut them some slack, hmm? Life is like that, so let bygones be bygones. How long are you going to keep this up? Are you really going to push everyone away and live in solitude for the rest of your life?"

I pressed my lips together and kept silent.

When the car rolled to a stop at the entrance of the Moore Residence, I was stunned for a split second but got down from the car without thinking too much. Before I could get my bearings, Summer threw herself into my arms.

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She hugged me and peppered me with kisses, all the while telling me how much she missed me.

Hugging her small frame, all of the day's fatigue seemed to have melted away. Cameron and Zachary walked over right then, along with another man who looked to be over fifty. After not seeing each other for a few months, they seemed to have aged significantly beyond their years.

I looked at them but didn't know what to say, so I settled for a smile.

Cameron smiled with motherly affection and piped up, "It's so good to finally see you. Come, let's go home!"

Having said that, she tugged me toward the villa. Emery had probably notified them in advance, so they ordered the housemaids to prepare a new table of food.

Summer was brimming with excitement. It was well past her bedtime, but she remained in my arms without any trace of sleepiness. Cameron had to gently remind her several times before she finally dragged her feet back to her room.

After a short while, however, she padded out of her room again to climb on my lap, asking softly, "Mommy, can I sleep with you tonight? I wanna hug you to sleep. It's been so long since we slept together, Mommy. I miss you!"

Any mother who had been away from her child for too long wouldn't be able to refuse her child's requests, and I was no exception.

Hence, I nodded with a helpless smile.

After having something to eat, Hunter came home with my suitcase and brought it upstairs before carrying his baby boy over. Because he was in a hurry earlier, he didn't get to see his son before leaving.

Before I knew it, I was reaching out to take the four-month-old baby from Emery's arms. He was so tiny and chubby that merely looking at him seemed to fill my heart with joy. All

women probably had a soft spot for children and would inevitably develop a sense of adoration for them.

Summer leaned against me to peer at the baby and said innocently, "Mommy, you should give me a little brother like Xavier too. Granny said that when I get older, I can help you take care of him. That way, you won't be too tired."

Surprised by her words, I glanced at her with a smile. "Summer, I'm happy with just you."

Emery eyed me and queried, "Are you and Ashton really not going to have a child?"

I nodded wordlessly, signifying the end of this topic.

We sat together as the night deepened. Summer had fallen asleep against me. Emery and Hunter carried their child upstairs to sleep, while Zachary went to his study, saying he had some matters to handle.

Cameron noticed the exhaustion lining my features and advised, "It's getting late. Staying up late isn't good for women, especially at your age. Go back to your room and have a good rest. Summer misses you a lot after not seeing you for so long. You should take her with you and sleep with her tonight."

I nodded and carried Summer upstairs. The Moore Residence was an enormous three-story villa with an extravagant interior design. Not just any wealthy family had the luxury of living in this five-hundred-square-meter residence located in the city center.

"This room was prepared by your father ever since he found out about your existence. Rebecca stayed here before. He was worried you would mind, so he got people to change everything, but he was afraid his tastes wouldn't suit yours, so he insisted on asking Ashton about your preferences. Some time ago, he brought Summer to R Province and looked for John. Then, he visited the place you lived in when you were young to see what kind of design you liked."

Cameron led me into a large bedroom that had at least a hundred square meters and was comparable to an ordinary family's entire house. The interior design was mainly elegant and simple. Indeed, it was my favorite style.

After I placed Summer on the bed, Cameron explained, "Some of the clothes in the wardrobe were chosen by your father, and some by me. I noticed that you usually dress plainly, so I

picked the clothes based on your style. I'm not sure whether you'll like them, but that's okay. If you don't, we can switch them out for something you prefer. The bags and jewelry were brought back by your father in recent years. They're all boutique items from famous fashion shows. I know Ashton treats you very well and you've seen your fair share of luxury items, so you may not be impressed by these things, but as your parents, it's the least we can do. We just want to give you the best. We've made many unforgivable mistakes these past few years and we wish to make it up to you. I know you resent us for what happened to your child, so we won't force you to accept us. We'd be happy as long as you're willing to come home and visit us."

As Cameron spoke, tears rolled down her cheeks. Hearing her voice that was thick with emotion, I placed my hands on her shoulders and reassured her. "Everything will be better in the future"

I didn't know what the future held, but the hardest thing to understand in the world was kinship. Concurrently, kinship was what helped us find our way home when we were lost. Although I didn't share a familial bond with them, we were still related by blood. In the decades to come, perhaps I would learn to understand the concept of family.

She gazed at me and smiled in relief. Certain things didn't need to be said out loud to be understood. Sometimes, a look or a gesture could convey what a thousand words couldn't.

In fact, I had already thought things through when I was in the morgue. Nothing came for free in this world. We had to work hard for whatever we wanted, otherwise, regret would be the only thing remaining at our moment of death.