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As they caused quite a commotion, Marcus lost his appetite after taking a few more bites. He looked at me and suggested, "Let's go and rest for a while. We'll go to OrbitTech at two in the afternoon."

Nodding, I stood up with him and subconsciously shot a glance at the woman, who was shrieking in pain as the man hit her.

I could not help but frown. Why is no one stopping them when things are looking so bad?

When the man was about to smash a glass on the woman, she cowered and desperately shielded her head. It seemed like she was used to being beaten up.

Instinctively, I yelled, "Stop it!"

When I regained my senses immediately after, I could not help but feel frustrated at myself. After all, it was not quite appropriate for an outsider to interfere in one's family affairs. Even if I could help this time, I would not be able to help them forever.

However, since I had already yelled at him, it was impossible for me to leave just like that.

When the man heard my voice, he paused mid-action and turned around to look in our direction.

When I saw his face, I was stunned. Felix?

Why is he here?

My gaze then turned to the woman cowering in front of him. She timidly raised her head and glanced at me.

I was once again astonished. As expected, the woman was Stacey. It had been some time since I last saw her, but her mature beauty had already disappeared and was replaced instead by a sunken and depressed look.

Only half a year had passed, but she had changed so drastically.

Both of them were stunned to see me. Felix was the first to scoff in disdain, "I was wondering who it was! So it's Mrs. Fuller, huh? Didn't you go to K City with Mr. Fuller? Have you returned?"

When he glanced at Marcus, he raised his eyebrows and remarked frivolously, "Tsk-tsk! You're still as pretty as before. Looks like you've found another man for yourself."

Frowning, I ignored his comment and gazed at Stacey instead. For a moment, I was at a loss for words.

How did she become like this?

After a slight pause, I unhesitatingly whipped out my phone and called the cops. After the call went through, I said, "Hello. I'd like to report a case of domestic abuse here, and it seems to be quite serious."

I told them about the address before hanging up. At the same time, Felix glared at me viciously, almost flying into a rage. "Why are you nosing into my business? Do you think that I won't dare to hit you?"

This was not how a rational person was supposed to react.

I glanced at Stacey. After a moment of shock, she became calm again. It looked like she was used to Felix's attitude.

Walking toward her, I stretched out my hand and offered, "It's been ages since I saw you. Do you need me to send you to the hospital?"

She shot a timid glance at Felix before shaking her head fearfully. Forcing a smile out on her face, she insisted, "It's fine. I'm alright. Thank you!"

Felix smirked coldly and shoved his hands into his pocket. Albeit being reported, he showed no signs of fear at all. Instead, he looked extremely reassured, as if nothing would happen to him.

The cops arrived soon. After understanding the situation, they brought Felix away.

As they needed evidence of what had happened, I told Marcus to look for the restaurant's owner and get the surveillance tapes.

Meanwhile, Stacey was brought to the police station to give a statement. As I was the one who reported the incident, I had to head there too.

After all that, it was already 1 p.m., and there was no time to rest anymore.

Meanwhile, Felix had been detained for intentional assault.

Outside the station, Stacey kept remaining silent. As she did not say anything, I was at a loss for what to ask her either.

Yet, I knew I couldn't leave her just like that. Hence, I walked towards her and assured her, "Although I don't know what you've experienced over the past six months, please note down my number. If the need arises, just call me, and I'll help you to the best of my abilities!"

As we had worked together for two years, I would feel guilty if I left her in that state.

Stunned, she stared at me sorrowfully as tears streamed down her cheeks. "Ms. Stovall, I... I'm sorry!"

I sighed. "It's alright. Let bygones be bygones. Call me if anything happens!"

Since I had changed my number previously, I left her my new number.

Then, I hailed a cab for her and sent her off.

Marcus stared at me with his lips pursed. "She'll probably look for you soon."

Looking at the cab that left, I replied sadly, "She wasn't like this in the past!" What has marriage done to her?

As it was already quite late, Richard, the president of OrbitTech, was already waiting for us when we arrived at the office building.

When he spotted Marcus and me, he approached us with a smile. "It must've been tiring for both of you. Have you had lunch?"

Marcus nodded and had a polite chat with him while we walked into the meeting room.

