

Girl Boss 821

Chapter 821 You Have No Right to Ask

Zane made his way up to the highest floor of the building without much hassle and found himself standing just outside Toby's office.

He was just about to knock on Toby's door when the one next to it, which led into the personal assistant's office, opened.

Tom emerged with a folder in hand, and when he saw Zane outside Toby's office, he froze. "Mr. Coleman?"

Zane raised a brow but made no reply.

After snapping out of his initial surprise, Tom adjusted his glasses and asked, "What are you doing here, Mr. Coleman? Are you here to see President Fuller?"

"Why else would I be standing outside his office?" Zane rolled his eyes at the question. He then added, "Is Toby in?"

As though realizing that his question was redundant, Tom let out an embarrassed cough and answered stoically, "Yes, he's in. If you'd like to see him, I'll go and inform him of your arrival. Just a moment, please."

Zane narrowed his eyes and asked before Tom could slither into Toby's office, "What, do I have to announce myself now that I want to see him?"

Tom could tell that the man was decidedly grumpy about this, but he remained composed as he explained patiently, "Here's the thing, Mr. Coleman. Your affection for Miss Reed has made President Fuller rather unhappy, and as such, he has told me that you are not allowed to go right into his office like old times just to see him; you will need his permission." With that, he shrugged helplessly as if to show that he had no choice in the matter.

Zane quirked his lips and clicked his tongue, clearly irritated by this unexpected rule. "A little childish and petty of him to deny me from seeing him without prior notice just because of my feelings for Sonia, don't you think so? Fine, whatever. Just go in and tell him that I'm here." He waved his hand impatiently as he spoke.

"Very well," Tom said with a professional smile. Then, he turned to knock on Toby's door.

"Come in," Toby's cold and crisp voice called out from beyond the door after Tom had knocked thrice.

Tom let his hand drop to his side and opened the door. He walked in and said, "I have the documents you asked for, President Fuller."

As he sat behind his work desk, Toby hummed in response without looking up to acknowledge his assistant. "Just leave them here."

“Yes, sir.” Tom carefully placed the folder on a spot on the desk that was within Toby’s reach. After that, he took a step back to put some distance between himself and the desk before saying, “President Fuller, Mr. Coleman is here to see you.”

Toby stopped writing abruptly when he heard this, and his pen scraped a hole through the paper. His handwriting was ruined too, and it didn’t look as neat now.

As he frowned, he set his pen aside and took up the piece of paper before crumpling it and throwing it into the trash. After that, he rubbed the space between his brows and asked somberly, “What is he doing here?”

Tom shook his head. “I’m not sure. I didn’t ask, but judging by how at ease he seems, I reckon he’s here to catch up with you.”

Upon hearing this, Toby sputtered. “There’s nothing for us to catch up on, so he must be here for some other reason or ulterior motive. Let him in.”

“Very well, President Fuller,” Tom said with a nod. Then, he turned to walk out the door.

Toby leaned into his seat and closed his eyes. He used his hands to massage the area around his eyes as though to relieve them of the weariness from a day’s work.

Just then, he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. He knew who had come into his office, but that didn’t deter him from massaging the area around his eyes, nor did it make him open his eyes and greet the person. It was as if no one had entered in the first place.

Zane was not at all peeved by Toby’s outright indifference, and he merely chuckled as he looked around the office. While doing so, he mused mischievously, “My, my, Toby—it’s only been months since I last dropped in here, but I can see you’ve made some very big changes. I won’t say much about the warm-colored carpet, but those throw pillows on the couch and the adorable odds and ends that I’m sure are part of your new decoration? I’m a little surprised, honestly. You didn’t redecorate the space for Sonia, did you?”

Toby’s preferences when it came to interior designs were emblematic of what he was like as a person—cold and aloof. Be it his own bedroom or his office, he would always go for cooler palettes that brought an intimidating edge to the space, and anyone who found themselves standing amidst such decor would be unnerved by its obvious lack of warmth.

There had been several occasions in the past when Zane tried to persuade Toby to switch up his preferences and stop turning his office into something like a torture chamber. “Others might start thinking of you as a sadist or something,” he had pointed out to Toby back then.

However, Toby did not take any of his advice.

Now that his office had decorations that would’ve never been there in the first place, Zane couldn’t help but wonder if Sonia was the driving force behind this sudden change in Toby’s preferences.

Presently, Toby put his hands down and opened his eyes slowly. He ignored Zane’s question and instead asked impassively, “What are you doing here?”

Zane did not try to force an answer out of him. He shrugged nonchalantly and pulled out the seat across from Toby before he grinned at the latter. "It's not a big deal or anything; I just want to know why you're trying to hide the identities of Sonia's birth parents from her."

Toby's expression shifted at once as a dark look flashed in his eyes. He stared at Zane like how an eagle might zone in on its prey and hissed, "I don't know what you're talking about!"

Zane rolled his eyes. "Please, like I'd believe you. I heard with my own ears that Jessica was about to tell Sonia who her birth parents were while they were in court today, but before she could get her words out, the bailiff stopped her. Under normal circumstances, the bailiff would never stop the accused from speaking to anyone after the court hearing, especially if the perp has only committed a minor offense like Jessica. Yet, the bailiff stopped her from continuing her conversation with Sonia anyway."

He continued, "Anyone with common sense would know that the bailiff was acting under someone's orders, and there are only three people in Seafeld capable of giving such orders. Two of them have nothing to do with Sonia whatsoever, which leaves you as the third and only person who could have intervened."

He was still smiling at Toby even though the latter was already looking mutinous. "Toby, I just want to know why you're so intent on keeping Sonia's birth parents a secret from her. I can tell from the fact that you had someone stop Jessica from spilling the truth that you are terrified of Sonia finding out. Is there something about her birth parents that you think could be a problem for her?" he asked.

Toby clenched his fists and asked in a voice so emotionless that it sent chills running down Zane's spine, "How would you know what took place during the court hearing unless you were there too?" He could think of no other reasonable explanation otherwise.

Upon realizing that he had exposed himself, Zane flashed him a sheepish smile. "Come on, that's not the point here. I was only there by coincidence. After all, I thought you knew about my being there at the court hearing after Sonia called you on the phone. Sonia and I had agreed to meet up not after the hearing but before it, so I ended up sitting in the courtroom, and..." He let out an awkward cough. "Well, that's how I found out about it."

Upon hearing this, Toby pressed his lips into a thin line. The nerve of this guy to attend the court hearing with Little Leaf! I didn't attend the hearing, and I'm her boyfriend! However, this douchebag decided that he would take my place and stay through the entire hearing instead!

The thought infuriated him to no end, and it upset him even more that Sonia did not mention this to him when they spoke on the phone earlier. He began to wonder if she conveniently left this detail out because she thought it insignificant or if she was trying to keep it a secret from him.

As he pondered on either possibility, his brows drew together. Meanwhile, the air around him grew cold and suffocating.

Even Zane was starting to feel uneasy. He scratched the back of his head and chuckled nervously before saying, "Forget about that, Toby. Come on, tell me what's the deal with Sonia's birth parents and the exact moment you discovered their identities."

Toby wouldn't have gone to such lengths to keep Sonia from learning the truth if he had no idea of it. As such, Zane was sure that he had the answer.

"What's it to you anyway?" Toby's eyes narrowed into slits as he gazed at Zane indifferently. "This is between me and Sonia, and it has nothing to do with you. You have no right to ask about this."

Chapter 822 Zane's Confusion

The way Toby said this confirmed Zane's suspicion that he knew who Sonia's birth parents were.

Toby was irate after being questioned on matters concerning Sonia, but that did not dissuade Zane from pressing further. Instead, he chuckled as he shrugged nonchalantly. "It's a little too late for you to point that out to me, Toby. If you told me that this had nothing to do with me before I went to the court hearing with Sonia, I'd gladly walk away right now without another word. However, as things are, I'm already involved. Jessica didn't tell Sonia everything back in the courtroom, but she had said enough to make Sonia grow suspicious."

"What?" Toby's back stiffened as a grim look passed over his face. "What do you mean she's grown suspicious?"

"You heard me," Zane affirmed with a nod. "It was only after Jessica had brought up the matter of Sonia's birth parents when the bailiff clapped a hand over her mouth to stop her from continuing. Based on the timing of the bailiff's gesture, anyone could tell that it was made to stop Jessica from speaking on the matter. Sonia isn't a fool to begin with, and she's bright enough to connect the dots right away. If I hadn't been quick enough to sense that you were behind this and talked Sonia out of her initial suspicions, she would have demanded an explanation from Jessica herself. You know how that could have been a real possibility."

Toby clenched his fists and made no reply. He felt nothing but a strong surge of rage for the incompetent fools who worked at the courthouse.

