

## Mr. Scott 221

### Chapter 221

Viola's face turned pale instantly at the way Melanie looked at her. Quite a few rumors were circulating within LeapCo about her, but no employees had dared talk about them in front of

her.

However, Julie and Melanie seemed to have no reservations as they spoke openly about the topic. For a moment, the expressions on Viola's face were quite vivid. Melanie watched her changing expressions and slowly withdrew her gaze.

When the elevator reached the first floor, her eyelashes flickered. She stepped out of the elevator.

She did not expect to run into Eugene just outside the company entrance. He looked to have just returned from Blue Inc. His expression was cold, and his jaw tightly clenched. When he glanced at Melanie, his dark eyes narrowed slightly. He was not in a good mood.

Not thinking herself to be the one who stoked his ire, Melanie was about to move away when she heard footsteps approaching. It was followed by Viola's slightly plaintive voice. "Eugene." Now outside the company, Viola ran over to him and even bumped into Melanie's shoulder as if intentionally. Melanie was wearing high heels today. Although they were not very high, she still staggered due to the unexpected collision.

Viola went straight for Eugene and looked up at him. Her nose was red, and she whined in a slightly aggrieved voice, "Eugene."

Anyone with eyes could easily see that Viola was feeling wronged. Eugene had initially been looking at Melanie but then redirected his gaze to Viola. "What happened?"

Not wanting to witness Viola's act any longer, Melanie turned around and walked away without saying a word. Having been keeping her eyes on Melanie like a hawk, Viola noticed her departing figure.

A trace of complex emotions flickered through her eyes before she bit her lip and said slowly, Eugene, I don't want to be part of the CEO's office anymore. Melanie is right. I don't know anything, and I don't have the qualifications for it."

She became increasingly despondent with every word as she clutched Eugene's clothing.

Eugene's gaze landed on the hand that was clutching his clothes. He asked faintly, "Melanie said that?"

Before Viola could respond, however, he sneered, "Who gave her the right to look down on others?"

Viola remained silent, but her eyes, which were hidden from others, revealed a subtle shift in emotion.

Instead of going straight home, Melanie first paid a visit to the nursing home. Her grandfather had called earlier, reminding her that it had been several days since she last visited.

The old man's health had visibly declined after he was discharged from the hospital the last time. The doctors had repeatedly warned about the risk of a stroke.

When Melanie arrived at the nursing home, her grandfather was in the room flipping through a photo album. She placed the fruits she brought on the table and said softly, "The caregiver said you haven't had your dinner. Is it because you don't have an appetite?"

Hearing her voice, the old man lifted his head and waved toward her "Melanie, come and take a look at your grandmother. You look just like her."

The old man would take out the thick photo album every year during his wife's death anniversary. Melanie looked at the photos of the young woman in the album and smiled, "Yes, I still remember how delicious Grandma's candied apples were."

The old man continued looking at the photos with a nostalgic

suddenly grabbed Melanie's hand. "Melanie, accompany me pression on his Lace when he

“But it’s a bit late now.

to the old house.”

Her grandfather insisted, “I go back every year. If I don’t go back this year, she won’t be happy.

Melanie had no choice but to inform the nursing home director and then help her grandfather into the car.

The old house her grandfather mentioned was in a traditional high-rise building to the north of the city. The area was supposed to be demolished, but due to some issues, the demolition had been delayed.

When Melanie arrived with her grandfather, she realized most of the residents in the high rise building had already moved out. The entire neighborhood was now only very dimly lit with the lights from the few old streetlights.

Aware of Melanie’s night blindness, the old man said, “Melanie, wait for me outside. I’ll go in and take a look.”

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Melanie did not agree to wait outside. Instead, she turned on the flashlight on her phone and helped her grandfather inside the building. Fortunately, the old house was on the ground floor, and they reached it after taking just a few steps.

The dim light revealed that the furnishings in the room had hardly changed, except for having collected a layer of dust.

While her grandfather shuffled into the room, Melanie stood in the living room, surveying the old house. She had always wanted to bring Eugene here, to the place where she grew up.

However, the man had always been too busy, too occupied to even spare some time to learn the name of this neighborhood.

Melanie used to console herself, thinking it was okay and that there was still time. Time: gradually passed, and she stopped mentioning this place to Eugene since he seemed indifferent about it.

Melanie sometimes felt foolish when she looked back on it. Even though his attitude had been so obvious, she still clung to her unrealistic fantasies.

When her grandfather came out, his eyes were tinged red. Melanie could tell he was overwhelmed with emotions and likely thinking about her grandmother.

