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I thought the second one was from Marcus too, but I heard another man's voice instead. "Mr. Taylor, I think there is someone else investigating Marcus, and they appear to be foreign. Should we find out more about them?"

Not wanting to stop halfway, I tapped on the last one as well and heard the same man's voice again. "Marcus seems to be in contact with them, so it's possible that they have his wife and daughter. We've been tailing him for half a year now, and Marcus is getting increasingly cautious as a result. Would you consider having a different group of men tail him instead, Mr. Taylor?"

It was the man's voice again, and he sounded like he had lost all hope of finding Marcus.

I had a bad feeling in my heart as I placed the phone back down on the table. This isn't good news at all... M Country is an unfamiliar territory for them... Even if Marcus is able to look after himself, what about Camelia and their daughter? Would they even be able to escape unharmed? If even Holden's hardened men find the situation hopeless, what are the odds of Marcus making it back alive?

After giving it some thought, I turned towards Holden and asked in a questioning tone, "You wouldn't go back on your word and just leave Marcus for dead in M Country once I sign this contract, would you?"

Holden shot me a frivolous glance through the corner of his eyes. "What are you saying? I am running the risk of getting on Mr. Fuller's bad side just by

coming over today, and this is what you think of me? How hurtful..." he said with a huge sigh and his head hung low like he was somewhat wronged.

He's telling the truth, though. The closer my babies are to being due, the more Ashton didn't want me getting involved in these sorts of things for fear of any accidents that may occur as a result. I know Holden must've snuck his way here to see me, but he doesn't understand the reason behind Ashton's concern. While I am grateful for his efforts, I could tell that he only did it because of the profits he stood to gain from it. Had the conditions not been favorable enough, he would probably have left Marcus for dead.

With that in mind, I handed him the phone as I said, "I do trust you, Mr. Taylor. However, your inability to locate Marcus after so long has me starting to doubt the capability of your men. Perhaps I should take some time to reconsider our contract..."

Holden narrowed his eyes. "I thought we had a deal."

"All is fair in war. It's better for the both of us to be a little more cautious with each other," I said with a shrug.

He sneered with an icy-cold look in his eyes. "And here I thought Ashton was a sly one... Turns out, you're a lot more cunning than he is! You haven't even fulfilled the promise you made me over half a year ago, and now you're demanding that I put more men on the search for Marcus?"

He had hit the nail on the head, as that was exactly what I wanted from him.

"I would very much appreciate it if you are willing to do so, Mr. Taylor," I said with the most innocent-looking smile I could muster.

Holden leaned back against his chair and eyed me from head to toe as if he was considering my suggestion.

After a brief moment of silence, he burst into laughter all of a sudden. "Hahaha! Very well, I'll make one last exception for you, Ms. Stovall! However..."

He then pointed at his phone on the table, and the look on his face turned vicious as he continued, "If you do not fulfill your end of the bargain when I bring you a video of Marcus on my next visit... I will resort to extreme measures, Ms. Stovall."

Considering the amount of violence and deaths he had witnessed in his life, I had no reason to doubt that he would carry out his threats.

"Of course," I said with a forced smile as I clenched my fist under the table in an attempt to appear unfazed.

Holden glared at me briefly before storming off irritably, having completely forgotten about the blonde woman he brought over earlier. I had to admit, she looked quite hilarious running through the soft mud in heels as she chased after him.

"Who were they?" Emma muttered right after they left.

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"Just a couple of nobodies. By the way, I haven't seen John around during the day lately. What has he been up to?" I tried changing the topic as I didn't want to get into it.

Emma frowned the moment I mentioned John. "He's been giving me the cold shoulder ever since you were kidnapped by Mitchell's men the last time I went out with you, so I'm guessing he hates me now..." she grumbled while tending to the potted plants on the table.

I was surprised as I didn't realize my own actions had led to a conflict between them. "Uh... You're probably just overthinking things... I bet he's just really busy with work!"

"Don't bother trying to console me. I can tell if he's busy, you know?" Emma let out a huge sigh as she continued, "John left his phone at home when you two visited Jackson at the hospital the other day, so I had the chauffeur drive me there and delivered it to him. I saw him starting a fight with Mr. Harrison in public because of you, Letty. I think you're the only woman that he will ever care so deeply about in his life."

I pursed my lips in response and took a moment to think about what she said before replying, "You're wrong, Emma. Have you forgotten what John said on your blind date with him? He personally admitted to liking other women before you, remember? He may come off as bold and fearless, but he's actually a coward who doesn't even have the guts to admit that he likes someone until it's too late! You have to give him some time and keep persevering until he comes to his senses, okay?"

Emma wasn't buying it at all and continued to take her anger out on the potted plants. "That's what you said before, but so much time has passed with no progress between us! In fact, we don't even find our usual squabbles fun anymore! Maybe it really is a one-sided love on my end, after all. I should probably cast these meaningless feelings aside and just be content with my title as his wife. Nothing good ever comes out of overthinking anyway..."

I could tell that she had been deeply hurt by John's words and actions. No woman could possibly put up with being treated so coldly on a daily basis, and Emma was no different.

Like flowers, women require plenty of warmth and care in order to bloom brightly. Being kept in a cold, dark room would just result in them losing their colors over time.

In the end, I decided to remain silent as I had no way of changing her mind.

I was dozing off on the sofa at around eleven that night when I heard the faint sound of footsteps approaching, I opened my eyes, and saw John about to drape his coat over me.

"You should go sleep in your room now that you're awake," he said while slinging the coat over his shoulder instead.

It was indeed uncomfortable sitting for too long with two babies in my tummy, so I did as told and made my way towards the bedroom with his help.

"You've been coming home late recently, John. Is everything okay at work?"

"What could possibly go wrong with Uncle Louis around? Some of my men screwed up a project, so I've been busy cleaning up the mess," John said calmly.

I stopped in my tracks and gave him a serious look as I asked, "How is Hannah doing?"

I knew that John had been secretly keeping an eye on her despite them being separated for so long.

John let go of me and looked away when he realized I had seen through his secret. "Why bring her up all of a sudden?"

Feeling an ache in my waist, I held a hand against it to steady myself as I said earnestly, "To remind you that you should leave the past behind. It wasn't your fault that you lost her, John. You both made that decision together, so you do have the right to move on and love someone else. Stop holding yourself back like this, okay?"

John lowered his gaze and kept quiet, which confirmed my thoughts about him.

He has been going after the Ziegler family ever since the kidnapping incident, and I know it isn't solely because of me. Emma too, was traumatized by the incident. It's obvious that he cares about her, but the blow from losing Hannah was far too severe for him. As a result, he refused to forgive himself and shut everyone out in the process, inadvertently distancing himself from those who loved him...