"If you think about it, Toby, you ought to thank me for stepping in," Zane added insouciantly as he swiveled in his chair. "Do you still think that this has nothing to do with me? I was dragged into this the moment I covered for you, so what choice do you have now other than to tell me who Sonia's birth parents are? That would be for the best, and I can keep covering for you if I know the truth. I wouldn't want to unknowingly help her track them down."

This rendered Toby speechless, for he knew that Zane made sense.

If Zane were to work together with Sonia to take down the Gray Family, it naturally meant that he would look into them as well. Eventually, he would start digging up more information on Rina. Once he had all these leads and lay them side by side with Sonia's findings, he would inadvertently help her piece up the puzzle.

There was no telling that Sonia wouldn't start questioning her own identity after that.

In fact, it was impossible to assume that she wouldn't figure it out, and there could only be so many coincidences before real doubt began to sink in. More importantly, Sonia was already suspicious; based on her character, she wouldn't be so easily dissuaded by a few lighthearted words on Zane's part.

Toby lowered his gaze as he thought about what he had asked Sonia on the phone earlier. He asked her if Jessica said anything strange to her in the courtroom, specifically anything that alluded to the identity of Sonia's birth parents.

He had believed her when she said Jessica told her nothing of the sort. However, after hearing what Zane said, he realized that Sonia had lied to him.

Jessica had told her about her birth parents, which was a strange topic in itself. Yet, Sonia did not relay this to Toby at all. This could only mean that she was suspicious of him, and even though Zane had tried to put her doubts to rest, it couldn't have been enough to quell her suspicions. Otherwise, why would she have lied to Toby?

At the thought of this, Toby grew somber as he began to worry. He was acutely aware of the fact that he was losing control over the matter of Sonia's birth parents. Now that her suspicions had been seeded, it wouldn't take long for them to sprout.

Sooner or later, she would discover the truth about her birth parents, and Toby feared it might be sooner than later.

For a moment, he was so frustrated that he even began to feel a strong urge to murder those who might tell Sonia the truth, particularly Jessica.

However, killing Jessica was not a feasible plan since it would only aggravate Sonia's suspicions.

More importantly, Sonia still needed Jessica to bear a child for the Reed Family.

As such, Toby needed to abandon quick measures and focus on the big picture.

Meanwhile, Zane had a bad feeling when he saw the dark and ominous look on Toby's face. He understood the man well enough to know that he was planning something wicked.

"Hey, Toby, maybe you should—"

Before he could finish his sentence, Toby looked up at him and cut him off icily, "I can tell you who Little Leaf's birth parents are, but you must not tell anyone. If you do, I won't spare you from my wrath even though I've known you for over twenty years."

Upon hearing Toby's grave tone, Zane immediately knew that there was something wrong with Sonia's birth parents, and whatever it was must be kept secret from everyone else, especially Sonia herself. Perhaps something drastic will happen if she finds out. At the thought of this, he nodded and promised in all seriousness, "Don't worry, I won't breathe a word about it. I'll cover for you, and I'll even get someone to keep an eye on Jessica so that she won't get the chance to tell Sonia about it."

When Toby heard this, his expression softened slightly, and he lowered his gaze as he said in clipped tones, "Sonia's birth parents are Titus and Julia Gray."

"Excuse me?" Zane was so shocked by this that he stood up from his chair and gaped at Toby incredulously. "You've got to be joking, Toby. How could Titus and Julia be her parents?"

Toby met his bewildered gaze and asked, "Do you honestly think I'd joke about something like this?"

Zane was at a loss for words. After all, he knew Toby would never do that. He was too serious to make a joke or prank someone, which could only mean that he was telling the truth.

His thoughts clamored at that moment, and he looked completely dumbfounded. He clenched his fists as he paced from one end of Toby's desk to the other, and he muttered in a seemingly endless loop, "How could they be Sonia's parents? How? Last I checked, Titus and Julia didn't have two daughters."

Toby took a sip of his iced coffee and said, "No, you're right. They only have one daughter named Rina."

Zane stopped in his tracks and stared at him with wide eyes. "Are you telling me that Sonia and Rina are the same people?"

Toby did not shake his head or nod. He made no answer, but it was clear that he was confirming the fact that Sonia was indeed Rina.

After inhaling sharply, Zane then asked, "How can Sonia be Rina? If that's the case, who the hell is Taylor?"

"Isn't Taylor the replacement that you and Sonia found?" Toby asked as he eyed the other man steadily.

Zane parted his lips, and after a pause, he said, "Yeah, she was supposed to be the replacement at first, but the DNA test afterward showed that she was indeed Rina. How can Sonia be Rina all of a sudden? What the hell is going on? My head hurts from having to process this."

He sat down and clutched his head as if to keep his mind from imploding, and he looked like he was questioning everything he had learned since birth.

Toby set his iced coffee down and said curtly, "The DNA test results were fake."

"What?" Zane exclaimed in shock. "Fake?"

"Mm-hmm."

"Wait, what?" Zane was flabbergasted as he raked his fingers through his hair. "The results can't be fake, though. I was there throughout the whole process, and I had my men keep an eye on the other facilities too. There is no way those results could've been faked."

Toby gazed at him witheringly. "The results weren't sabotaged because the DNA samples used in the test were Sonia's and Titus' right from the beginning, not Taylor's and Titus'. In other words, it wasn't the DNA test results that got swapped or tampered with, but Taylor's DNA sample."

"Wait a minute." Zane put up his hand. "Let me get this straight. You said that Taylor's DNA sample was swapped, but I saw her pull out her hair for the sample with my own eyes. Sonia never once pulled a single strand of her own hair, and Taylor's sample was sent to the facilities immediately. I had my men keep an eye on the whole process, so there was no way the sample could've been swapped. How in the world did Sonia's DNA sample get mixed up in all this anyway?"

Chapter 823 You Helped, Didn't You?

Toby looked up calmly and gave him a look. "The hair that Taylor plucked from her head belongs to Sonia."

“What the heck?” Zane was stunned. “Sonia’s hair is growing on Taylor’s head? Toby, you must be kidding. How could she have Sonia’s hair on her head? Could it be that she took Sonia’s scalp and planted it on her own head?”

That was utterly impossible.

Toby looked at him in disdain. “I meant that Taylor got a strand of Sonia’s hair beforehand and placed it on her hair clip. If needs be, she could always take out Sonia’s hair with precision and use it for DNA tests in place of her own.”

Upon hearing Toby’s explanation, Zane finally understood. “I see. If that’s the case, Taylor probably discovered that Sonia is the daughter of Titus and his wife, and that she’s the real Rina Gray. Is that why she got Sonia’s hair beforehand just in case?”

“Yes.” Toby nodded.

Zane frowned. “How did Taylor know that Sonia is Rina, though?”

Toby parted his thin lips. “The red mole.”

“What?”

“The red mole on Little Leaf’s wrist,” said Toby once more.

Zane’s eyes widened as he made the connection. “I can’t believe it’s because of that! No wonder Taylor whacked Sonia unconscious and removed the red mole on her wrist. She was scared that if the mole continued to exist, Titus and his wife would eventually find out and realize that Sonia is the real Rina. Thus, Taylor made the first move by gouging out the red mole in case her identity got exposed. No wonder...”

For the longest time, he couldn’t figure out why Taylor would knock Sonia out cold and attack the mole on Sonia’s wrist.

After all, there weren’t any grudges between the two, and Sonia was even the one who brought Taylor back to the Gray Family for Taylor to be reunited with them.

If Taylor did that, wouldn’t she be repaying kindness with evil?

Of course, one could think that Taylor had done this for the Gray Family.

After all, once Taylor returned to the Gray Family, she would be one of them too. She would naturally be at odds with Sonia like the Grays, and it would be understandable for her to inflict harm on Sonia.

However, based on the eternal hatred between the Grays and the Reeds, if Taylor wanted to deal with Sonia on the Grays’ behalf, wouldn’t it have been easier for her to just kill Sonia?

After all, Taylor could’ve simply killed the woman back then.

However, Taylor didn’t do that. She just sliced a piece of flesh from Sonia’s wrist in puzzlement.

Because of Taylor’s nonsensical move, they couldn’t figure out her real motive at all.

It was only now that Zane understood she was trying to hide the fact that Sonia was the real Rina.

Upon thinking about this, Zane suddenly thought of something and looked at Toby with a complicated expression. "Toby, since when did you know that Sonia is Rina?"

"Not long after Taylor attacked Little Leaf, I accidentally heard Mrs. Gray mentioning that there's a red mole on Rina's wrist. I linked that to Little Leaf's removed mole, and I guessed Little Leaf's identity. After that, I managed to get my hands on Little Leaf and Titus' DNA samples to run a test, hence confirming Little Leaf's identity. I've also discussed it with Taylor at the police station before," said Toby calmly as he interlaced his fingers and set them against his belly.