Seeing that the upper management of OrbitTech had all arrived, Marcus glanced at me and instructed, "Describe our project briefly later. We'll negotiate the scope of OrbitTech's conditions afterward."

I nodded, having prepared all those beforehand.

There were not a lot of shareholders in OrbitTech, with a total of only six. The person with the greatest shares was the president, Richard. He was in his mid-forties and was a huge techie.

As he was obsessed with developing new products, he founded OrbitTech at the start. For the past few years, OrbitTech's products had always been top-notch.

However, as he was not so skilled in management, OrbitTech had been incurring losses. As a result, many investors decided to invest in OrbitTech and participate in its management.

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Money was not a solution, though. Even if they were well-endowed with funds, the company would still be plagued by problems they did not know how to manage.

Over the past year, John and Ashton had realized OrbitTech's advantages. As experts in management, the first thing they thought of was not to invest but to acquire it directly.

After spending half an hour speaking, I returned to my seat. One of OrbitTech's shareholders asked confusedly, "Ms. Stovall, have you worked in Fuller Corporation previously?"

I was stunned because I had never interacted with the people of OrbitTech, nor have I appeared on the newspaper headlines. Staring at the person, I replied in surprise, "Yeah, I was the Project Director at Fuller Corporation previously."

The people at the meeting table exchanged glances with one another. After a short pause, Richard looked at me and said, "Ms. Stovall, I'm sure that you know this even better than us, but Ashton, the president of Fuller Corporation, has plans to acquire OrbitTech too. We initially planned to accept his proposal. However, for some reason, the Fuller Corporation suddenly gave up on acquiring OrbitTech. We would like to know if you had a role to play in this."

Smiling, he continued, "Although the White Corporation would be acquiring OrbitTech, we all know that you value our people and technicians the most. Hence, I wish that we can be honest with each other."

Richard was very straightforward. Hence, I laughed and admitted, "Mr. Fuller is my husband. As for why he suddenly gave up on acquiring OrbitTech, it's true that I played a role in it."

When I said that, everyone starting whispering to each other. Richard asked calmly, "In that case, why did you stop Fuller Corporation from acquiring OrbitTech? In comparison, there's more potential for our development if Fuller Corporation acquired us instead."

I nodded. "That's true!" After a slight pause, I continued, "But has everyone forgotten that Fuller Corporation also owns HiTech? Both HiTech and OrbitTech are technology companies. Upon closer analysis, you'd realize that Fuller Corporation doesn't actually want OrbitTech that badly. They're only after a certain technology owned by OrbitTech, but these aren't that hard to find in the market either. As a result, acquiring OrbitTech would not reap a lot of profits for Fuller Corporation. This is the reason why Ashton has been delaying the acquisition of OrbitTech for the past half a year."

Glancing at Richard, I persuaded, "Mr. Blackwood, you should know this better than us. No corporation will acquire another technology company when the potential of their current one has not been maximized. Most of Fuller Corporation's revenue comes from real estate development, and their only technology company is HiTech."

Richard nodded. Pursing his lips and deliberating about it, he said hesitatingly, "We don't really know about what's going on in Fuller Corporation. If we just take the current situation into consideration, the conditions they offered are quite attractive. However, we can't guarantee that OrbitTech will become better under the control of Fuller Corporation."

Raising his eyebrows, Marcus stood up and declared, "The White Corporation's businesses revolve around technology. Although we have jewelry and other businesses under our wing, our forte still lies in technology. The largest reason why we decided to acquire OrbitTech is because of your research in AI technology. Naturally, we have some conditions that need to be met for acquiring OrbitTech. If OrbitTech doesn't develop a new AI technology in the coming year, we will regard it as any other technology company. All of White Corporation's funds and manpower will be withdrawn and reinvested in other areas."

His speech caused most of the shareholders at the meeting table to turn pale. In other words, he was saying that even if White Corporation acquired OrbitTech, it would still face potential collapse if it failed to meet White Corporation's expectations.

Looking at their strange expressions, I felt anxious. Marcus is being too straightforward.

OrbitTech is very capable. Hence, it's impossible for the outcome he described earlier to happen.

After a long while, Richard looked at Marcus and said, "Mr. White, can you guarantee that you'll invest in AI research and development?"

Marcus nodded firmly. "That's a given!"

