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"Ashton, I have to go now. Goodbye," I said hurriedly.

Without waiting for his response, I hung up the call.

Upon hearing the horn, Isabelle glanced over in my direction. When she entered my car, I couldn't help but notice her swollen and reddened eyes. It looked like she had just finished crying.

Although I was clueless about the issue between Rachel and Isabelle, it seemed like it was far more complicated than I initially anticipated.

"Let's go find something to eat," I suggested, "It's already close to dinner time anyway."

"Thank you!" Isabelle exclaimed gratefully as she rubbed her hand over her face.

I nodded and started the car.

Even if I did not question her about the issues, she revealed them through her solemn gaze. Isabelle must have kept these troubling thoughts to herself for a very long time.

Although I did not speak up, Isabelle revealed it to me in a self-deprecating manner.

"Back in the '80s, the country had a program to increase the population's birth rates. My mother was raised in the countryside as a farmer and did not have the luxury of receiving an education. Due to her lack of knowledge, she assumed that her worth as a woman would be fulfilled if she gave birth to a son. After she had me, she continued to get pregnant in hopes of bearing a son."

Isabelle paused for a moment as she sighed hopelessly before continuing her story. "She gave birth to almost eight children. Although there were boys amongst her children, they seemed to suffer from a horrible curse. None of them could survive beyond their teenage years. A decade later, she gave birth to another girl- Rachel. Because of Rachel's gender, my mother decided to abandon her. Fortunately, Rachel was adopted by a kind couple who had suffered countless miscarriages. Their business grew to become very successful too. As a result, they decided to send her overseas for better education and future."

"Isn't that great?" I asked with a furrow of my brows. She was adopted into a wonderful family and raised in luxuries. Why would she harbor such a great hatred when she managed to escape her past misfortunes?

"Yes, she was very lucky. My mother continued to get pregnant as she still yearned for a son. After Rachel, she gave birth to another girl. Unfortunately, the girl wasn't as lucky as Rachel. The moment she was born, my mother left her in the mountains. That year, there was a bitter and harsh winter. Thus, the poor child froze to death after seven days," Isabelle smiled bitterly.

How cruel!

Her words sent a flutter of shivers down my spine as I scowled deeply. Her ignorant mother was terrible!

When she caught sight of my expression, Isabelle's tone wavered with guilt. "I understand that her ignorance has brought harm to so many innocent children. After so many years of endurance, my mother finally gave birth to a son and raised him healthily. Her greatest wish was fulfilled after the sacrifice of other children."

"It's a pity to those innocent children," I sighed deeply in grief.

"My mother has ruined many lives to give birth to a son. It was inevitable that her past deeds would cause her downfall. After she had my brother, her body turned weak and frail. My mother was shocked to her core when she discovered my father's affairs. In order to separate their relationship, she ingested toxic chemicals. Although she managed to survive the poison, it left her body broken beyond repair."

Having so many children in succession must have left a severe impact on her body.

"Last year, my brother was diagnosed with leukaemia. We were never a rich family, to begin with, my mother burned through most of our wealth and possessions in order to afford his medical fees. Yet, the doctor claimed that he would need the blood marrow of a relative to cure my brother's sickness," Isabelle continued.

Hearing her words, I could guess what would happen. "You must have guessed it as well," Isabelle said with a faint smile, "My mother was old and had a weak body; she was unable to donate her bone marrow. My father was out of the picture as well. He had turned a blind eye on us for a long time."

"You couldn't donate because you were pregnant?" I guessed hesitantly. She must have begged Rachel as the last resort.

"At that time, I was facing some struggles in my job. Alongside that issue, I was also pregnant at an old age. Giving birth to my child was already a challenge. How could I donate my bone marrow? Thus, my mother set out to find Rachel's adoptive parents. However, no one expected my mother to go to such extreme lengths. Rachel's adoptive parents could not bear to harm Rachel and turned down my mother's request. In the end, my mother barricaded them at their company and prepared to threaten them with her life. In an attempt to avoid my mother, Rachel's father swerved away and collided with another vehicle. The impact caused his instant death," Isabelle said sorrowfully.

I stopped the car as the traffic light turned red. "I finally understand why Rachel hates you so much!" I turned to her and spoke after a long pause of shock

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To me, giving birth to a child and not raising her properly was already a sin. Now that the child had grown up and started a new life with a partner and a new family, why would the biological mother still want to hurt her?

Isabelle took a deep breath and smiled wryly, "I know we did her wrong in so many ways, and I don't blame her for hating us, but she's still her biological mother."

I could not believe what I heard. I used to think women like Cameron, Rebecca, and Kristina, were evil, but Isabelle's family sent chills down my spine.

I looked at her and smiled, "There are people whom I find pathetic and despicable. Do you know who they are?"

She looked at me but kept mum.