Zane was dumbfounded. "You knew about this from the beginning?"

Toby didn't deny it.

"In that case, why didn't you tell Sonia?" Zane interrogated, placing both his hands on Toby's desk. "Why did you let Taylor take her rightful place and identity?"

Toby frowned. He was about to speak when Zane thought of something and hastily said, "Wait, I just remembered that after Taylor attacked Sonia, she angered me and Sonia. We were ready to expose that Taylor wasn't the real Rina, but an impostor we set up. Did you already know that Taylor wasn't Rina?"

Toby gazed at Zane with a calm look in his eyes, silent.

Nonetheless, his unspoken answer was clear.

Indeed, he had already known about this at that time.

Zane drew in a sharp breath. "When we got Taylor and Titus to go through the DNA test, you helped Taylor, didn't you? You knew early on that Taylor wasn't Rina, and you even discussed it with her. However, you didn't expose Taylor's identity, and you even helped her to hide it. After Rina's custody ended, you probably knew that Taylor had Sonia's hair with her when you carried out the DNA test in front of everyone present. Perhaps you even helped Taylor get that piece of hair. Am I right?"

"Sorry, you're wrong." Toby leaned back slightly in his chair while maintaining a calm expression on his face. "I didn't help Taylor get the hair; she did it herself. Before Taylor got the hair, I didn't even know she had this ace up her sleeve."

Zane frowned again, and his eyes were knitted tightly. It was obvious that he hadn't expected to guess wrongly.

However, it didn't matter. Judging by Toby's expression, he had guessed something right.

Toby had definitely helped Taylor that day, but what was it?

Zane lowered his gaze and thought for a while before he realized something. His hands, which were still on the desk, clenched into fists. "It's Mr. and Mrs. Carey."

A dim light flashed across the depths of Toby's eyes, but they disappeared instantly.

Zane leaned forward and stared at Toby. "It's Mr. and Mrs. Carey, right? You didn't switch out the test report between Taylor and Titus, but you definitely switched out the one between Taylor and the Careys. Taylor couldn't get those testing facilities to help her, and neither could Sonia. I would've never

helped, whereas Titus and his wife wouldn't either since they wanted to know if Taylor was their daughter. Hence, the only one who could manipulate it was you, Toby."

"I didn't switch out the tests; I switched out the hair. The hair that was sent to be tested with the Careys didn't belong to Taylor; it was Little Leaf's," Toby said coldly, indirectly admitting that he had indeed tampered with the results.

Zane squeezed his eyes shut. "I knew it. You knew Sonia's real identity so early on, but from the moment you chose not to tell her, I knew that you definitely helped Taylor so that she could better hide the fact that she was an impostor. Had she been acting on her own, she couldn't have hidden it until now. Why did you do that, Toby? What good is that to you?"

He couldn't understand.

The look in Toby's eyes turned cold. "Do you think that I'm doing it for myself? Do you remember the relationship between the Reeds and the Grays? Sonia grew up in the Reed Family and believes that she is one of them, and she wants to exact revenge for them. She hates the Grays to the core, but if you suddenly tell her that she isn't actually a Reed but a Gray that she absolutely loathes instead, how do you think she'll react?"

"I..." Zane swallowed, suddenly unable to speak.

Then, he lowered his gaze and tried to stand in Sonia's shoes. He imagined how Sonia would react if she knew of her true identity.

At that thought, Zane's handsome face turned visibly pale, and there was a lump in his throat as he spoke much later in a hoarse voice. "I know what you mean now. No wonder you're hiding it from her and choosing to help Taylor settle in as Rina. You fear that Sonia cannot accept this truth, and she'll..."

Toby pursed his thin lips while remaining silent.

Zane heaved a long sigh. "How can this be possible? Fate is so cruel. What sort of sick joke is this? Why is Sonia actually Rina?"

Chapter 824 Lovey-Dovey

Despite Toby's silence, he couldn't agree more with Zane's words. Well, we're all just puppets and toys to our own fate, aren't we? Then, he rubbed his forehead and asked Zane with a tired look on his face, "Well, do you think I should tell Sonia about her actual identity?"

"Unless I want to see her suffer, I think you should tell her the truth." Zane bitterly shook his head.

"In that case, you ought to keep your lips sealed as well. After all, we both don't want her to know anything more than she should," said Toby as he grunted coldly.

"Don't worry, I know what I must do." Zane waved his hand without saying a single word more.

Since Toby was a man of a few words himself, the subsequent moments went on without a response from either of them. Soon, the atmosphere in the office was filled with an oppressive silence.

It was only a few moments later that Zane started speaking with a slightly confused expression on his face. He asked, "Toby, I know that you're holding out on Sonia about her identity for her own good, but some secrets can never be buried forever. Have you ever thought about what would happen if she finds out about it one day? By then, don't you think she is going to be so mad at you knowing that you kept her in the dark all this while?"

Toby fiddled with his fingers for a while before he replied, "She will certainly blame me for it, but I believe she will come to understand why I did it sooner or later. After all, she is smart, and I trust she knows what to do."

"I hope you're right." Zane shrugged his shoulders.

Then, Toby picked up the cup and guzzled down the coffee in it. "Well, now that you know everything you've wanted to know, is there anything else I can help you with?"

Zane sensed that it was Toby's hint for him to be gone, so he curled his lips upward and smirked. "Hey, you and I are like brothers in arms, but why do I feel like I'm something disposable that you merely use and throw away? Don't you think it's a little too mean to treat your comrade like that?"

While Toby reacted by shooting an annoyed gaze at his friend, Zane stood up and said, "Fine, stop giving me that look, okay? You're scaring me. I'll get going now."

"Tom!" Toby called out to his assistant.

Tom, who was waiting outside the door, heard his name and quickly pushed the door open before coming in. "Yes, President Fuller?"

"Please see him out." Toby jutted his chin toward Zane.

"Sure." Tom smiled at Zane. "This way, Mr. Coleman."

Zane rolled his eyes. "Were you waiting outside the door all this while? Were you aware of that too, Toby? Damn, you two had this all planned seeing how ready you are to see me out of here the moment you got the chance, am I right?"

"I'm glad we've made ourselves clear about that, Mr. Coleman. This way, please." Tom gazed at Zane with a smile. Well, I wouldn't make a fuss if I were you. Otherwise, things will turn ugly.

As soon as Zane understood Toby's implicit gesture, he pursed his lips in speechlessness and walked away with Tom.

Instantly, the office returned to its usual quiet and peaceful state. At the same time, Toby looked in the direction of where Zane had left, feeling uneasy and restless as the latter's words reverberated in his mind.

In fact, he was somewhat worried that Sonia would blame him when she found out about the truth, but even so, he'd rather take his chances because he thought he was doing the right thing for her.

Thus, he told himself that he would not regret his decision just as a determined look flashed across his face before it disappeared.

Later that afternoon, Toby finished his work before it was time to go home and drive to Paradigm Co. By the time he arrived there, it was already 6.00PM.

However, he remained in his car and sent Sonia a text message to inform her about his arrival, but when he didn't get a reply from her a few moments later, he began to feel a little anxious and wondered if she wasn't replying to his messages intentionally because of the call they had earlier that morning.

As he pursed his lips, he placed his phone in his pocket and grabbed the coat lying in the front passenger seat next to him before he wrapped the scarf Sonia had made for him around his neck. After that, he stepped out of his car and made his way to Paradigm Co.'s lobby.

Soon, Toby's appearance in Paradigm Co.'s lobby immediately stunned everyone, causing many heads to turn as they didn't expect to see him there.

After all, Toby was the Fuller Group's president. He was the youngest and richest man in Seafield and the whole country, not to mention the fact that he was also among the top few wealthiest men in the world.

Therefore, the employees present felt fortunate to have run into him after work, thinking that he was there to see Sonia. While everyone else was wondering about the purpose of his visit, Toby couldn't care less about the attention that was directed at him and walked toward the front desk emotionlessly.

As Toby got closer and closer, the receptionist at the front desk felt more and more nervous. She tried to talk but struggled to do so, and she stuttered while her cheeks blushed wildly. "G-Greetings. P-President Fuller... How may I help you?"

The receptionist wasn't inept; she was simply just too stunned to entertain Toby. After all, she hadn't even met Sonia in person, let alone someone else even more powerful than her chairman. Nonetheless, she was still able to pull herself together and speak.

"Is Little Leaf still here?" Toby asked calmly.

"Little Leaf?" The receptionist appeared confused.

"I mean Sonia Reed." Toby pursed his lips.

At that moment, the receptionist realized that Little Leaf was her chairman, Sonia.

None of us has ever heard about Chairman Reed's nickname. In fact, we've never heard President Lane calling her that way either. Well, I guess this is a name uniquely given by President Fuller to Chairman Reed. Oh, my gosh! This is so sweet!

