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He presented an inkpad to me as he waited for my next move.

I nodded my acknowledgement.

Glancing at the table, I couldn't help but zero in on the ten percent and three-point five billion listed on the documents. My eyes burned at the sum.

After a moment of consideration, I lifted my hand and closed the contract before handing it back to the lawyer.

"Mrs. Fuller, what are you doing?" The lawyer's smile was frozen in place.

As the lawyer-in-charge, I knew he would earn a hefty sum once the contract was finalized. I felt sorry for depriving him of his windfall.

I didn't answer him but instead looked at Zachary. "I'm sorry, Mr. Moore. I'm grateful for your gesture toward my children, but we can't accept this."

Zachary frowned in confusion. Cameron cut in before he could speak, "Please don't feel pressured. It's just a small gift for the kids."

A small gift of three-point five billion? It seems that Cameron's sense of money is getting distorted by her wealth.

"No," I insisted. "They're still young, and I don't want them to feel weighed down by such a large inheritance."

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If the twins grew up with such an exorbitant inheritance looming over their heads, I was sure that they would burn out under the pressure and the expectations.

They may choose to go down this path in the future, but as their mother, I don't want to impose this without them having a say.

"We'll just see how it goes," replied Ashton lightly. His decision was, however, firm like mine.

We were coaxing the babies to sleep that night when Ashton hugged me from behind. He muttered reluctantly, "I've forgotten how it feels like to wake up next to you."

I remembered what I had promised him earlier and blushed. "Then you can stay here tonight. This bed is big enough for two."

Armond was on the radar of Interpol, so he would be laying low for a while. As such, K City was a lot safer for us now. We no longer needed to pretend that we were separated.

I looked at Gregory and Audrey, who were both sleeping beside me. And with Summer sleeping right next door, I wished that the moment could last forever.

Ashton suddenly loosened his hug and gently turned me around to face him. "I can't. Now's not the time."

I knitted my brows, confused.

Ashton continued, "Don't forget, Armond isn't our only enemy. Do you know where Armond brought you to earlier?"

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"Wasn't it his old residence overseas?" I asked.

"If only it were that simple." Ashton shook his head. Just then, Audrey kicked off her blanket in her sleep. Ashton turned to tuck her in before he spoke. "Armond was already wanted by the Interpol for his involvement in the underground organ trade. He could never have founded a company that easily. The place you were at was the headquarters of Illiad International in M Country."

"Wait, isn't that company owned by Bill Young? Isn't he a philanthropist famous for donating billions every year?" To say I was shocked was an understatement. Why is a philanthropist working with someone like Armond?

"The donations are real, though I'm not sure where the money comes from." Ashton stared at me intently. "Dealing with Bill is going to be a lot harder than dealing with Armond. So I think it's better to keep up our facade."

He paused before dropping a kiss on my forehead. Backing out of the room slowly, he murmured, "Take care of yourself. You're still sick, after all."

He left the room after giving me a smile.

I replayed his words over and over in my head. When I finally collected myself, he was already gone.

Ashton's right. I'm not just dealing with poor health after my pregnancy; there's also the toxin Armond injected into my body.

It was a slow-acting toxin targeting my internal organs, and there was no available cure. I could only control its spread via medication. While it wasn't fatal or particularly dangerous at the moment, there might be severe effects as time passed. There was a distinct possibility of organ failure as well.

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As these thoughts crossed my mind, I couldn't help but stare at my babies in the stroller. The pain in my heart intensified.

I wasn't scared of death itself, but the thought of its imminent approach frightened me because it meant that I wouldn't be able to watch my children grow.

If only God could hear my prayers and just give me a couple more years to live.

Since the kidnapping of his child, John had upgraded the security system in his home. He ran extensive background checks on all of his staff, making sure that strangers could not infiltrate the Stovall residence again. This way, everyone in the house could finally let down their guard.

A week after my return, I caught wind that Rose had given birth. Since Nick and Rose had always treated me like their older sister, I knew I had to visit her.

Emma tagged along on my visit to the hospital.

"The baby's so pretty. He looks just like you." Rose's son was born after a nine-month-long pregnancy, and he appeared much healthier than my twins. I was genuinely pleased for her.

"Thank you," Rose rasped weakly as she sat against the headboard. She was being tended by an older lady who appeared to be the Harrisons' maid.

"Is Nick still busy with work?" I asked.

Rose lowered her head as she bit her lips in acquiescence.

This seemed to invoke the anger of Rose's caretaker. She snapped, "No matter how busy he was, he should at least be there when his wife is giving birth. Mr. Harrison's really too much."

"Margaret..." Rose interrupted Margaret's rants to no avail.

"You know I'm right. Mr. Harrison took one look at the baby and hasn't come by again since. He didn't even arrange for someone to take care of you after the delivery and you had to beg me for help. Why must you speak up for Mr. Harrison when he's mistreating you like this? I watched you grow up, my dear... I can't let them bully you like this!"

It almost seemed as if she might add me to her rants as well.

Nick had always been an organized person, so I couldn't believe how careless he was when it came to Rose's delivery. He really crossed the line this time.

"Rose, is she telling the truth? That Nick is neglecting you and your son for his work?" I've always had a great impression of Rose, so I was on her side in this ordeal. At the same time, I wanted to clarify some misconceptions in case I got the wrong idea about the situation.

"No, of course not." Rose gave me a weak smile before continuing, "Margaret just misunderstood the situation. She's been taking care of me since I was young, and I would feel uncomfortable if I had to deal with another stranger. That's why I brought her here from the Walker residence. It has nothing to do with Nick."

"Mrs. Harrison..." Margaret appeared to have more to say, but she zipped her lips under Rose's stern glare.

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"Scarlett, let's not talk about me. What about you? I heard you gave birth to a pair of twins! I'm so jealous right now."

It was obvious that she was trying to change the topic. Since Rose didn't want to talk about Nick anymore, I followed her lead and progressed to safer topics.

As I was waiting for the elevator after leaving Rose's ward, I heard a visible sigh from Emma.

"What are you sighing about?" I asked with a laugh.

"Can't I sigh? I just think that being a woman is a tough job," Emma explained.

"Why do you say that, Mrs. Stovall?" I teased her as we entered the elevator.

Emma and John's relationship was still on tenterhooks. As such, she was always surprised whenever she was addressed as Mrs. Stovall.

As I Mrs. Bauman expected, her easygoing demeanor disappeared into a frown at my words. "Mrs. Fuller, can you drop that title?"

I laughed as I pressed the button on the elevator. "I didn't know you'd be so easy to tease."

"Fine, don't say I didn't warn you, I won't hang out with you anymore." Emma made a gesture of turning her head away.

"Ok, ok, I won't joke at your expense anymore. Come on, at least tell me why you don't want to be known as Mrs. Stovall?" I rearranged my face into a serious expression before asking my question.

"Why wouldn't I mind? Just look at Rose. Nick obviously dumped her but she's still defending him. It's almost as if our only job as women is to satisfy a man's wishes. What a tiring way to live." Emma sighed.

I didn't agree with her statement. "To be fair, what if Nick's really stuck in an impossible situation at work? Rose's only making excuses for Nick because she loves him. I don't think it's a matter of men or women at all. It's being in love that's exhausting."