As the rest at the meeting table were investors who did not know much about technology, they did not have a large say in things. Hence, they all directed their gaze at Richard and waited for his response.

A long time passed before Richard slowly stood up from his chair. He walked towards Marcus, offered his hand, and said, "We look forward to working with you, Mr. White."

I was stunned for a while before realizing what had happened. Does this mean that the deal is sealed?

Quickly after that, we signed the contracts. After the lawyers from both parties had reviewed the contract, Richard looked at Marcus and me. "It must've been tiring for both of you to come all the way from K City. Why don't I treat you to a meal tonight? It'll be an honor if both of you would dine with me. Let's eat at the Pavilion Restaurant."

It was a common business practice to have dinner together after the signing of a contract for further negotiation. Even if Richard did not extend an invitation, Marcus would.

As there were still a few hours left, Marcus and I left OrbitTech. He went to the hotel while I returned to my villa.

It had been ages since I had come back to Peakville Estate. Luckily, someone had been keeping the place clean, so it looked no different from before.

When I returned to the villa, the maid whom Ashton hired had already prepared some food. But since I did not have much of an appetite, I took a few bites before going back to my bedroom to rest.

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As I woke up early in the morning and did not have a good night's sleep last night, I fell asleep in a daze the moment I lay on the bed.

I could vaguely feel that someone was beside my bed. As I was in a deep sleep, I thought that it was an illusion. However, even though some time had passed, I kept sensing that the shadow was still lurking nearby. It felt the same as sleep paralysis, which I had when I was younger.

Although I was so exhausted that I could barely open my eyes, I could still vaguely feel that someone was sitting beside the bed. Anxious and flustered, I was at a loss for what to do.

It was a huge struggle for me to finally wake up. By then, my forehead was already dripping with sweat. Yet, when I glanced around, there was no one sitting beside my bed. The entire room was empty.

It was probably because I was in a deep sleep. My body became very frail after my pregnancy, which was most likely the reason for this hallucination.

Still feeling light-headed, I went downstairs. The sky had already darkened by then. When the maid saw me walking down the stairs, she said, "Ma'am, your phone has been ringing a few times. I'm afraid that it's about something urgent. Please take a look."

When I returned earlier, I had casually left my bag downstairs. I quickly went to grab my phone after hearing that.

It was a call from Marcus. As I did not pick up his calls, he messaged me with the address of the restaurant for dinner.

By the time I arrived at the second floor of the Pavilion Restaurant, everyone was already present. Some teased when they saw me rushing in, "Our busy Ms. Stovall has finally arrived. Since you're late, take three shots as a punishment!"

I laughed as I sat down beside Marcus and downed three shots.

After that, we chatted casually for the entire duration of the meal. I was sitting beside Marcus, and he kept placing food on my plate.

I was already used to his actions. Glancing over a few times, Richard smiled and commented, "Both of you really have the chemistry. If you aren't married, Ms. Stovall, we'd think that you two are a couple."

Although this was meant as a casual remark, Marcus and I were both stunned. I raised my head and said jokingly, "It's because we've been working with each other for a long time. Please don't misunderstand. My husband gets jealous very easily."

A few people laughed out loud at this light-hearted remark.

However, Marcus's expression was grim.

When I subconsciously grabbed my wine glass, he grabbed my hand and said in a deep voice, "You've drunk too much!"

Everyone at the table glanced over at both of us. Withdrawing my hand, I replied calmly, "Yeah, I've drunk too much."

It felt uncomfortable to have everyone looking at me like I was a monkey in the circus. Furthermore, as Marcus was deliberately trying to make things difficult for me, I became even more uneasy.

As usual, he still placed food on my plate and stopped me from drinking. He even thoughtfully ordered a glass of warm water for me.

As the intentions of his actions were too obvious, everyone present there instantly understood.

I felt really uneasy. Yet, if I tried to clarify this situation, it would make things seem even more suspicious.

Suddenly, a message from Ashton popped up on my phone screen. What are you doing now?

Me: We've finished signing the contract, so I'm dining with them now.

Ashton: Did you drink?

Me: Yeah, but not a lot.

After a while, he instructed: Send me the address.

I pursed my lips. He was at K City, so it was impossible for him to fly over to pick me up. Hence, I answered: I'm at the Pavilion Restaurant. I'll be going back soon.