At the thought of that, the receptionist's face blushed even more as she felt thrilled on the inside. After all, she was a big fan of both Toby and Sonia and had been following all kinds of news about them on the internet, but now that she got to see the man in person, her ecstasy and excitement took over her mind.

Deep down, she thought to herself that she would scream in joy if she was at the right place at the right time. Then, she told herself that she would drop a message in the group chat that was centered around Toby and Sonia to flaunt her encounter with the man and make everyone else envy her.

Oh, dear! Even the thought of that is making me so excited!

Upon taking a few breaths, the receptionist tried her best to calm down and smiled at Toby. "Chairman Reed is still in the office. There's an urgent meeting which requires her presence, so she is probably in the meeting room with all the other directors and department heads."

No wonder she didn't reply to my messages. After learning the truth, Toby put his mind to ease and responded with an affirmative hum before walking toward the elevator.

Meanwhile, the receptionist, who had her eyes glued to the man, clenched her fists and celebrated in excitement. Then, she texted the group about his arrival. I mustn't be the only single lady who feels the pain. After that, she proceeded to sign into her Facebook account and continued to show off about her encounter with Toby to the other fans.

Needless to say, Toby was unaware of what the receptionist was doing as he soon arrived outside the meeting room, and there was another front desk there. One of Sonia's assistants was seated there; when he heard footsteps approaching, he looked up and shifted his gaze away from his monitor, only to catch sight of Toby's face. After being stunned for a moment, he immediately rose from his seat and greeted the man by saying, "President Fuller."

Toby glimpsed the man and replied with an affirmative hum, whereupon he shifted his gaze to the meeting room's door. "Is the meeting still going on?"

The assistant nodded his head. "Yes, but I think they're about to wrap things up soon. After all, Chairman Reed and the rest have been there for more than an hour. Are you here to see Chairman Reed, President Fuller?"

"Yes." Toby nodded. "I'm here to take her home."

Despite feeling a sting of pain in the face of Toby's loving attitude toward Sonia, the assistant tried his best to keep a smile on his face. "Please give me a moment, President Fuller. I'll inform Chairman Reed about your arrival at once."

"There's no need for that." Toby put a hand up. "Let's not interrupt her meeting. I'll wait until she is done."

Upon hearing Toby's words, the assistant politely showed him where to sit instead of trying to change his mind. "In that case, please sit here and wait, President Fuller. I'll get you a cup of tea."

Toby nodded and walked toward the place where the assistant had pointed at. Then, he sat down and waited for Sonia to be done with her meeting.

Chapter 825 One of the Responsibilities of a Man

After waiting for about half an hour, Toby was drinking coffee when he suddenly heard movement from the direction of the conference room opposite him.

He put down the coffee cup, stood up, and looked in that direction just in time to see the door of the conference room open. Then, a group of people came out in twos and threes.

Toby stared at those people, looking for the figure he had been thinking of among them.

However, he still couldn't see the figure that he wanted to see after looking for some time, and he felt slightly disappointed.

It seems like she's going to be the last one to come out.

Toby pursed his lips, but he still did not withdraw his gaze. If Sonia didn't come out last, wouldn't he miss her if he looked away now?

Toby's gaze was so focused that he quickly attracted the attention of those who came out of the conference room.

When those people looked around and saw Toby standing there, they were all stunned.

"P-President Fuller?"

Someone couldn't help but call out. With this, the other sluggish people also came back to their senses.

"It really is President Fuller! I thought I was mistaken."

"Me too."

"Why is President Fuller here?" Someone raised a curious question.

Soon, these curious people were looked down upon by others.

"Nonsense, what kind of question is that? Our chairman and President Fuller are a match made in heaven."

Upon being reminded of this, the person who had asked curiously immediately reacted by patting his forehead. He then said, "Yes, I almost forgot. President Fuller must be here to look for our chairman."

"That's right."

"In that case, shall we say hello?" someone asked.

However, it was quickly opposed by others. "It's not necessary to greet him. President Fuller is here to find the chairman. Wouldn't it be annoying if we go over to greet him?"

"However, since he is here, it seems a little bit inappropriate if we don't go over to say hello."

"Well..."

Everyone didn't know what to say and fell silent.

Yes, it was both appropriate and inappropriate to say hello. What else could they do, though?

Moreover, they couldn't leave now.

At that moment, the Paradigm Co.'s executives who came out of the conference room were all unsure of what to do.

Asher, who was in the middle of the crowd, listened to everyone's discussion before he looked at Toby. Meanwhile, the latter was staring at the expectant crowd, his face as dark as ever.

Asher had always been troubled by the relationship between Toby and Sonia.

The better the relationship between these two people, the worse it was for him.

When their relationship was good, Toby would help Sonia out during difficulties, so Asher's dream of obtaining Paradigm Co. would be even more difficult to achieve.

Therefore, he wished that these two were distant from each other. Nevertheless, that was unlikely and unrealistic right now.

Toby had come here to pick up Sonia from work, so how could they be distant from each other now?

Asher clenched his fists, his face full of unhappiness.

When the executives who supported Sonia saw Asher like this, they all laughed in disdain.

They all felt that Asher had some sort of brain damage and could not comprehend things clearly.

He obviously had no talent in managing the group, but he was very ambitious. He wanted to hold Paradigm Co. in his hands, but he had forgotten how the company had struggled under his leadership before Sonia took over Paradigm Co. In fact, it was Sonia who had asked everywhere for help after she took over the company to salvage it. At this time, not only was Asher neither thankful or grateful, he wanted to overthrow Sonia and manage Paradigm Co. by himself instead.

What he didn't consider was that if Sonia had really been driven out, Toby would be the first to stop the collaboration with Paradigm Co.

After all, half of Paradigm Co. Group's collaborative projects now relied on various subsidiaries of the Fuller Group, and the rest were collaborative projects between Sonia and Charles. Once Sonia was overthrown, Toby would surely revoke all the projects. Meanwhile, the remaining projects between Sonia and Charles would definitely be destroyed and not left to Asher.

It could be said that Paradigm Co. was entirely supported by Sonia. Without her, Paradigm Co. would naturally fail.

Every one of them could see this clearly, but Asher, a man who only knew how to fight for power and profit, couldn't. He was thinking that even if Sonia was expelled, Paradigm Co. would continue as usual.

Oh, dream on.

A high-level executive who was a director glanced at Asher with disdain. Then, he turned his head to a manager who was one level lower than himself and said, "Go in and tell the chairman that President Fuller is waiting for her here. Also, tell her to leave the minutes of the meeting behind first. Tell her to hurry up and meet him so that we can leave."

If Toby didn't leave, they couldn't leave either.

"Alright," the manager answered and hurriedly turned around to enter the conference room.

Inside, Sonia was sitting in the main seat while checking out the meeting minutes.

Just then, someone walked quickly to her side and said, "Chairman Reed."

Sonia paused to look up. Then, she smiled at the person and asked, "What's the matter, Manager Watson?"

"Chairman Reed, President Fuller is here." Manager Watson pointed to the door and spoke.

Sonia looked over, but she couldn't see the situation outside. However, based on Manager Watson's movements, she could still guess what he meant.

She stood up in surprise. "Are you saying that Toby is outside?"

"Yes." Manager Watson nodded. "He's waiting for you."

"When did he come? How long has he been here?" Sonia asked as she took out her phone to see if Toby had texted her.

At first glance, she realized that he had sent her a message more than half an hour ago.

In other words, Toby had already been here for quite some time.

Manager Watson shook his head. "I don't know. When we went out after the meeting, we saw him sitting at the front desk. It must have been a while."

"I see, thank you for telling me this." After Sonia smiled at him, she quickly gathered up all the documents on the table, put them in a folder, and walked quickly toward the door.

Then, Manager Watson followed closely behind her.

As soon as Sonia left the conference room, she found that the high-level executives hadn't left yet as they all stood outside.

Fortunately, the area outside was large. Otherwise, it would've been jam-packed.

"Chairman Reed."

When they saw Sonia coming out, everyone looked happy except for Asher and his people. "You're finally here. President Fuller is waiting for you."

After saying that, someone pointed at Toby.

Sonia turned her head to look and saw the man walking around the front desk. With a smile on her face, she raised her hand and waved at the man. Then, she stepped forward and walked toward him.

After a few steps, Sonia and Toby came to each other. Sonia stopped several feet away from him before she looked up at him and said apologetically, "I've made you wait for a long time."

"No." Toby shook his head. "Waiting for a woman is part of a man's responsibility."

Tom previously told him that men who were in love needed to wait patiently when women dressed up, went shopping, and ate slowly. What was more, she was holding a meeting.

He also believed that if it were him, she would've waited as well.