I started driving when the traffic light turned green. I looked at the road and said, "Rachel has been very kind to your family. I would have adopted a far crueller approach if I were in her shoes."

Isabelle was taken aback as she did not expect I would say something like that.

I continued, "There are people who are born poor, but it has nothing to do with money. They're just poor in spirit and don't know what it means to be humans."

"Like you and your mom, who had committed the worst crime ever by ending her children's lives. Yet, she never thought what she did was wrong."

"Rachel should count herself lucky to have escaped from such a terrible family and found herself parents who cherished her and took good care of her."

"And what did you all do? You came into her life and destroyed her happiness. Her father was the man who rescued her from hell, yet your mother killed him," I said, "And your mother seems to be very proud of what she has done. She thinks she's doing this out of love for his son."

"It was as if she had forgotten Rachel, too, was her child."

Isabelle lowered her head and cried. She said in between sobs, "We had no choice. My brother would die if she refused to donate her bone marrow. We're a family. It's her duty to rescue her brother!"

Her remark bemused me, and I instantly let out a cold snort. "Since when it was Rachel's duty to rescue your brother? Has your mother even done her part in raising her?"

"Have you all tried finding her in the past? No. You only appeared and blackmailed her emotionally just because you needed her help. If this is not selfish, I don't know what else is."

I parked my car by the road and tried to contain my anger. "You know what your mother did was wrong, yet you still side with her. How could you, Isabelle?"

Isabelle nodded in silence. She responded after a short pause, "But I didn't know what else to do anymore."

"Talk to Rachel nicely, if possible. If not, stay away from her and stop making her life miserable," I advised.

"But my brother..." Isabelle's eyes turned red, "He'll die if he doesn't undergo the operation!"

“But why put the pressure on Rachel? Isn’t there anyone else who’s related to your brother? Shouldn’t you be looking for your father in the first place?” I could not understand this family.

She lowered her eyes and sighed. “We’ve lost touch for years, and my mother was afraid that he might not be able to take it as he’s not young anymore.”

I looked at her and soon realized this issue was much more complicated than I thought.

I thought what they did to Rachel was cruel and despicable, but I bet Isabelle would think otherwise. To her, it was Rachel’s responsibility to save her brother since they were related by blood.

Rachel must be utterly disappointed with how foolish her biological parents were and how Isabelle condoned their actions.

I was afraid I might explode with rage if I were to continue this topic with Isabelle.

So, I decided not to talk about it anymore.

Isabelle and I arrived at the restaurant. Instead of focusing on Rachel’s hapless fate, we talked about other things and

had a pleasant dinner.

Isabelle left after dinner, and I decided to stay in the restaurant a little longer.

Ashton called and said he wanted to pick me home, so I thought I might as well sit here and wait for him.

All of a sudden, Cameron and Zachary came into the premises. There were only a few famous high-end restaurants in K City, so I was not surprised to see them here.

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Cameron held Zachary’s hands and walked toward me. She grinned and asked, “Had your dinner?”

I nodded and hesitated for a moment before asking, "Should I ask the waiter to clear the table for you?"

Cameron and Zachary were horrible people. But come to think of it, they were not as bad as Isabelle's parents. At least they would treat their own family members with kindness.

Cameron was surprised that I did not give her the cold shoulder. She pulled Zachary closer to her and babbled incoherently, "Okay, anything is fine."

Zachary gently patted her hand to calm her down. He then called a waiter to clear the table.

Cameron, who was probably in a good mood, looked at me and smiled. "Scarlett, what do you like to eat? I remember I enjoyed dishes that are sweet and sour and also desserts when I was carrying you. Do you like them?"

She got that right. To this day, I still enjoyed desserts and sweet and sour food. Oh, well. I was indeed her daughter, after all.

She looked at me and waited eagerly for my answer. I nodded and replied, "Yes."

Cameron's lips curled into a wider smile. She looked at me and said, "I heard Summer has left for W City in the last couple of days, and Ashton has also been quite busy lately. Why don't you come back to the Moore Residence and stay with us?"

"Emery is back home now, and I've tidied your room. Why don't you come over and keep her company since you're quite close with her?"

Once again, she looked at me and waited for a positive answer. But when I looked at her, I could only think of Rachel.

I never liked Rachel because she was not afraid to show the world how ambitious she was, but after listening to her story from Isabelle, I felt bad for her. If Rachel were to tell me her story personally, I think I would feel sorrier for her.

After Zachary had ordered some dishes, he also turned his attention to me and waited for my answer.

I hesitated for a while and said, "I'll just stay with Ashton. He has been busy in the last few days but should have more free time soon. We plan to travel after this."

I did not turn down her offer, but I made it clear that I had no intention of staying with them.

When Cameron was about to say something, she suddenly saw someone coming in her direction, and her expression turned grim.

Out of curiosity, I turned around and saw Rebecca.

