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My unannounced appearance stunned Shane. Just when he was on the verge of losing his cool, he saw Ashton behind me and he got on his knees immediately. "Mrs. Fuller, you're right. I'm at fault. I will never do it again!"

I doubted him. After all, a leopard would never change its spots. I watched his girlfriend's face closely. Somehow, I pitied her. I couldn't believe she would fall for a guy like him.

"Break up with him. He does not deserve you," I said to her.

I knew that no matter what I said, it would be useless. Despite that, I had to say something. That woman looked at me, puzzled. There was no longer any trace of the alluring expression that she wore earlier. Rather, she looked miserable and pale. "Thanks," she muttered after a while.

I shook my head nonchalantly. "No, I just can't bear to see this jerk raised his hand on you."

Ashton pursed his lips. "Let's go." I stood up and followed him. After a distance away, I took another glance at her. Then, with a heavy sigh, I made my way down the stairs.

"Not everyone walks the same path. Everyone is different. You can't control it," he said with a warm smile as he held my hand.

I turned to him. "Are you trying to say that I shouldn't be a busybody?" I said, with a little pout.

He responded with a gentle grin before he rubbed his nose and said, "You are overthinking it."

I huffed, and we stayed silent until the cruise ship docked. I was surprised to see a familiar face when we disembarked. "Joseph, when did you arrive?"

"Today."

I considered him a friend. Naturally, I missed him after such a long time. As soon as we got into the car, we had a good catch-up.

On our way to the hotel, Ashton had a horrible cough. I asked worriedly, "Are you feeling unwell?" He was finally discharged from the hospital, but the doctor advised that he needed to rest. However, he just couldn't turn down Holden's invitation because it was an important event.

"I'm fine. Don't worry." I watched him silently as he leaned back in his seat and shut his eyes to rest.

Upon our arrival at the hotel, I was suddenly feeling so exhausted that I crashed on the bed while the two men chatted in the living room. What was supposed to be a nap became a deep slumber.

Ashton came and woke me up after he showered. As he stood by the bed, I could smell the scent of soap on him. "Go wash up. You can go back to sleep after that," he said tenderly.

I stood up and rested my head in the hollow of his shoulder. "Sorry, I was too sleepy. These past few days are just mentally exhausting. I definitely need a good rest when we get home."

He stroked my hair idly. "Shall I help you wash up? You can continue your sleep, then."

A sly grin crept onto his face. I knew he was up to no good, so I immediately made my way to the bathroom.

The moment I stepped in, I furrowed my brows at a bottle of Vitamin A next to the sink. It was odd to see supplements around him lately, yet I tried to think positive. This is perfectly normal. Everyone takes care of themselves more as they get older.

After I got out of the shower, I showed him the bottle and asked, "Have you been taking this lately?"

He reached out and took a glance at it before nodding.

"Why Vitamin A? Are you feeling any discomfort in your body as you get older? Why are you taking all these supplements?" I asked inquisitively.

He closed the book in his hands, laid it carefully on the side table, and fixed his blazing gaze on me. "My dear wife, are you despising me now?"

I was flabbergasted for a moment. Then I shook my head and chuckled. "Of course not. You are Prince Charming. You look classy and young as ever."

He raised a brow, then pulled me down onto the bed. He took the towel that I wrapped around the top of my head and wiped my hair gently from behind. "Stay away from Holden." His voice was soft.

"Why?" I was surprised by his sudden change of topic.

He pursed his lips. "Is he hot?" Although he was being nonchalant, I could sense a hint of jealousy.

With a small smile, I turned my head to him. "I've watched a variety show a few days ago. One of the female singers said that she was not interested in the twenty-five-year-old guys because they are boring. I guess Holden is around that age, no?"

His expression darkened. "Don't watch that kind of show anymore."

I pouted. "I kind of agree with her though." I tried to reassure and win over my jealous hubby.

It had been three days since we returned to K City, and Ashton was busy day and night. Going back and forth between the office and home became a routine for him. I visited him at work because I was concerned about his health since he had just recovered.