When she heard the man's words, Sonia couldn't help but chuckle. "Where did you hear this from?"

“It doesn’t matter; the important thing is that I am willing to wait.” After Toby finished speaking, he took her hand and was about to pull her into his arms.

When she felt the pulling force from the man’s hand, Sonia panicked and quickly stopped him. “Wait.”

Chapter 826 Toby Looks Hilarious

Toby instinctively loosened his grip. “What’s wrong?”

At this moment, Sonia’s face was red as she whispered, “Someone’s staring at us.”

A look of realization appeared on his face.

And here I thought she didn’t want to be near me, but it looks like she just didn’t want others to see us like this.

Toby ruffled Sonia’s hair gently, after which he looked up and turned to the higher executives staring at them before giving them an indifferent look. “The meeting has ended. Are you all not going to excuse yourselves?”

Upon hearing that, all of them caught on that they were in the way of the lovebirds, so they chuckled in embarrassment.

“We are leaving now.”

“Yeah. Let’s not disturb President Fuller and Miss Reed any longer.”

Those who said that were employees from Sonia’s side, as they sincerely hoped for those two to be in a good relationship.

If Sonia and Toby were in a good relationship, Paradigm Co. could always rely on Fuller Group, and these people’s interests would be secured.

In no time, all of the higher executives hurried off the meeting room.

Nevertheless, humans were curious by nature, especially the locals.

Although all the higher executives left in a rush, they turned around to glance in Sonia and Toby’s direction after walking a distance away.

Upon seeing them hugging each other, a few of them were satisfied, while a few others’ facial expressions soured.

Of course, Toby and Sonia, who were completely engrossed with each other, couldn’t be bothered by any of their reactions.

At this moment, Sonia was lying in Toby’s arms obediently as she rested her head on his shoulder. “I thought you wouldn’t get off work so early, so I started a meeting without informing you about it. If I had known earlier, I would have told you about it so that you didn’t have to wait for me.”

“It’s alright.” Toby ruffled her smooth hair gently. “I didn’t inform you that I’m getting off work on time because I wanted to give you a surprise.”

“So we were both not thoughtful enough.” Sonia looked up at him while he chuckled. “Well, that’s a good thing because it adds on to surprises occasionally.”

“You’re right.” Sonia chuckled as well.

They embraced each other for a while before heading to the elevator hand-in-hand. When they got back to Sonia’s office, Toby let go of her hand and looked at her before asking, “Are you going to continue with your work?”

Sonia shook her head. “Nah. I did initially have some work scheduled. I was thinking I could stay a little longer to finish my work since you were busy recently and had been working overtime and coming home late. However, now that you’re here, I’m obviously placing you as my priority. Well, I’m going to work on these tomorrow, as they’re not really important. Shall we go back now?”

Toby’s lips curled up as he was in a good mood. “Sure. Let’s go home together.”

“You’ll have to wait for me for a moment. I have some things to tidy up.”

“Sure.” Toby nodded while Sonia headed to her desk to pack her stuff in preparation to clock off.

Just then, Toby started trailing behind her, following her everywhere she went, as if he was a duckling.

Although Sonia found his actions funny, she didn’t stop him from doing so.

I guess I’ll let him trail behind me if he wants to. Plus, it’s kind of funny seeing a tall man like him trailing behind me.

A while later, Sonia tidied all her stuff and locked them in her drawer before she dusted her hands off.

Upon seeing that, Toby asked, “Are you done?”

She nodded. “Yes. We can leave after I grab my coat and handbag.”

“Here.” Toby took it upon himself to walk over to Sonia’s coat rack to grab her coat and her handbag.

Just then, he slung Sonia’s handbag over his shoulder before unfolding her beige coat and motioned for her to slip her arms into her coat.

At this moment, Sonia smiled and didn’t refuse Toby’s advances to help her to get into her coat. Instead, she slipped her arms into the sleeves and wore her coat with his help.

It’s normal for a boyfriend to help his girlfriend to wear her coat, so why should I refuse his advancement? Besides, it’s rare for something like this to happen, and he might get upset if I reject him.

Sure enough, Toby’s mood lifted when Sonia wore her coat with his help.

While Sonia didn’t notice the man’s expression, she extended her hand toward the man after tying the belt around her waist with a knot. “You can hand me my bag now.”

“It’s fine.” Toby pulled on the bag’s strap before he shook his head. “I’ll carry it for you.”

Sonia raised her eyebrows. “Are you sure?”

Is he actually going to carry my handbag for me?!

Toby nodded seriously. "Of course."

Staring at the beige handbag slinging off the man's shoulder and his good-looking suit, Sonia couldn't help but feel bewildered as he looked mismatched.

It was already odd to see a man carrying a woman's handbag, not to mention a well-dressed and charismatic man carrying a feminine handbag. Those who didn't know who Toby was might even think that he was a twisted pervert.

Right then, Sonia couldn't help but purse her lips to avoid laughing as she looked at Toby, who was carrying her handbag. If it weren't for the fact that she was worried that his pride would get hurt if she started laughing, she wouldn't have refrained from doing so.

At that instance, Sonia was really struggling not to laugh.

"Sure. You can carry my handbag if you insist on doing so. I'll take this chance to relax, then," she cleared her throat before saying and covered her mouth so that Toby couldn't see the smile on her face.

Not noticing Sonia's reaction, Toby pushed the strap of the handbag on his shoulder before humming in acknowledgment. "Let's go."

"Alright." Sonia lowered her gaze to mask the smile in her eyes.

Then, the two of them left the office, one after another.

Right after they left the office, the door to the secretaries and assistants' office next door opened as well. Following that, a few secretaries and assistants came out of the office along with their bags, as it was already time to get off work.

When they noticed Sonia and Toby, all of them halted before greeting them. "Miss Reed, President Fuller."

While Toby didn't react to them, Sonia smiled gently at them. "Hey guys, do get home safely."

"Alright, Miss Reed," they nodded before replying with a smile.

Just then, Sonia looked away and held onto Toby's arm before they started heading toward the elevator while the others stared at their retreating figures in awe.

Suddenly, one of the assistants' eyes widened before their mouth fell open in disbelief when they noticed Toby carrying a woman's handbag. "Look at that."

"What?" the person next to them asked in confusion.

The assistant pointed to Toby's left. "Look at that. President Fuller is carrying a woman's handbag. That must be Miss Reed's."

Surely, all of them noticed the beige handbag when they looked in the direction that the assistant pointed.

Upon seeing the bag and staring at Toby's large build as well as the suit that he was wearing, they glanced at each other before breaking into laughter at the same time.

“Oh my goodness! President Fuller looks hilarious carrying that tiny handbag!”

“I know, right? It doesn’t fit his image at all.”

“Still, that’s much a caring move. Although knowing that others might make fun of him, he still helps Miss Reed to carry her handbag. Looks like President Fuller really loves Miss Reed. I’m so jealous of her.”

“Who isn’t, though?”

The few secretaries and assistants gathered around and exclaimed among each other, staring in the direction where Sonia and Toby left together.

Chapter 827 Remember to Wake Me Up

It only went to show that Toby, with Sonia’s purse slung over his shoulder, was a hilarious sight indeed, and those who were fortunate enough to witness this moment were either wide-eyed with surprise or pressing their lips together to keep from laughing.

There were even some standing a little further away from the scene who took out their phones and snapped pictures, emboldened by the distance and the low likelihood of getting caught. After that, they excitedly shared the pictures with their respective work groups.

It didn’t take long before the pictures of Toby with a woman’s purse slung around him began to circulate among the employees, and naturally, they all laughed at this comical sight.

The entire Paradigm Co. was buzzing like it was New Year’s as everyone pored over the funny pictures.

Being the chairman, Sonia was not in the employees’ various group chats, but she saw the pictures of Toby in the executive group anyway. After all, the world was never short of gossip-mongers, and it was only par for the course that something as hilarious and bombastic as this would make its way from the employees’ group text to the executives’.

As Sonia gazed at the picture of Toby walking alongside her with her purse slung over his shoulder, she couldn’t help but sputter and burst into laughter.

Next to her in the driver’s seat, Toby had already started the car and was ready to pull away from the curb when he heard her laugh. He put a hand on the steering wheel and turned to look at her in askance. “What are you laughing at?”

Sonia quickly flipped her phone screen-down on her thigh, then met his eyes. Amusement glittered in her gaze, and her cheeks were flushed. She shook her head and said in a voice that quivered with repressed laughter, “Oh, nothing, just a funny picture on the internet.”

She didn’t even consider showing him the picture, knowing that he would only sulk if he saw that he had become the joke of the day.

Toby narrowed his eyes skeptically. “A funny picture?”

“Yeah,” she replied as she deftly locked her phone.

His gaze fell upon the phone. “Show me the picture, then.”