My phone finally stopped vibrating. I placed it down, god up, and headed to the washroom. Since I had three shots earlier, I felt a bit dizzy.

Trying to sober up, I splashed some cold water on my face in the washroom. When I came out, I accidentally bumped into a waitress who was carrying some liquor.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" apologized the waitress profusely.

Slightly dizzy, I waved my hands and said dismissively, "It's okay. Just be more careful."

"Ms. Stovall!" A surprised voice sounded. Shocked, I raised my head and glanced at her.

It was none other than Stacey, who was wearing a wig and had heavy makeup applied on her face. Wearing an extremely short mini-skirt, she looked like a hostess in a nightclub.

I could not help but frown. It was a coincidence to meet her twice a day, but wasn't this a bit odd? Hence, I asked, "What happened to you?"

She's being abused in the morning and had to serve alcohol at night. How did she come to this?

Her head drooped as she whispered softly, "Mr. Fuller blacklisted me in J City's human resources field. None of the real estate or technology companies is willing to recruit me. As I have to earn a living, I have no choice but to be a server here."

I was confused. "Why would Ashton do that?" Although he was by no means a kind person, he would not target someone just like that.

She glanced at me before quickly lowering her head. "It's because of my involvement with the AC Credit and HiTech scandal. I played a significant role in getting you fired by Fuller Corporation. I forged your signature for a lot of AC Credit's documents."

I actually knew about this. Back then, I was indeed extremely furious. However, as she had worked for me for two years, I merely gave her a harsh warning. She left Fuller Corporation afterward.

Never in a million years would I expect this to happen!

So, does Ashton know about it too?

After a short pause, I looked at her and reassured her, "It's already in the past. I'll go back and talk to Ashton. You're a capable person, anyway. He might've done it out of fury, so I'll clarify this matter with him quickly. Don't work here anymore. Also, since Felix isn't a good person, you should think of a way to leave him!"

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Life was bitter and short. She definitely did not wish to have such a toxic presence in her life, anyway.

As I was still a bit woozy, I wanted to go back as soon as possible. Hence, I patted her shoulders and left.

Surprisingly, she suddenly grabbed my hands and fell onto her knees. When she knelt, she sobbed softly. "I'm sorry, Ms. Stovall. I shouldn't have done that in the past. I know my mistake now and have suffered my due punishment."

I frowned and tried to help her out. However, she refused to stand and continued sobbing. "Ms. Stovall, you're the only one who can help me now. Felix is a complete devil. Back then, in order to gain a foothold in AC Credit, he instructed me to do things that I'm not supposed to. After I got together with him, I realized how terrifyingly violent he is. He would beat me and scold me for no reason, even chasing me out of the house in the middle of the night. I can't take it anymore! As I don't have any family or friends left, you're the only one who can help me."

At a loss for what to do, I asked, "Since you aren't happy, you can divorce him. Isn't he detained right now? Change a job and live a peaceful life from now on. How can I help you?"

She kept shaking her head desperately as tears streamed down her cheeks. "It's useless. When he first started to abuse me, I called the cops on him and got him detained. However, he was released a few days later and started abusing me even more harshly. I have no other choices. I wanted to get a divorce, but he refused to. I really don't know what to do anymore. I'm begging you, Ms. Stovall, please help me out!"

"T-This... It's not that I didn't want to, but how?" I did not know what to say. After all, as this was her domestic affairs, I was not in much of a position to help. Furthermore, only she could help herself when it came to something like this.

Raising her head, she gazed at me with her bloodshot eyes. "Felix's got the president of AC Credit and the Ludwick family backing him up. If they don't help him, he'll get jailed for more than three years. If I live apart from him for three years, the marriage will be dissolved automatically, and I'll finally regain my freedom. Ms. Stovall, since Mr. Fuller loves you so much, he'll definitely help you if you ask."

I frowned, feeling speechless. Since when does Ashton love me?

Opening my mouth, I was about to say something when someone interrupted me.

“She can’t help you.” Marcus had already come out. His tall figure strode towards me as he said to Stacey, “She’s already facing so much trouble, so how can she possibly help you? Her actions today were impulsive, without any considerations of the consequences. If she helped you, a ruthless man like your husband will take revenge on her after he’s released. You should know this better than she does.”