After helping the old man back into the car, Melanie drove them to a nearby restaurant instead of sending him back to the nursing home.

It was an old establishment that her grandfather often brought her to when she was a child.

“Since you don’t have much of an appetite tonight, I figured why not try having some of Mrs. Zawn’s soup?”

Melanie spoke as she helped her grandfather into the restaurant. The establishment was quite old, and its decor was vintage. The glass door swung open, revealing the entire dining area.

At a table directly in front of the entrance sat a middle-aged couple. Melanie felt like she had seen the man somewhere before but could not quite put her finger on it.

After seating her grandfather at a table inside and placing their orders, Melanie noticed the glass door opening again. She immediately heard a voice that made her eye twitch. “Mom, Dad, we’re back.”

Viola placed the bag in her hand on the table and said with a smile, “Dad, these are the supplements Eugene bought for you. He said it takes at least a hundred days to recover from your injuries, so you need to rest more.”

Melanie's fingers stiffened slightly. Then, she heard a slight creak as the door opened again. It was followed by Eugene's deep hum..

Her grandfather, of course, also caught onto Eugene's voice. He turned around to look at him, his expression growing stern. He stood up and said to Melanie, "Melanie, take me back."

It was evident that he did not want to see Eugene and Viola together. Due to her grandfather's words, Viola also ended up noticing them.

She hesitated for a moment before reaching out to hold Eugene's arm. She cooed

affectionately, "Eugene, it seems like my dad's recommendation for this restaurant is spot on. Even Melanie is eating here."

Eugene was as composed as he usually was. "It's indeed not bad."

Seated in the worn-out chair, Melanie could not help her thoughts as they drifted to another matter. Eugene was usually very picky about food and typically looked down on these small, street-side restaurants at least when he was with her.

She no longer felt much toward the man but could not help comparing and wondering how Eugene would act when he truly liked someone. It probably would not be like how he was with her. After all, he did not even have the time to accompany her back to the old home.

A faint smile played on Melanie's lips. She suddenly felt like a bystander, an onlooker who was not entirely upright. She could not help but want to compare, to see how far Eugene could go when he truly loved someone.

It definitely would not be like how he acted with her. He did not even have time to accompany her back to the old house.

Melanie's lips curled slightly. She suddenly felt like a silent observer. She wanted to know how Eugene would express love for someone.

## Chapter 223

“Melanie!” Despite his old age, Melanie’s grandfather was not senile. Although Melanie had explained that there was no longer anything between her and Eugene, he still subconsciously did not want her to have any contact with him.

It was not because he did not think Eugene was a good kid, but he knew he had made Melanie unhappy.

Due to his sudden rise in voice, the old man suddenly started coughing. Melanie quickly stood up to pat his back and ease his discomfort. After the coughing subsided, he waved his hand and said,

“Let’s go back. I don’t feel like eating.”

Melanie nodded and then supported her grandfather so that they could leave. However, it was also then their orders arrived. The food was personally served by Mrs. Zawn herself.

“Mr. Lancaster, Melanie! It’s been years since you two last visited. I thought I’d come over to say hello!”

Mrs. Zawn used to have a good relationship with Melanie’s grandparents. Smiling at Melanie, she said, “You’ve grown so much, Melanie. You were still in school the last time I saw you, right?”

“Time flies. I still remember how small you were when you first came here. You were so tiny and adorable.”

Melanie nodded and then pointed at the soup. “Mrs. Zawn, could you help me pack this up, please?”

“Sure, sure.” Mrs. Zawn swiftly grabbed a takeout container and chatted with her grandfather while packing up the food.

Melanie remained silent until Mrs. Zawn suddenly mentioned, “I saw Howard last month. He and his wife have a second child now. The entire family is squeezed into a house in the urban village.”

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Howard was Melanie's father, and mentioning him caused both Melanie and her grandfather grow colder. The woman realized then that she should not say more. After handing them the packed bag, she retreated to the kitchen.

With the bag in one hand, Melanie helped her grandfather to leave. However, Eugene and Viola were sitting right in the center, so they had to pass by them as they left.

Just as they were making their way past them, she heard Viola saying, "Melanie, it's so rare to run into you in the northern part of the city. How about we eat together?"

She sounded so fake that Melanie wanted to ignore her. However, with her grandfather nearby, she could only coldly refuse, "No thank you.

"In that case, if you're going for a medical check-up tomorrow, remember not to eat breakfast in the morning," Viola added.