"I've already turned my phone off," Sonia said as she showed him the black screen of her phone to prove a point. Then, she quickly set it aside and changed the subject. "Okay, forget about all that, because it's not as important as getting home so I can finally eat. I'm starving." As she said this, she patted her stomach.

Upon hearing this, Toby naturally abandoned the subject of the funny picture and nodded as he said, "Sit tight."

She hummed in response. "I'm all strapped in," she declared while clutching her seatbelt.

It was only then that he released the brakes and steered the car away from the curb.

When Sonia saw that he had willingly dropped the matter of the picture and that he had his eyes on the road while he drove, she let out a sigh of relief. She subtly clicked into her phone once more and found the picture, then saved it.

A picture this hilarious could very well be the only one of its kind, and if she didn't save it now, it would be her loss, seeing as there would be no carbon copies. She would hate to miss out on owning such a special memento.

Who knows? I might even pull it up to cheer myself up on a bad day.

At the thought of this, she carefully stored the image on her phone and set up a password for it so that Toby wouldn't snoop around and come across it. She knew he would throw a fit for sure if he ever saw it.

After she was done setting up the password, she smiled in satisfaction and shoved her phone into her bag, then let out a small yawn.

Toby caught sight out of the corner of his eyes, so he pointed out gently, saying, "We'll be hitting traffic soon, so it might take a while before we get home. Take a nap if you're tired. I can wake you up when we arrive." Sleep now so you won't be tired later, he thought as his gaze darkened.

Oblivious to his devilish thoughts, Sonia massaged her temples and glanced at the view up ahead. He was right when he said that they would be hitting traffic soon. She could see that it would be a slow crawl from this point forward, and there was no telling how long it would take for them to get back to Bayside Residence. As such, she nodded and said, "Okay, I'll take a nap. Remember to wake me up when we get home, and don't try to carry me up, either. I don't want you putting any more strain on your arm before it heals completely."

He nodded obediently in agreement. "Got it."

She let out another yawn and reclined her seat, then lay in a lounging position as she closed her eyes. Before long, she was fast asleep.

Toby glanced over at her side profile while she slept. He took his hand off the steering wheel and reached for her face, then caressed it softly.

As if sensing someone touching her, Sonia frowned and reached up semi-consciously to swat his hand away, and her lips parted as she mumbled, "Don't... That tickles..."

Her voice was thick and soft with sleep, like a down feather that brushed over the edge of Toby's ears. He stiffened and raised his hand to pinch his ear to ease the sudden, ticklish sensation, then turned to see Sonia flipping on her side. She was now facing the passenger seat window.

At the sight of this, he chuckled and let her be. He retracted his hand and elegantly unbuttoned his suit jacket, then shrugged it off. He shook it out to straighten the fabric, after which he carefully draped it over Sonia's sleeping frame and brushed her hair away from her delicate face. It was only after that that he straightened up in his seat, refastened his seatbelt, and proceeded to drive.

There was no telling how much time had passed before they finally parked outside Bayside Residence.

It was already nightfall, and upon their arrival, Toby tenderly stirred Sonia from sleep.

She rubbed her eyes groggily and took in the confined space of the car. Registering where she was, she sat up slowly and asked, "Are we here?" She wasn't entirely awake just yet, and her voice was still soft and hoarse from sleep.

"We are."

Nodding, he turned on the lights in the car, and at once, the dimness inside the vehicle was replaced by a much-welcomed brightness.

Sonia peered out the windshield, and she knew that they were home when she saw that they were in the familiar parking lot. She unbuckled her seatbelt and turned to flash a smile at Toby. "I'm glad you decided to wake me up instead of carrying me up into the apartment like you usually do."

He shrugged. "I figured you would only wake up and lecture me if I did the latter."

She rubbed her stiff neck and said, "Good to know you're aware of it. I couldn't care less if your arm was perfectly fine and you insisted on carrying me up, but seeing as you're still recovering, I wouldn't want to live with the guilt of worsening your injury."

"As if I would make you feel guilty if that ever happened," he pointed out solemnly as he met her gaze.

She rolled her eyes at him. "Even if you don't, my conscience would make sure I drown in guilt. Now, what time is it?" As she asked, she raised her arm and glanced at her watch. "Oh, it's almost 9.00PM." She seemed stunned by this. "I didn't think it'd be this late. Were we stuck in traffic for long?"

He nodded. "Kind of."

She put her arm down as realization dawned upon her. "It's no wonder I'm starving, then. Come on, let's get out of the car."

Toby hummed in response and got out of the car at the same time she did.

After closing the car door, Sonia shrugged off his suit jacket and draped it over her arm. When she saw him rounding the vehicle to meet her, she handed the jacket to him.

However, he pushed the jacket back to her and said, "Wear it. You'll only catch a chill if you give it back to me now."

“No, I won’t.” She shook her head and handed him the jacket with more insistence. “You’re the one wearing a waistcoat and shirt, so there’s a higher chance of you catching the chill than me. Put your jacket on, and no, I don’t believe that a big, strong man like you won’t catch a cold. Some women might believe it, but I’m not that gullible. Humans are susceptible to the cold weather no matter the gender, so come on, pull on the jacket,” she said with a steely edge to her voice, looking as if she would not take no for an answer.

Toby raised a brow at her and let out a low chuckle, then grabbed the jacket. “Okay, fine, I’ll wear it.”

He knew she was only worried that he would get sick, and he would much rather do as he was told than make her worry.

When Sonia saw that he had pulled on the jacket, she smiled in satisfaction and said, “Right, let’s go home now.”

Chapter 828 A Heartwarming Dinner

Toby hummed in response as he buttoned up his jacket and said, “Let’s go.”

Sonia took a step forward, but perhaps she was hungry and still groggy from her nap because she wobbled on her feet. She had only just tried to walk when her legs caved under her weight, and she toppled forward like a house of cards.

At the sight of this, Toby’s expression froze. He didn’t bother with the last two buttons on his suit jacket as he reached out to grab Sonia’s arm, then pulled her forcefully upward and into his embrace.

The next second, Sonia found herself pressed against his sturdy chest, and she appeared to be in a daze. The fact that she had nearly fallen clearly scared her.

Toby held onto her gently. He had one arm around her waist and a hand patting her back softly as he asked anxiously, “Are you okay?”

She nodded feebly. “I’m fine.”

“What happened just now?” he asked as he gripped her shoulders and put some distance between them so he could look at her.

She let out a slow breath. Having regained composure, she replied calmly, “I was hungry, and I guess all my strength drained out of me because one moment I was standing and the next I was swaying. You saw what happened after that.”

Upon hearing her explanation, Toby nodded, then glanced down at her feet. “Did you sprain your ankle?”

She was wearing heels, and she could have sprained her ankle from a stumble like the one earlier. While he didn’t hear the sound of popping bones that usually accompanied a sprain, he wasn’t taking any chances.

“No,” Sonia answered with a smile. She shook her head good-naturedly when she saw how anxious he looked and added, “My ankles are perfectly fine. I promise.” As she said this, she made it a point to turn

her ankle this way and that. When she was done with the right ankle, she proceeded to do the same with the left, and at last, she stood still.

Toby was no longer as worried when he saw that she was unhurt. Nodding slightly, he said, "Alright then. Come on, let's get back to the apartment. You're hungry, aren't you?"

"I am," she replied.

And just like that, Toby put his arm around her waist and helped her over to the elevators.

Sonia, on the other hand, was kind of hoping that he would let her go so that they didn't have to hobble, as two so often did when they were glued at the hips. However, seeing as he was so convinced she would fall if he let go, she didn't have the heart to decline his gesture.

They didn't have to hobble around for long before they reached the apartment.

Sonia set her purse down and grabbed the apron from the living room, then pulled it over herself as she made her way into the kitchen to get started on dinner.

But she had only just stepped through the kitchen doorway when Toby grabbed her arm and said, "You don't have to cook tonight. It's late, and you're so famished you can barely walk. I'll make dinner instead."

When she saw how serious he looked, she did not insist on making dinner and handed him the apron instead as she conceded, "Very well, then. You get to have the kitchen."

"Dinner will be ready in just a moment," he promised as he took the apron, then gave her a gentle stroke on the head before he headed into the kitchen.

She reached up to smooth her hair and let out an amused laugh, then turned to walk into the living room. She sat down on the couch and watched some television while waiting for the man in the kitchen to serve dinner.

Ten minutes later, Toby was still making dinner, and Sonia was waiting for him patiently when her phone suddenly rang.

She put the TV show on pause and set the remote control down, then picked up her phone. After glancing at the caller ID, she put the call through and greeted, "Hello?"

"Hello, Miss Reed. We're calling from the atelier," a woman's voice said pleasantly on the other line.

Sonia nodded. "Yes, I know. This is a rather late hour for you to be calling. Is there something I can help you with?"