When I went down to the lobby, I saw Stella, who I hadn't seen for almost six months. She looked like an entirely different person under such sophisticated makeup and stylish attire. I wouldn't recognize her if she hadn't approached me first.

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"Mrs. Fuller, you're back from the trip," Stella greeted me.

I was so mesmerized by her drastic change that I fell silent for a moment. After a while, I threw a smile at her and nodded. "Yeah. By the way, are you going out with someone? You look gorgeous."

"You're flattering me, Mrs. Fuller." She blushed. We both laughed.

Suddenly, my phone rang. It was Sasha's mother. I answered the call as I knew it was around the time that she would ask me for money for Renee's chemotherapy.

Instead of the usual sobbing I was expecting, the woman sounded calm on the other end. Instead, she forced calmness into her voice and said, "Mrs. Fuller, are you free to come over? Renee wants to see you and thank you personally."

She sounded rather unusual to me, so I asked in confusion, "Mrs. Brooks, what's wrong?"

"Nothing. It's just that Renee wants to express her gratitude for your generous support with her medical fees."

I promised her I would stop by. I ended the call, bade Stella farewell, then headed to the hospital.

I hated the iodoform smell in the hospital, so I quickened my pace to Renee's room. Both her grandparents were in the ward with her. They had aged considerably when I last saw them two weeks ago. Now, their wrinkles were more prominent, and they looked haggard.

Mrs. Brooks stood up from her seat when she saw me entered the room. "Mrs. Fuller, thank you for coming."

I shook my head slightly. They informed me they hadn't eaten, so I agreed to stay and looked after Renee. Then, they excused themselves and went to the cafeteria. The emotion I felt when I looked at the child was unexplainable.

She lay asleep on the bed with a pale and gaunt face. It was heart-breaking to see such a lovely girl terribly emaciated because of cycles of chemotherapy treatments.

I took a seat beside her bed as I seriously pondered whether I should ask Ashton's help for her treatments. Renee deserved the best specialist out there who could cure her illness. It was just unbearable to see her suffer.

When I was about to message him, Renee woke up and was surprised to see me. "Ms. Stovall..." she called out my name with a quavering voice.

"Did I wake you up?"

She shook her head and looked at me. "Where are Grandma and Grandpa?" she asked.

"They went out for lunch. Renee, are you thirsty? I'll pour you a glass of water."

"It's fine. Thanks, Ms. Stovall."

I smiled faintly and held her bony hand. My heart ached for her. "Are you hungry?"

She just shook her head, perhaps still a little groggy from her sleep. I usually felt awkward around little kids, so we fell into silence. I noticed her gaze drifting from me to the ceiling several times.

"Ms. Stovall, am I dying?" She finally broke the silence.

Her question gripped my heart. The air surrounded us seemed too hard for me to breathe. I tried to suppress my tears and force a smile. "No. The doctor will cure you, and you will get well very soon. After that, you can run outside, play under the blue sky, or even go to the zoo with your grandparents."

"Really?" Her eyes sparkled with excitement.

I tugged on her hand and nodded affirmatively. "Yeah. After you recover, I will bring you anywhere you want. How does that sound to you?"

Suddenly, she looked attentive, even hopeful. "I have not eaten cake and ice cream in a long time. Grandma said I can only eat after I get better."

Her earnest response somehow touched me. "Okay. It's a promise then!"

"Hooray!" she exclaimed. Then she took out a pocket-size notebook from behind her pillow. "Ms. Stovall, my grandma wants you to take this." She passed it to me. "It's my mom's diary. And Grandma said I should thank you for your kind help."

Confused, I reached out for the diary. "Your mom's diary?"

She nodded. "Yes. I don't know what she wrote because I can't read. Grandma said it can help you. Now, keep it in your bag before some bad guys see it. Read it only when you reached home." Thus, I shoved the notebook into my handbag.

We were having a nice talk when her grandparent returned from their lunch. "Mrs. Fuller, thank you so much," Mrs. Brooks said gratefully.

"Don't mention it. Don't worry about her hospital bills. I'll find another way."

