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"Hello!" I answered the phone as I cleared my throat.

"Scarlett, Nora is awake. She wants to meet you," Armond said over the phone. His voice sounded deep and exhausted.

"Alright, I will hurry over right now!" I exclaimed with a jolt of shock as all traces of my drowsiness vanished into thin air.

After I ended the call, Ashton's hand was still draped across my waist. As the blankets slid off my naked body, I felt a hint of shyness due to the exposure.

Quickly, I set my phone aside. "Nora is awake! I have to go visit her," I told him urgently.

Ashton nodded sleepily. Although he had just woken up, his handsome feature gave him a very alluring look.

Just as I was about to rise to my feet, Ashton captured me in his embrace. "Stay a little longer..." he rasped lowly.

"Nora is awake! There must be a reason for Armond's early call! I must visit her," I said and pushed his hand away.

"Okay," he mumbled in response and did not comment any further.

I felt a tinge of childish frustration when he closed his eyes. Without hesitating, I bent down and blew a puff of air into his ear.

Immediately, his body stiffened in surprise. "Are you teasing me?" Ashton's gaze darkened as he gazed at me.

"I was just trying to wake you up," I replied innocently.

Without warning, Ashton flipped my body and caged me underneath him.

The sudden movement left me stricken with shock as I stared at him with widened eyes. "Ashton, you..."

"You don't have to rush. Instead of waiting for a woman's help, Armond should be able to handle it himself. Let's settle the more urgent matters first!" Ashton murmured before he kissed me affectionately.

It took an hour before we stopped.

Immediately, I scurried to the shower and changed my clothes in fear that he would continue.

When I emerged from the bathroom, the lower half of Ashton's body was clad in a towel as he scribbled in his notebook. Hearing my footsteps, he handed over a box clutched in his hand. "Eat two of these!"

"Are these vitamins?" I asked as I took the box from his hand and peered inside before looking at the handbook. It was filled to the brim with supplements.

"Aunt Sally brought them from Archulea." He nodded and flipped the notebook shut. "It is good for your health."

Despite my reluctance, I did not want to waste my elder's gift. Thus, I forced myself to consume the supplements.

"Hurry up and shower," I urged Ashton when I noticed his languid movements. "Then you can accompany me to visit Nora!"

Along the journey to the hospital, Ashton gave me an apologetic gaze after he finished talking on the phone. "I don't think I can visit Nora with you."

"It's alright. Why don't you stop the car right ahead? I'll hail a cab to the hospital!"

I did not receive a reply from Ashton. It looked like he had no intention to halt the car too. Upon seeing his actions, I decided to play along.

In order to avoid any delay, I grabbed my purse and prepared to leave the car.

However, Ashton did not unlock the door. Instead, his dark gaze remained fixated on me.

"What's going on?" I asked in confusion.

"Are you planning to leave like this?"

"Is there something wrong?" I replied and nodded my head in confirmation.

His mood seemed to sour when he heard my answer. As I observed his expression, Ashton seemed to have a helpless look on his face.

In a rush to leave the car, I decided to discard that thought. With a quick wave, I began to stride towards to hospital.

As I approached the building, I caught sight of a young couple. The young lady clung to the man and refused to let him out of her arms. "When my mum's sickness is better, I'll come and visit you. Don't get angry, please."

Her partner simply nodded his head in compliance. Despite that, he still looked dissatisfied.

The woman raised herself on the tip of her toes and kissed his cheek. "I promise to keep you company for a long, long time. Are you happy now?" she asked.

The woman's adorable antics and sweet kiss must have warmed his heart. Immediately, he nodded his head in approval, albeit he still seemed unhappy with her decision.

I couldn't help the smile that spread across my face. Young love is so passionate!

Right at that moment, I couldn't help but recall Ashton's parting words. Are you planning to leave like this?

Realization dawned upon me as I hurriedly made my way back to where he had dropped me off.

Ashton was still in the midst of reversing his car at the hospital entrance. A wide smile graced his face when he caught sight of me.

"I'll see you tonight!" I ran towards the car and told him softly. Following that, I planted a delicate kiss on the side of his cheek.

The sight of his baffled expression was amusing to me as I bid him farewell and headed to the hospital.

"I'll see you tonight!" His deep voice resonated behind him.

With a bright grin, I bid him farewell and made my way into the hospital.