With that, Marcus dragged me away. Shocked, I turned around and saw Stacey still kneeling on the ground and crying her heart out. I could not help but feel guilty.

“Actually, she might really need my help!” I mumbled behind Marcus’ back.

“Hah!” He suddenly stopped in his tracks. However, I did not manage to stop in time and crashed into him, causing my nose to sting in pain.

“Scarlett, do you know that sometimes, your so-called kindness may backfire? Do you know how hilariously ridiculous it is?” He looked at me, his eyes blazing with fury.

Not knowing why he suddenly got so angry, I massaged my nose and protested, "I'm not being kind for no reason. She worked for me for two years..."

"So what? Does she still work for you? Is she still your assistant? Scarlett, do you even have boundaries? Why do you feel such pity for everyone, men and women alike? What are you trying to get out of it? Are you trying to make yourself seem like a saint? Do you want others to idolize you?"

His voice was agitated and aggressive, while his eyes were bloodshot. I could smell the alcohol in his breath, which puffed on my face. It was obvious that he was drunk.

"Marcus, are you drunk?" I asked, trying to steady him. However, he flung my arms away.

Grabbing my shoulders, he stared intently into my eyes. "Do you pity me too? Sally managed to squeeze my mother away and chase her out of my life. On the other hand, I have to indifferently endure her and my father's happiness while suffering from his cold treatment. Do you pity me?"

I frowned. Looks like he's really drunk.

Sighing, I held onto his arm and said, "You don't need my pity. You're drunk, Marcus. Let me send you back."

After bidding farewell to the others in the private room, I ignored their gaze and helped Marcus walk down the stairs.

He was still slightly conscious. At the entrance, he slumped down on the steps childishly and refused to walk anymore.

Exasperated, I looked at him and instructed, "Marcus, I'm sending you home!"

"I don't have a home!"

"Then go back to your hotel!"

He looked at me and pursed his lips. "Let's go together!"

Hearing that, I was rendered speechless.

"I'll send you there."

God... He's such a difficult person to handle.

"Then forget it! I'll stay here for the entire night." He was half-drunk and even throwing a tantrum.

Too frustrated to say anything, I stared at him and said after a slight pause, "Fine! Stay here for the night, then. I'm going home."

With that, I turned around and hailed a cab.

Suddenly, he hugged me from behind. I heard his deep, hoarse, and helpless voice sound beside my ear. "Scarlett, where's your sense of empathy? Do you really want me to freeze to death here?"

Gazing at his flushed yet handsome face, I nodded. "Yeah! Be my guest."

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I guess I shouldn't get my hopes high since I was talking to a drunkard.

As soon as he heard my words, he stared at me with his abysmal pair of eyes and a frowned look. He was cradling me in his arms while caressing my head.

I pushed him away because I knew what he had in his mind. "Marcus, you're drunk!"

Nevertheless, the man didn't even budge the slightest. Since we were next to the street, I was afraid I would push him off to the bustling streets and get him involved in an accident.

In the end, we ended up behaving as though we were making out in the middle of nowhere, being lovey-dovey in public.

"Marcus-" I yelled at him to express my frustration because he started running his hands behind my back.

Before I could reprimand him, I felt him being lunged away from me full force. A few seconds later, I heard a muffled grunt from him.

By the time I returned to my senses, Ashton and Marcus had gotten involved in an intense fight. To be precise, Ashton started beating Marcus to a pulp with all his might.

Within a few seconds, Marcus' face was bruised. Perhaps because he was awfully drunk, he was defenseless against Ashton and allowed the brutal man to throw several consecutive punches at his face relentlessly.

I sprinted over and grasped the hem of Ashton's shirt to stop him. As I was worried that something bad would happen, I warned him, "Ashton, stop! He's going to die for real if you keep going on!"

Ashton's expression darkened, and then he asked callously, "Are you worried about him?"

I responded with a frown while Marcus remarked sarcastically, "Scarlett, I knew it! You still care about me, don't you?"

To be honest, I was completely speechless because of the things Marcus said in front of Ashton – it sounded as though Marcus had a death wish and couldn't wait for Ashton to send him to hell.

As expected, Ashton got increasingly infuriated and dragged the man that was pinned to the ground up, throwing punches at him without showing him any mercy.