"Well, we're actually calling to inform you that the evening dress you ordered has already been shipped over from Milan. May I know when you would be free to drop by for a fitting so we can see what alterations need to be made?"

"Oh, the dress!" Sonia hit her head with her palm when she heard the woman's explanation. Now that she remembered, she gave an embarrassed laugh. "I nearly forgot about that dress. I can come by the atelier tomorrow afternoon for the fitting."

After she had received the invitation from the mall the other day, she asked Daphne to place an order for an evening dress for her. Some time had passed since then, long enough for her to push this matter to the back of her mind, where it would have inevitably dwelled forever had it not been for the call from the atelier.

Presently, the woman on the other line said with a polite laugh, "Well, in that case, Miss Reed, we'll see you tomorrow at the atelier."

Sonia hummed in response. "Okay."

When the call ended, she put her phone down.

Just then, a savory scent came up from behind her. She turned around to see Toby bringing a tray out from the kitchen, and on it were two large bowls of something.

He was standing, and she was sitting, so from her vantage point, she couldn't see what was in the bowls until Toby bent over to put the tray on the coffee table in front of her. She peered at the familiar coloring of the soup-like substance in the bowls. Is that borscht?

The borscht was a rich red in color with potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables peeking out. She could even see the slices of beetroot that had given the soup its distinct auburn-ish coloring. On top of the soup was a dollop of sour cream garnished with dill. The savory scent she had picked up on earlier must be from the sour cream.

A bright smile stretched across her face as she stared at the two bowls of soup and exclaimed, "Wow, you actually made borscht!"

Toby handed her a spoon and said, "Well, you were hungry, and I didn't think I had time to make anything fancy. Borscht happened to be the quickest dish I could think of when I saw beetroot in the fridge. It's a simple fare, so I hope you won't mind."

Sonia shook her head to dismiss his self-invalidation. "No, it's not a simple fare at all. You made this from scratch, and this bowl of borscht is filled with your sentiments. There is no way it's a simple fare, and I happen to love borscht."

With that, she stirred the sour cream into the soup and picked up a spoonful of the concoction, then blew on it to cool it off for a bit before taking a hearty sip. At once, her eyes lit up, and she gave him an earnest thumbs-up. "This is delicious! Hey, your culinary skills are improving!"

Toby gave her a lopsided grin. "Of course. I am a man who is constantly improving, after all."

More importantly, there was no one else he would cook for, and if he wanted to make sure she ate well, he was going to have to pick up proper cooking skills.

She beamed at him. "Aren't you a modest one?"

"I'm just stating facts," he pointed out solemnly as he looked at her.

She nodded. "Yes, yes, you're factual and constantly improving. Come on, it's already late, and you're probably hungry as well. Also, you made this borscht, and you should definitely try your own cooking."

Toby chuckled at the way her eyes sparkled when she praised his cooking and nodded as he said, "Alright."

They ate their dinner in comfortable silence, and neither one made conversation. The only sound that filled the living room was the slurping that accompanied their eating.

It was a comical sight indeed to see two civilized persons abandon eating at the dining table in favor of eating at the coffee table.

Every time they bent their heads to welcome the next mouthful of borscht, they would quite literally be head-to-head with each other. There were several times when they bent so far down that they knocked heads, and while it wasn't painful, the thud that came from it was still audible.

After each knock, they would look up and meet eyes, then exchange amused smiles before they went on eating. Then, they would knock heads again, and exchange an amused look and a smile, and this process repeated itself several times until they finally polished off their bowls of soup.

Sonia set her spoon down and leaned into the couch, practically lying on it as she patted her stomach. Her eyes were heavily lidded as a contented smile spread over her delicate face.

She was completely surprised by how wonderful the borscht had tasted. The flavors were all there, and Toby's company only made the dinner all the better. She had so heartily slurped up the soup that she felt like she might burst now, and as she lay there on the couch, she didn't think she would ever consider moving again.

She wasn't the only one feeling this way, for Toby looked like he was happily stuffed from dinner, too.

Chapter 829 Sneaking Into the Bathroom

When he was growing up, Toby received a strict education. He had to follow a set of rules in every part of his life, and eating was no exception. He had three meals with a certain amount of food a day at a scheduled hour—no more, no less.

As a result, he would always stop eating when he was 80 percent full. He never ate until he was entirely satisfied, so feeling bloated after cleaning his plate was a first for him.

When he was about 80 percent full, his rationality told him to put down his cutlery and stop eating. However, when he saw how much Sonia enjoyed her food, he didn't feel like stopping either, so he went on and finished the meal with her.

It was undeniable that when he had company who enjoyed eating so much, he could disregard all the past rules while having a hearty meal.

Rubbing his tummy, Toby stood up and offered, saying, "Go ahead and rest. I'll clean this up."

"It's fine." Sonia pressed his hands down and counter-offered by stating, "Let me. I'll take care of the dishes since you did the cooking. I can't let you do everything, so just sit back and relax. By the way, you don't look so good either."

With that, she stacked the plates and cutleries before carrying them to the kitchen.

To Sonia, a relationship should be mutual, and so was the same for cohabiting. A relationship between two individuals was about give-and-take, so having only one party blindly giving or receiving didn't feel right. Regardless of how great the relationship was, it would gradually wear away as time passed.

Therefore, it was critical that both parties put equal effort into maintaining the relationship, just as it was with co-living. It was only then that both could go strong for a long time.

Watching Sonia carrying the plates into the kitchen, Toby heaved a sigh before taking a seat.

Well, that came as a surprise. I didn't expect her to be able to tell that I wasn't feeling okay.

It was proven from that alone that she still cared for him. With that thought in mind, Toby lowered his head and chuckled lightly.

After a few minutes, Sonia, who had just cleared the table, came out with a first aid kit in her hand.

Toby was suddenly anxious when he saw the first aid kit. Straightening his back, he quickly inquired, "What happened? Where did you hurt yourself?"

Seeing his concerned look, Sonia couldn't help but feel warmth pooling in her heart. Shaking her head, she smiled. "Not me. You."

"Me?" Toby questioned with his brows raised.

Sonia returned to her seat and sat down before opening the first aid kit, saying, "Aren't you feeling bloated from overeating? Let me look for the antacid."

After saying that, she picked one of the medicine bottles and read the instructions. Unscrewing the lid, she poured three tablets into her hand and gave them to Toby. "Here. These are antacid medicines. Take it."

Looking at the tablets in her hand, he didn't reach over to take them. Instead, he grabbed her wrist and poured the tablets into his mouth. That wasn't all. Once all the tablets were poured into his mouth, he licked her palm deliberately.

Tickled by his licks, Sonia glared at him petulantly. "What are you doing?"

Toby chuckled in response. "Oops. Sorry."

The corners of Sonia's lips twitched. "The look on your face tells me otherwise."

Rolling her eyes at him, Sonia pulled her hand back and poured a glass of water for him. "Drink some water."

Toby hummed and didn't try anything else on her. This time, he took the glass and drank a sip of water to melt the bitter tablets in his mouth before swallowing them.

Sonia shut the lid of the first aid kit while uttering, "You shouldn't have eaten so much. Don't force yourself to eat so much anymore, alright? It's not worth it if you get an upset stomach."

"How do you know I can't eat much?" Toby inquired while holding the glass and staring at her.

Spreading her palms, Sonia replied, "You always control your portion for every meal, so it's not difficult to notice that you've eaten more than you usually do. If it weren't for that happy look of yours, I would've stopped you from eating."

She was indeed shocked to see that he had almost finished the whole bowl of borscht earlier, and she did intend to stop him.

His stomach could only hold a certain portion of food because he had always managed his meals.

The portion of the borscht he had eaten earlier exceeded his usual portion, so it made sense for him to have an upset stomach right now.

Moreover, he was obviously uncomfortable but refused to stop eating. Sonia was a little taken aback and wanted to stop him, but she held back after watching him enjoying the food.

Sonia was also aware of what made him so happy.

The reason was none other than him having the meal with her and watching her eating happily. It made him want to do the same.

What an innocent fool. I can't believe he did that! Haha!

"Don't do that anymore. You only suffer from it." Sonia looked at him.

Meeting her concerned gaze, Toby responded with a gentle look on his face, "Okay."

"Alright. Lie down here and take a rest. I think you'll be fine in a while after the medicine starts working." After that, Sonia carried the first aid kit into the kitchen and stored it. She then grabbed her clothes and went to the bathroom.

On the other hand, Toby sat on the sofa while his gaze was locked on her as she moved. Even after Sonia had entered the bathroom and closed the door, he couldn't peel his eyes off the frosted door.

Though he couldn't see the inside, he could see a graceful figure through the frosted door. The figure was currently putting her hands to the back of her head and tying her hair into a bun.