In the ward, Nora looked pale as she lay in bed with her head heavily bandaged. Armond sat by her bed while peeling fruits. "Was there heavy traffic?" he asked when I entered the room.

"No." I shook my head in slight bashfulness. "I left my house a little late."

"Is she feeling better?" I shifted the topic back to Nora.

"She just ate and is fast asleep right now. You should stay here and keep her company. I have some matters to attend to," Armond said with a nod of his head.

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With that, he grabbed his jacket and left the room.

Armond's absence from Murphy Corporation whilst he was in the hospital must have caused many issues.

I did not comment any further and merely wished him a safe trip. After he left, I took a seat beside the bed and waited for Nora to arouse from her sleep.

Half an hour later, Nora finally awoke from her slumber. "Scarlett, you are here!" She still seemed a little muddled, and her voice sounded raspy.

"How could you venture to the base all alone? It is a place covered in dirt and mud! I thought that you disliked getting dirty!" I asked and helped her into a sitting position.

"Would you trust me if I said that I did not head there alone?" she said and pinched her brows together.

"So, you met someone else last night? Was it someone you recognize?" I nodded and asked in shock.

"I wasn't exactly close with that person," Nora replied, "I have a feeling that I've met the person before."

"What is the situation?"

"Originally, I was picking some fruits at the yard. However, someone else was also present. I thought that he was someone working at the base. After a brief chat, he told me that he was more familiar with the other area and said that he could bring me to a place with sweeter fruits. Thus, I decided to trust him," Nora said after a brief pause.

"So you followed him and ended up like this?" I facepalmed in frustration.

"I had no idea as well! Why would he want to harm me when I've never provoked him! It was the first time that I visited the base!" Nora replied innocently.

I couldn't help but think of the past events. Maybe it wasn't really a coincidence!

"Have you told Armond about this matter?" I asked her.

"I did." Nora nodded. "He said that there were numerous workers at the base. It was normal for women to be preyed upon by those men."

Although her words were true, the incident at the base had only occurred recently. Was that incident really a simple accident?

Seeing that further discussion of this topic would lead to no results, we decided to halt our talk.

When Tabitha and the others caught wind of Nora's situation, they all dropped by to visit in the early afternoon.

"Tessa, we haven't met since the last incident. I have some questions for you," Nora called out when she saw that Tessa was present.

"What do you want to ask? Well, you could've called or talked about it in the group. Is everyone so busy?" Tabitha replied in confusion.

"Yeah, things have been hectic lately," Nora replied with a nod of her head.

"What do you want to talk about?" Tabitha bore a serious expression when she noticed Nora's solemn gaze.

"We are all friends who have experienced life-threatening situations together. Our encounters include the incident in Venria and Lavelian Village. If we were to break our ties, then something serious must have happened. Otherwise, we'd always offer a helping hand to each other, right?" Nora said as she locked gazes with Tessa.

Her last sentence was aimed specifically towards Tessa. Both Laurel and Tabitha nodded in agreement to Nora's statement. "Yes!"

"Nora, get straight to the point," Tessa said with a nod of her head.

"I'm puzzled. Didn't you say that you were going to get the help that night? Where did the help go?" Nora replied.

I thought that Nora had forgotten about this incident. Who would have expected her to remember it?

In that split moment, her bold question left everyone stunned as they traded glances with each other.

"That's right! I nearly forgot about this matter!" Laurel added as she turned to address Tessa, "When Scarlett fell into the hole with the three of us, you told me to stay behind with Scarlett and volunteered to get help. Yet, you disappeared and never returned. Where on earth did you go?"

Under the heavy scrutiny of everyone's gazes, Tessa's face turned ghastly pale. "I-I was too anxious and got lost!" she stammered nervously.

"You, of all people, should know better than to lie. When Scarlett was rescued, you were already in the tents. Are you sure that you got lost? You never called for help in the first place, did you?" Nora sneered.

"Tessa, is this true? Do you know how disappointed we were?" Laurel questioned her in disbelief.

"Aren't you unscathed? Aren't you safe? Why won't you drop it?" Tessa snarled all of a sudden. Her ferocious gaze turned to me as she lashed out like a cornered beast.

"Is this how you see it?" Tabitha exclaimed agitatedly. "Tessa, are you joking right now? We see you as our close friend. Yet, you treat us like a bunch of fools. I can't believe that you have the audacity to continue preaching about your so-called morals and values! You turned a blind eye when you could have called for help!"