On the other hand, Marcus seemed to have lost his mind – he wouldn't stop grinning no matter how brutal Ashton was. "Ashton, the more you beat me up, the more Scarlett cares about me!"

Something was definitely wrong with Marcus' mind. His words worked like a charm as Ashton cast him to the ground and launched a few merciless kicks on his abdomen.

I could hear another muffled grunt from the drunk yet brutally beaten-up man when he struggled to bring himself up.

Since Ashton was about to rush over to Marcus' side once more, I got in his way and stopped him in a calm manner. "Ashton, can't you tell he's trying to provoke you deliberately? Do you really want to kill him and be thrown behind bars because of him?"

He pursed his lips and started panting heavily. "This jerk asked for it!"

I rolled my eyes helplessly and decided to stay away from the heavily injured man to prevent further conflicts. Thankfully, Richard rushed out when he heard the commotion. "Mr. Blackwood, can you do me a favor and bring Mr. White to the hospital before sending him back to his place? Thanks in advance."

Richard took a peek at the indifferent Ashton and responded with a nod and a smirk. He proceeded to bring Marcus up and brought him away soon.

Once they departed, Ashton glared at me in the eyes to express his irritation.

I should be blamed for the entire incident, but I tried to defend myself.

"I-I... H-He's drunk!"

"So what about it?"

What the heck? What does he mean? What am I supposed to tell him when I have just explained the reason behind it?

I gave it a thought and said, "Nothing was going on between us! He was the one who drank too much and ended up being drunk! Speaking of which, I ran into Stacey in the restaurant just now. She seemed to be living a tough life. Are you the one behind her misery?"

He replied with a frown and raised his volume because he was enraged. "Scarlett, stop trying to divert my attention!"

I couldn't believe he managed to see right through my plan again.

Staring at Ashton in the eyes, I decided to keep my mouth shut tight because I knew it would be impossible for me to talk some sense into him.

The frustrated man broke the silence, asking indifferently since I was dead silent. "Aren't you going to explain yourself?"

"I tried, didn't I? You have no intention to listen to me at all!"

"Y-You..." He stuttered in return because he was at a loss for better words to rebuke my statement. All of a sudden, I couldn't help but find him adorable.

A few seconds later, I offered, "Why don't you beat me up just like how you have beaten Marcus to a pulp? I mean, if it helps, why not, right?"

I knew it sounded dumb, but literally, that was the only thing I could think of.

Ashton looked a little bemused, yet he replied indifferently, "I'll definitely take you out someday in the future."

After he cast a stern gaze at me, he turned around and departed.

Since we were in the middle of the streets, perhaps the incident of him beating another man had made it to the social media due to the commotion that was caused.

I trotted over the onlookers and went after him. He boarded the car before me, but when I tried to open the door to the passenger seat, I couldn't because it was locked.

As compared to an ordinary car, his car had a higher ride height. Hence, I had to tiptoe to reach the window. "Hey, Ashton! What are you trying to do?"

"I'll have you walk your way home!" Once he finished his sentence, he started the car and departed without a second thought, leaving a confused me behind.

What the hell! Fine!

Usually, it wasn't tough to hail a cab since we were in the middle of a bustling street, but the cabs that passed were all occupied on that night.

A few minutes later, a black Cadillac stopped in front of me as the driver in the car winded down the window.

It was Joseph who showed up, and he offered, "Mrs. Fuller, Mr. Fuller has instructed me to give you a ride home."

I was astonished because he had never addressed me as Mrs. Fuller before. I wouldn't lie – I couldn't get used to it after being addressed as Ms. Stovall all this while.

In spite of being flattered, I replied in a petulant manner, "Wasn't he the one who refused to give me a ride home? He should have left me behind and allowed me to freeze to my death!"

Joseph rebuked, "Mrs. Fuller, the temperature wouldn't drop any further than seven or eight degrees Celsius. Technically, you won't freeze to death, but you may catch a cold if you spend a night on the streets."

Oh, God! Am I hearing what I'm hearing? I have never ever encountered such a geeky man before!

I asked rhetorically, "What if I catch a cold and fall terribly sick?"

He paused and gave it a thought. Shortly, he nodded and affirmed, "You may pass on as a result, but there's only a slight chance of such an outcome; that is – unless you're infected by other viruses."