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The employees were busy setting everything up. Rachel was at the base directing and making arrangements. At the sight of me, she merely glared distastefully but did not say anything disparaging.

I was not very familiar with the technology, so the best I could do was to handle the miscellaneous items on the side. The damage done to the base was repaired with such skill that I could not tell the difference.

With Armond and Rachel delegating, I watched in amazement as the employees ferried over and set up all sorts of sophisticated machinery.

Two of them brought a sort of excavation machine in. It wasn't large, but it was fully automated. They left the machine and departed.

I was curious and couldn't help myself from getting a closer look. It wasn't turned on, so it just looked like a pile of scrap metal.

I couldn't understand why children were so fascinated with these things.

"These are used to assist in the development phase," came Joseph's voice from behind.

I was nonplussed. "Assist the development?"

Joseph nodded. "There aren't many laborers here in Lavelian Village. The robots basically handle all of the follow-up work."

"Were the stolen goods similar to this?"

"Yes, they were," said Joseph. "That was why the projects had to be postponed. However, it was a good thing that we have backups on hand. The commencement of the project wasn't a problem. Our worry is that if the technology is leaked, it would be a hassle to haggle and fight for copyright."

"Coming through!" a voice came suddenly from behind. Instinctively, I stepped back to make way.

I tried to avoid touching the machine behind me, but I lost my footing and gave it a shove instead.

In an instant, the machine came to life and raced backward, smashing into everything in its path. It had happened so suddenly that everybody was caught off guard.

The six-foot-tall machine fell over. Thankfully its progress was halted by the wall and the damage was not as bad as it could have been.

Joseph held me steadily. "Are you alright?" he asked.

I shook my head and looked behind me at the damaged machine.

"lt..."

"Scarlett, it's you again. You're a troublemaker, aren't you? Things will always go wrong whenever you show up." Rachel strode over and signaled for men to clean up the wreckage.

"Do you know how expensive these things are?" she chastised. "It's difficult to fix them, you know. Don't you feel bad for the people who have to suffer because of you?"

I did not do it on purpose. "I am sorry," I hung my head and apologized. "It was not done on purpose. I would be happy to bear the cost of the damages."

"Of course, you would bear the costs, it's not even your money, to begin with," she said scathingly. "How nice it must be to spend your man's money like that." Rachel was clearly savoring the moment of my mistake.

Joseph felt the need to interject. "Ms. Zimmer, I think you should concern yourself with the repair works. Let me handle everything else."

"You..." Rachel's temper flared but decided not to pursue it as she caught sight of the look in Joseph's eyes.

She spun around and started describing the extent of the damage in great volume and detail.

I was aware that she directed the sarcastic comments to me on purpose.

The mark on the wall left by the machine caught my interest. It had scraped off some of the white paint and revealed bare rock underneath.

"Mrs. Fuller," Joseph said when he caught me examining the wall. "It's crowded and chaotic here. Let's head into the office."

"Who was it that built this base? Murphy Corporation or Fuller Corporation?" I asked him.

"Why, Murphy Corporation, of course," Joseph said, puzzled. "Murphy Corporation built this entire enterprise. Why do you ask?"

I shook my head in confusion. Turning back to the wall, I knocked on it for no particular reason only to discover to my surprise that some spots were hollow.

But it did not look any different from the solid parts.

"Ms. Stovall, could you verify these data?" Leedon came over with his hands full with a large stack of documents.

I nodded and tore my eyes away from the wall. "Are these not dealt with?" I asked, taking over the documents from him.

Leedon nodded. "It's nearing the end of the month. These things have to be sorted out earlier and sent as reports to the headquarters. I'm old and illiterate, so I'm afraid I would have to depend on you."

I nodded after studying the information. "Leedon, were the walls constructed according to temporary structural specifications?"

"No," he said with a shake of his head. "They were built according to strict residential specifications. To keep this project quiet, the foundation is exactly double its original width. The walls are thick too!"

I was startled and shot another glance toward the damaged wall. Leedon appeared to be panicking over the deadline of the reports, so I grabbed the stack of documents and brought it into the office.

It was another long and hectic day. After I got off work, Ashton sent me another text to inform me that he had arrived at K City.

I was incredibly tired, so I headed back to the hotel even before I had dinner. The phone rang just as I came out of the shower.