People I hate to see would always appear before my eyes. Always. What an irony.

A line formed between Zachary's brows when he saw Rebecca as he was not pleased to see her here.

Disgust was written all over Cameron's face. She did not even bother to hide her feelings.

Their reactions surprised me. I thought Cameron would treat Rebecca nicely since they used to be family members.

When Rebecca approached the table, Cameron's expression changed.

"Mom... I mean, Ms. Anderson!" Rebecca greeted her with a smile. "Having dinner here?"

Without hesitation, Cameron gave her a sullen glare and said, "Ms. Larson, could you please leave us alone? We're trying to have our family dinner here."

Wow. That's harsh.

Rebecca froze for a moment. "I just stopped by to say hello, Ms. Anderson. I don't have any other intention."

Cameron kept mum and ignored her. Zachary stepped in and looked up at Rebecca with a scowl. "Please leave!"

Upon seeing their reactions, Rebecca instantly became disheartened. It seemed that the couple had been treating her quite coldly for some time.

Since the Moore family had severed ties with her, and Ashton had no longer paid for her expenses, how did she manage to sustain her luxurious lifestyle? I could not quite put my finger on it.

Despite knowing she was not welcomed; Rebecca still plastered a smile on her face and bade them goodbye. She behaved as if she was still their daughter.

After she had left, Cameron heaved a sigh of relief and said in a cold voice, "She must have approached us with an ulterior motive."

Zachary knitted his brows but kept mum.

I looked at them and sneer, "She didn't ask to be adopted, did she? You were the one who adopted her and gave her everything. But after you realized it was a mistake, you took everything away from her. Has she done you any wrong, though?"

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What I said had rendered Cameron speechless. Zachary frowned and looked at me, displeased, "What nonsense are you talking about?"

"I admire your relationship and am impressed by how to protect your family members, but I hope you can put yourself in people's shoes and think of others," I said, "Had you been more magnanimous and gracious to others, you wouldn't have pushed your own daughter away and suffocated your grandchild."

I was afraid I might flip out if I continued to dig up the past. Instead of paying attention to their pallid faces, I grabbed my bag and walked away.

No one human was perfect, but that was what made us so unique. Likewise, we were all neither saints nor sinners.

Whenever we viewed the world from our own perspective, we would also think what we did was right. Yet, it might be the opposite had we adopted a different point of view.

If we had the absolute freedom to destroy someone we hated, then the world would be in a state of anarchy.

Meanwhile, Ashton had arrived and parked his car by the entrance. He stood beside his car and waved at me the moment he saw me.

I walked to him, wrapped my hands around him, and leaned against his chest.

He embraced me and asked in his usual deep and soothing voice. "What's wrong?"

I placed my head to his chest and refused to move. "I don't want to be a good person, but I don't want to hurt people too."

He grinned and wondered why I said that. "Did something happen?"

I released him and looked at him. "Ashton, if you fall in love with someone else in the future, you have to tell me. I'll leave honorably."

He knitted his brows and cupped my face with his hand. "You're the only woman I'd ever love."

My lips curled into a smile, and once again, I leaned against his chest. Though I find comfort in his words, I also know it's impossible to stop a person from changing his or her heart.

I'm grateful that he has come into my life and loved me unconditionally, but if he finds someone else in the future and decides to move, I'd still be happy for him.

He realized I was a little emotional. Instead of talking, he stood there and hugged me for a while before leading me to my seat in the car.

Joseph drove my car while I got into Ashton's. I stared at the road and went deep in thought.

After keeping quiet for some time, I looked at Ashton and asked, "What makes a good person?"

He took a glance at me while he continued driving. "That's a meaningless question, Scarlett. You should live your life and let your conscience be your guide."

I gave him a faint smile before looking out of the window. I supposed he's right.

It had been an emotional day for me. When we got back to the villa, I fell asleep right away.

Ashton came out of the bathroom and stood beside me for quite some time. He then lay beside me and embraced me.

His tall and muscular physique made me feel even more petite than I already was.

Upon noticing how close he was, I said in a daze, "I'm on my period. Tired."

He let out a low grunt. "Got it. Sleep well." He then gently patted my back.

The Fuller Corporation had made headlines recently, so he had to get back to work early. By the time I woke up, Ashton had already left the villa.

Flora, who was preparing breakfast in the kitchen, looked at me and smiled. "Good morning. Mr. Ashton left early today, but he wants me to remind you to enjoy your breakfast."

I pressed my lips and smiled. I turned around and saw a bouquet of roses on the table in the living hall.

Seeing the fresh flowers on the table made my day. "Did you bring the roses?"

Initially, Flora did not know what I was talking about, but when she took a glance at the table, she smiled and explained that it was Ashton who bought the bouquet to cheer me up.

I could not help but grin upon knowing his ridiculous logic.