"Mrs. Fuller, my husband and I have tried our best. We have decided to give up on the treatment. Renee has gone through so much. We want her to enjoy her childhood to the fullest." Despite the smile, she sounded despair.

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Her words stunned me. I was at a loss for words. "Why, Mrs. Brooks? I've sought advice from the doctor. He said there's still hope. If you're worried about the cost, please don't be. Just leave it to me. Renee is still young. There are endless possibilities ahead of her..."

Before I could finish, she broke down in tears and shook his head helplessly. "Still, she can never break free from misery. My husband and I are old now. We will only become a burden for her in the future. Not to mention, she has a wicked uncle. We caused Sasha's death. So we can't let Renee go through the same faith as her mother. She should live the rest of her life with no regret. She deserves happiness in this life and the next life."

I could feel Mrs. Brooks' pain. Somehow, I agreed with her, because even if Renee pulled through this difficult period, there was no one she could turn to. Shane, that jerk alone, would definitely make her life a living hell. Also, she had to take care of her grandparents alone in the future.

No, I must not give up hope. Before I could muster enough reasons to persuade her, Mrs. Brooks looked at me and said, "Mrs. Fuller. I know you are being kind, and we really appreciate it. It's getting late now. You should head home."

I held my tongue and left the ward, utterly frustrated. I knew I have no right to decide on their family matters. Most of all, I couldn't meddle in that little girl's future.

Suddenly, I felt a vibration in my handbag and reached for my phone. It was a call from Nora. "Scarlett!" She was as loud as always. "Are you at K City? Have you seen Armond? He hasn't called me for days! Why exactly did the police seize the Lavelian Village project? And you, when will you come and visit me?"

I sat on the chair as I watched people walked in and out of the entrance. I saw people with different emotions—anxiety, despair, joy, and sorrow. There was also a couple who were holding their newborn baby tenderly. I watched them closely and was fascinated to see the realities of life.

Nora waited for my response on another line, but I could not utter a word. The frustration still lingered in me. "I will not visit you for the time being," I said after a moment of silence. "Just take care of yourself and don't worry too much. Something must have happened to the Murphys, but I'm sure Armond will contact you once things have settled down."

She sighed and pouted. "I am hoping for you to come because I am so bored here. You know what? Grandpa is arranging blind dates for me every day! I don't know what has gotten into him. He's suddenly opposing my relationship. He said Armond is not a good match for me. Geez, the old man is so fickle!"

I didn't know how to respond to that, so I just said, "Stop complaining. Maybe Mr. Oberick thinks that's what's best for you."

The sun had already set when we ended the call. I was not surprised because the days were always shorter in that area, especially during autumn, where the weather was unpredictable.

At the villa, I parked my car in the garage. The smell of food lured me to the kitchen. I leaned against the door frame and watched Ashton, who was busy with the dinner preparation. I couldn't help but break into a big smile at the sight of him in an apron.

He noticed my presence and paused. With a startled gasp, he asked, "How long have you been standing there? You should tell me you're home."

"I'm home." I smiled.

He broke into a helpless grin. "Wash your hands. Dinner's ready."

That night was the first time I saw him in a grey sweater. "You look much younger wearing other colors than black," I complimented him.

He arched an eyebrow and gave me a solemn look. "So you mean I look old all this while?"

I found his expression funny. "A little, like an old nerd. You looked intimidating and unapproachable. I prefer you like this. You look more amicable."

"Fine, I will start wearing more colors."

I was surprised that he would take my advice seriously. He had made changes to his bad habits, control his temper, and even took time to reflect on his life.

I could say it was a hundred and eighty-degree change in his image. The Ashton I knew was rather cold and hardly ever smiled. It was not a sudden change. The transition took ten years long. I didn't notice it until I saw him jealous, longed for attention, and broke the habits. Sometimes, he would even throw tantrums. Tonight, I saw the gentler side of him.

He might not express his love verbally, but he made a habit of caring.

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Noticing that I was staring blankly into space, he waved in front of me. "What are you thinking about?"

I recollected my thoughts and planted a kiss on his chin. "I'm thinking of how lucky I am to be able to meet someone like you."