It was Ashton. I picked up the phone and sprawled on the bed. "Good evening, Mr. Fuller!" I greeted as I rested my eyes.

"Have you had your dinner?" I could picture his smile just from the way he spoke. "What're you doing?"

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If I said that I did not want to eat, he would just continue to nag. Thus, I could only reply, "I've already eaten. Have you?"

"Yep, I'm eating now!" The sound of glasses clinking together could be heard from his end.

"Are you eating outside?"

"Yep!" he replied.

My hair was still wet, and when I leaned back against it, my back was drenched. I turned and asked, "Who are you with?"

He chuckled lightly and said, "A... girl!"

I pursed my lips. "Is she younger or older?"

"Younger!"

My eyes narrowed as I asked, "Is she pretty?"

"Yep!" he quipped.

My lips twitched. "Is she prettier than me?"

He grinned and said, "Both of you are pretty!"

I inhaled deeply and snapped, "Ashton, be serious. Otherwise, I'm going to hang up on you."

He laughed loudly and clearly had no qualms about hiding his exuberant mood.

The laughter was pleasing to the ears. I had initially assumed that he was eating with some woman. But from the way he laughed, I could tell that I knew the person he was with!

A childish voice sounded out from the phone, "Mr. Fuller, are you talking to Mommy?"

My heart skipped a beat. It had been so long since I last heard Summer's voice and held her in my arms.

Tears welled up in my eyes that instant.

Ashton handed the phone to Summer. "Mommy? Is that you? I'm Summer."

My heart ached, and the lump in my throat prevented me from speaking for some time. A weight pressed down on my chest as I struggled to draw breath.

Due to my silence, Summer became anxious and said, "Can you hear me, Mommy?"

Tears started to flow down my face. Each beaded droplet of water seemed to sting me on its way down. I took in a shaky breath and replied, "I'm here, Summer. I... can hear you!"

Speaking to her brought on another tide of tears.

Summer was elated to hear my voice. She could not contain her excitement as she proceeded to fire off words, "Have you eaten, Mommy? When are you coming home? Mr. Fuller and I have been waiting for forever. Let me tell you a secret – I've planted many sweet potatoes in the yard. Grandma says that when they sprout, you'll be back. They've already started growing. Are you going to be home soon, Mommy?"

I choked, and for a moment, I could not breathe. Tears cascaded down my cheeks endlessly as I nodded and said, "I'm going to be home soon. Once I'm done working, I'll go home to you. Eat well, do your best in school, and listen to what Mr. Fuller says, okay?"

"Okay!" I could almost see Summer nodding earnestly. "I'm a very good girl, Mommy. I can recite many poems now, and I even know how to write and count. Mr. Fuller let me take piano lessons, and I've learned how to play 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.' I'll play it for you when you're back. I know how to draw too. I drew a beautiful picture for you, so please come home soon, Mommy. My birthday is almost here. Mr. Jackson says he'll invite Michael and Mr. Johnson to my birthday. It's going to be fun. So, you have to come home quickly!"

I nodded and tried to fight back the tears. "Okay. I'll definitely be back before your birthday. I promise to spend your birthday with you."

Ashton seemed to be talking to Summer at that moment. "Alright, that's enough for now, Summer. Let me talk to Mommy, okay?"

Summer was reluctant, so she said, "Can I ask you for a favor, Mommy?"

I nodded as my whole body trembled with the force of my suppressed sobs. "What birthday present do you want?"

"No. I want to ask if I can talk to you every day until you come home. I want to hear your voice. Grandma and Grandpa do too. Grandma cried a while ago because she misses you as much as I do!"

Her voice was full of innocence – pure and naive. I made a sound of agreement to hide the guilt that was gnawing away at me.

I left because I knew that I would not be able to provide Summer with the best quality of life. She would have a much better life with Ashton. However, I forgot that she was just a child. To her, I was the only family she had, and she was frightened that I would leave her.

After a while, Ashton took over the call. He must have known that I was crying. Thus, he lowered his voice and said, "She's doing well here and is very obedient. Jackson and the rest will come to see her."

I nodded and choked out, "Thank you, Ashton."

"You're my wife, and Summer is my daughter. There's no need to thank me!"

I could not help but laugh and let out a breath of relief. "When the Lavelian Village project is done, I'll return and spend Summer's birthday with the two of you!"