After that was done, the figure rested her hands in a crossover posture before lifting the hem of her shirt over her head, showing off her voluptuous figure.

Seeing that, Toby could feel his eyes darken and Adam's apple bobbing up and down. He then grabbed hold of the sofa's arms and stood up before sauntering to the bathroom.

Once he was right outside the bathroom, the figure was done taking off her clothes. With one hand, she held onto the showerhead and started washing herself.

The sound of the rushing flow of water penetrated the frosted door and into Toby's ears. At that moment, Toby's eyes turned dark.

He then turned the doorknob lightly with one hand, and the door opened.

Having been staying alone in the past, Sonia never got used to locking doors because no one would barge in any way.

Though she was currently living with Toby, she kept the habit of not locking doors because she never expected him to enter while she showered.

Slowly, the door was pushed open by Toby. The bathroom was enveloped in mist and fragrance, and everything else in the bathroom entered Toby's line of sight.

Sonia was currently naked and standing under the showerhead with her back facing him. Water poured down her body from the huge showerhead above her while she held the small showerhead on her shoulder, giving her shoulders a little massage as she tilted her head sideways.

The whole day of work had burdened her shoulders, so during the shower, she splashed hot water on her shoulders as a form of massage to relieve the soreness. It became a habit for her to do it every time during a shower.

Perhaps Sonia was too focused on showering, or perhaps Toby was too quiet as he opened the door and walked toward her, but she didn't even realize the door was open and his figure was sneaking in.

It was only when Toby stood right behind her and reached out to hug her waist did she come to a shocking realization. She blurted a cry, and her whole body went stiff.

"Shh! Don't scream!" Toby immediately covered Sonia's mouth and leaned his head on her shoulders, uttering in a raspy voice, "It's me."

"Huh?"

Toby?

Chapter 830 You're Getting Ahead of Yourself

Sonia was first stunned, but soon after, she became frustrated.

How could Toby sneak into the bathroom while I showered?! And here I thought some weirdo entered, but well, it's just him! Gosh, he gave me the shock of my life!

Sonia's cheeks quickly turned crimson as she slapped away Toby's hands, which were placed on her waist.

In response, Toby loosened his grip. Sonia then hurriedly took a step forward, widening the gap between them. Turning around, she tilted her head upward and looked at him.

His clothes were soaking wet due to the water flowing from the huge showerhead above them. Even his hair was damp and stuck onto his face and scalp.

However, he didn't look the least bit messy. Instead, his damp shirt clung to his body, punctuating his perfect body proportions.

Even as water dripped down his face, it only further accentuated his charm and sexiness. Men or women soaking wet looked equally enchanting.

At that moment, dreamy was the word to describe Toby. His dampened figure drained off his usual cold and aloof expression, bringing out the dreamy and delicate impression of him.

It was simply hard to tear one's eyes off of him. Watching the gorgeous being in front of her, Sonia couldn't help but be awestruck.

However, she was quick to return to her senses. This is no time to stare at a hot guy! He was the one who sneaked into the bathroom while she was showering!

I'm... nude! Argh!

After she realized there wasn't a single piece of clothing on her body, her already pink cheeks turned crimson.

After letting out another yelp, she quickly crouched down and wrapped herself with both hands, covering her body. Tilting her head up, she glared at Toby in embarrassment while yelling, "Why did you come in when I'm showering, Toby Fuller?! Get out!"

If she didn't have to cover herself up, she would have slapped his calves to chase him out.

Despite that, Toby stayed rooted to the spot while looking down at her. His Adam's apple bobbed a little, and his voice sounded raspy. "I'm here to take a shower too."

"You want to take a shower?" Sonia widened her eyes in disbelief.

"Mhm." Toby nodded in all seriousness.

Sonia's lips twitched as she questioned, "Do you think I'll buy that? Who on earth barges into the bathroom to shower when someone else is showering? Just get out already," she urged once again.

Regardless of her pushes, Toby didn't leave. Instead, he started unbuttoning his shirt.

Seeing that, Sonia could feel her heart skip a beat. "What are you doing, Toby?"

"Taking off my clothes to shower," replied Toby. "I'm being serious with you. I'm here to shower."

Upon hearing that, Sonia was furious. "Why do you want to shower when I'm showering? Get out! Do you hear me? Get out, Toby Fuller! Stop taking off your clothes. Get out!"

She was so anxious to the verge of crying, although they had hit the home run before.

But still, it was going to be the first time for them to be fully naked in the shower with each other!

She wasn't going to let him do whatever he wanted.

Watching Sonia hugging herself even more tightly like a ball, Toby halted his actions.

Though he stopped moving, the buttons on his shirt had all been undone.

His shirt was slightly left open, revealing his well-defined chest and abs. Any person would easily swoon over that sight.

After that, he crouched down to Sonia's eye level, asking, "Why? Don't you want to shower with me?"

Sonia glared at him in embarrassment.

What kind of nonsense is he spewing? I've never showered with someone else. A man at that!

It only made sense that Sonia would reject that idea. Though she didn't speak, Toby understood her thoughts.

Reaching his arms out, he grabbed her wrist and pulled her into his embrace. After a quick yelp, Sonia fell into his chest and was locked in his embrace.

This was the first time that Sonia was lying naked in his arms while he was clothed. The unfair circumstances made her blush even more. Instantly, she panicked and struggled to get out of his grip. "Let go, Toby! Do you hear me? I said, let go!"

Caressing her smooth back, Toby refused to let go. He then nibbled her earlobe and reassured, "Don't worry. We're just showering together. I've done that for you before, so what are you so afraid of? There's nothing to be embarrassed about."

Sonia was so enraged that her eyes turned red. "How is that the same?"

When he washed her up before, she was in a coma, so she didn't know what was going on. At that time, she was just like a rag doll. She didn't have any consciousness, so naturally, she didn't feel shy or embarrassed.

However, Sonia was entirely conscious at this moment. Being aware of whatever was going to happen only served to make her panic.

"There's not much difference." A tiny chuckle escaped Toby.

"We've done the deed, so is showering a big deal now? Come on. Get up. Aren't your legs getting sore from crouching so long?"

After saying that, Toby got up and pulled her up together. At the same time, Sonia realized that he was determined to shower with her now, and there was no way he would leave this bathroom anymore.

Inhaling a deep breath, she tried to compose herself and look calm.

It was just like what he said. They had already done the most intimate thing that a couple could do, so showering together was nothing compared to two bodies intertwined with each other.

Well, now that I think of it, I did overreact a little. Does he think I'm a joke now? It's just a shower! What's there to be embarrassed about? Stop panicking! There's no need to be shy!

It seemed that she was too conservative and narrow-minded compared to him.

Sonia shut her eyes and persuaded herself silently. At the same time, she was trying to calm herself down.

After a while, her tensed body finally loosened a little. Even the panicky and nervous feeling gradually dissipated.

She was no longer the flustered little deer caught in the headlights when Toby suddenly barged in.

He was right. They had reached the highest form of physical intimacy, and he also gave her a shower before. They had become the closest person to each other. On top of everything, there was no part of her body that he hadn't seen before.

Therefore, there was no reason for her to be so nervous and shy. Being flustered in front of Toby, who didn't even feel the slightest bit of shame, made her seem lower in status.

With that thought in mind, Sonia could finally compose herself. She could even look him in the eye now, though her cheeks were still flushed pink. It was a pretty sight for Toby to watch.

"Ready?" Toby inquired when he could feel Sonia's body relax.

Sonia nodded in response and glared at him. "Ready. You trained another set of courage out of me."

Sonia could then feel the vibration in Toby's chest as he chuckled lightly with a seductive voice. Smirking, he uttered, "That's because you're all shy."

"Hah! Do you think everyone is as brazen as you?" Sonia snorted in dismay, but that only served to trigger another laugh from Toby. "You're right. I'm a brazen man. So, Mrs. Fuller, may I ask you for a favor?"

Upon hearing that, Sonia widened her eyes and questioned, "What did you call me?"

"Mrs. Fuller," Toby repeated.

Pursing her lips, Sonia could feel the heat surging up her face again. "W-Who allowed you to call me Mrs. Fuller? Why are you talking nonsense?"

"I'm not talking nonsense." Toby blinked his eyes and looked at her with a serious expression.

"You will be Mrs. Fuller unless you don't want to marry me. But it's too late to refuse because I will drag you to the Civil Affairs Bureau and register our marriage. You are only allowed to marry me, my dear Mrs. Fuller."

Toby looked into her eyes with a gaze that was dead serious. If she rejected him, that would ruin his whole domineering stance.

After lifting her hand to hit him on the chest, Sonia quickly caressed the spot with a scar left from the surgery before questioning, "You're getting ahead of yourself. Aren't you afraid that I don't like someone so haughty?"