He replied, "I'm lucky to meet you too, Ms. Stovall."

After spending some time alone with him, my troubles dissipated, and I felt better. I went back to my bedroom and received a call from Cameron. She asked me how I was doing and urged me to visit them.

I explained to her my current situation and promised to visit them the next day. Suddenly, Summer called out to me from the other end of the phone and chatted with me for a while before hanging up.

Initially, I wanted to take a good sleep, but right after Ashton and I lay on the bed, his phone rang. Upon answering the call, his expression turned stern as he got up and changed his clothes.

Seeing his reaction, I couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong? What happened?"

"There are some problems with the investigation at Lavelian Village. I have to be there."

Upon that, he packed his stuff, while I changed into some casual clothing and followed him.

He wanted me to stay, but knowing my temperament, he let me do as I pleased.

Then, we rushed to the airport and boarded the last flight. On the plane, we took a brief nap, and when we reached A City, the sky was still dark. Hence, we went back to the villa and slept for two hours before going to Lavelian Village.

It had been almost a month since I went to Lavelian Village. Scanning the surroundings, a lot of things had changed. The construction was completed, as a two-story building was erected from the ground. Not only that but the roads were also paved with cement to make walking easier and safer since it was almost winter.

The project was a collaboration between the Fuller Corporation and the Murphy Corporation. However, now that problems had surfaced one after another within the two companies, everything was put to a halt.

Ashton parked the car at the entrance of the base, and we scanned the scene. The police officers had the area barricaded to preserve the scene for further investigation. At the same time, Rachel was communicating with the police officers, while Armond was nowhere to be seen.

"Mr. Fuller, you're here." Upon detecting Ashton's presence, Rachel came towards us and was in a good mood.

Ashton looked at her and asked, "What's the current situation?"

"The place that Armond transferred the technology equipment was discovered, and the police officers had it sealed off. They are contacting the Murphys right now." Rachel glanced at me as she reported to the man.

Soon after, Linda came to the scene and was rather agitated when she saw me. "Where did you go? Why is Mr. Murphy locked up in Moranta? What's going on?"

Things were quite complicated, so I didn't know how to tell her. After pondering for a while, I said, "It's complicated. I'll tell you everything in detail next time. Anyway, what's going on here?"

The woman pursed her lips. "I don't know. Do you remember the time when Fuller Corporation's technology got stolen? They were all stored in the underground warehouse. To be honest, I never knew there was an underground warehouse here after working at the Murphy Corporation for ten years. Goodness gracious!"

Hearing her words, I glanced at Ashton. Back then, I noticed something was off with the structure of the base, so I asked Ashton to look into it.

After a while, Ashton said, "Let's go in and have a look."

We headed toward the base, and police officers were guarding the entrance. Rachel took the initiative to talk to them. "This is Mr. Fuller, the president of the Fuller Corporation. We're here to check on the technology equipment stolen from us."

The police officers took a glance at us and said, "To go in, the person in charge for both companies must be present."

I exchanged glances with Linda. "We are the Murphy Corporation's person in charge of this project. Sorry to trouble you." With that, Linda showed them her work pass.

After glancing at the work pass, the police officers let us in. The equipment on the first floor was the same as before. With Rachel guiding us, we went in and headed towards another door.

When I saw the door, I was shocked. It looked exactly the same as the wall. No one would notice it as it blended in with the wall perfectly.

"Why is there a door here? When was this designed?" Linda blurted out in shock as she furrowed her brows.

I was shocked as well. However, there was more to come. Following that, a long pathway could be seen. As we walked down the pathway, we reached the warehouse and saw the stolen technology equipment.

Rachel said, "It seems like I was right. The equipment couldn't be transported in such a short time since they were big and would attract unwanted attention. Even if they were meticulous about the operation, people would still notice it. So their only way of doing it was to move them here."

Then she turned to Linda and clapped her hands sarcastically. "My, my, what a brilliant plan by the Murphy Corporation. Who would've known that the equipment would be in a hidden warehouse within the building itself?"