While I was sitting by the dining table and having a bowl of mushroom soup, I swiped my phone and came across Fuller Corporation's action on Rachel's incident.

Since the video clearly showed what Isabelle had done to Rachel, the board of directors had decided to transfer her back to J City but retained her Finance Department director position.

I supposed this was a win-win situation for everyone.

After spending two days in the hospital, Rachel finally got discharged from the hospital. The drama had finally come to an end.

Time passed by very quickly, and New Year's eve was around the corner.

Isabelle called, but I did not answer her. Instead, I texted: Good luck!

Once we got to know some people well enough, we would see not only their angelic side but also the devil in them. Hence, it was best for me to keep a distance from her.

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At noon, Ashton called, "Have you taken your lunch?"

It seemed he had placed a lot of attention on the mundane details of my life now. It was quite unusual of him to behave like this.

I lay on the couch and nodded, "Yeah. I'm a little bored because I'm alone at home."

He chuckled, "Do you want to come and pick me up from work then?"

I froze for a moment and instantly took up his offer, "Okay!"

I could imagine the smile on his face upon knowing how spirited I was.

After a short pause, he said in a serious voice, "Are you not going to ask me if I've taken my lunch?"

I was a little tongue-tied at first. "So... have you eaten?"

"Yes. Grilled eggplant. I'll make this for you tonight."

Grandma once said, teenagers are often abashed when they're in love, while those in their mid-twenties would be more romantic and crazier in love. As for people aged thirty and above, love is basically dead.

But I beg to differ. Love after the age of thirty might not be intense or passionate but will subtly reside in our hearts.

The older we get, the more we appreciate such subtlety. And the love we have for our partners would evolve to become an integral part of our lives.

At this point in life, what matters most is that we enjoy each other's companionship, and, God willing, we get to spend the rest of our lives together.

I ended the call after having a chat with Ashton. Since I had nothing to do at the Fuller Corporation, I thought I might take my own sweet time going to his office later in the afternoon.

After lazing around the villa and taking a nap in the afternoon, I noticed the sky had turned dark.

I took a glance at the watch and realized it was already 8 p.m. I immediately bounced out of bed, checked my phone, and saw a few missed calls Ashton made around 5 p.m.

When I was about to leave the villa, I saw a note on the table and froze for a bit.

Apparently, Ashton had already come home on his own. Something urgent cropped up, so he went out again to meet Joe.

In the note, he reminded me to eat my dinner. Upon seeing the blanket on the couch, I could not help but slap my forehead with my palm. What is wrong with me? Why did I sleep so much?

I walked back to the couch and gave him a call.

"Taken your dinner?" the man asked in a deep voice.

I paused for a bit, took a glance at the dishes on the table, and replied frankly, "I'm still not hungry. Where are you?"

"I'm at the Imperial Hotel. You want to come?" I could feel the vibration from the phone. It must be him sending me the address.

I thought about it and answered, "Wait for me."

Since Summer was not home, I thought I might as well take this opportunity to go out.

After changing into new clothes, I drove straight to the Imperial Hotel.

The hotel was supposed to be thirty minutes from the villa, but it took me twice as long to reach the destination during rush hour.

Since Emery and I had been there several times, the hotel manager knew who I was. He then brought me to Ashton's suite.

There were two men in the suite. One was Ashton, and the other one was Joe, who was completely drunk.

I had not seen Joe for a very long time. He now had an overgrown beard and looked utterly frazzled.

I was glad that Ashton did not drink. He sat still on the couch and listened to Joe complaining.

Upon seeing me standing by the door, Ashton waved at me and asked me to come over. Though the background music was loud, I could hear him clearly, "Come over!"

I walked to his side and took another closer look at Joe. It was hard for me to believe that a harsh and vicious man like him could look so dishevelled. "Do you know how much I've done for her in the last ten years? How could she ignore me just like that?"

I see. It's all because of love.

After ordering a fruit juice for me, Ashton looked at me and asked, "Do you want to pick a song?"

I shook my head and whispered in his ear, "He got dumped?"

He looked at the television screen in the suite and replied, "Someone rejected his love!"

Wow. What a surprise.

Joe soon calmed down and slouched on the couch. I initially thought he got so drunk that he passed out, but when I leaned forward to check on him, I noticed his eyes were still wide open.

I almost got the shock of my life after seeing how he stared motionlessly at the ceiling.

"Who's the woman?" I could not help but ask upon seeing how dejected he had become.

Ashton raised his brows and kept mum. Obviously, he did not want to answer my question.

I thought about it and asked, "Rebecca?" I could not think of anyone else other than that woman.

Joe must have heard me mentioning that name. He instantly straightened his back, shot daggers at me, and exploded with rage. "Who do you think you are, Rebecca? Why do you even like Ashton? Yeah, he's rich and handsome. So what? I can give you money too if you want!"