Melanie suddenly froze at those words. With a stiff expression, she turned around and saw Viola looking all harmless. Melanie's gaze slowly shifted to Eugene, whose expression was almost blank. Only when he felt her gaze did he look up slightly.

"Didn't you receive a message from the hospital?" he said indifferently.

Melanie felt as if something was blocking her throat. She could not make a sound.

The old man furrowed his brow and asked, "You're going for a medical check-up, Melanie? Are you feeling unwell?"

Melanie was already trembling slightly by then, and her gaze on Eugene was filled with

disbelief. It was humiliating enough that Eugene had arranged a check-up for her. She did not expect Viola to know about it, and now, even her grandfather...

Eugene stared at her for a while before looking away and responding to her grandfather casually, "It's a routine check-up requested by the company."

Melanie did not realize that her palms had gone ice-cold. She steadied herself by supporting her grandfather and found her voice. "I'm fine, Grandpa."

After Melanie and her grandfather left, Viola's father asked her, "Is that woman from your company?"

"Yeah, she used to be Eugene's secretary. She's very capable," Viola replied, maintaining her obedient image in front of her parents. It was why she had deliberately found an excuse earlier to showcase her good interpersonal relationships in the company.

Chapter 224

Still, she felt a little uneasy after having accidentally discovered that Eugene had arranged a medical check-up for Melanie. When she asked him about it, he just said that it was an exit examination since she was resigning.

When she enquired with other employees, however, they told her that there was no such thing as an exit examination at LeapCo. With these thoughts in mind, she could not help but look at Eugene with a hint of resentment.

After accompanying her grandfather back to the nursing home, Melanie stayed to have dinner with him before leaving. It was already 11 pm when she headed home, and there were few people left on the road. Melanie floored the accelerator, and the car roared forward like a wild beast.

She gripped the steering wheel tightly as if it were the only way for her to release the tension. In her heart, it was not until a glaring white light appeared ahead that Melanie abruptly snapped out of it. She pulled the car to the side of the road..



Resting her forehead on the steering wheel, she breathed heavily, her throat feeling dry and painful. When she finally arrived home, it was late. The moment she opened the door, however, she saw Eugene sitting there on the sofa.

Melanie paused, leaning against the cabinet in the hallway to gather some strength. She heard her own voice, dry and hoarse, as she asked, "Do you have something to say?"

Eugene casually pocketed his phone and then lifted his gaze to her. "What were you afraid of tonight?" he asked, voice cold and deep.

He was referring to what happened at the restaurant. Melanie tightened her hand against the cabinet, saying, "Eugene, it's fine if you target me, but you know my grandfather isn't in good health. Is it really necessary for you to go so far?"

She genuinely dared not think about what might happen if Eugene had said those hurtful words in front of her grandfather. Ever since Dylan and Howard's divorce, Melanie believed her grandfather to be her only family left. Eugene was well aware of how crucial her grandfather was to her.

Her eyes turned

feelings, so it." red as she looked at Eugene, murmuring, "You don't care about

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Eugene observed her with dark eyes that seemed to swirl with emotions. After a moment, he suppressed the surging emotions and said indifferently while his gaze was still fixed on her, "He's your grandfather, not mine. I have no obligation to consider your feelings."

His words made Melanie feel exceptionally pitiful.

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Her grandfather had praised Eugene so many times in front of her in the past, but now it was revealed that this was what Eugene truly felt. She had hoped that there would still be a slight sense of sincerity within the man.

No longer wanting to discuss these things with him, Melanie only paused for a moment before asking, "So what exactly do you want?"

"Nothing. I just hope you don't forget about the medical check-up tomorrow," Eugene

reminded her emotionlessly.

"What are you trying to prove?" Melanie's voice was hoarse, her eyes on him gradually turning blurry. Nevertheless, she stood up with her back straight and repeated, "Eugene, can you tell me what you're trying to prove? Why must you humiliate me like this?"

As she spoke, a teardrop rolled down her cheek.

Eugene squinted at her for a moment before replying indifferently, "You're thinking too much. I just find it a bit distasteful to touch something that isn't very clean."

Chapter 225

Hearing Eugene's indifferent reply, Melanie felt her heart so brutally crushed that she struggled to catch her breath for a moment. She looked at Eugene in disbelief. She was supporting herself on the cabinet, and her knuckles turned white from the force she was exerting.

Melanie felt a ringing in her ears as her head buzzed. She could not comprehend this. She could not understand how Eugene could say such things. Even if he disliked her or was fed up with her, he should not have said such things.

Nausea surged within her as Melanie's face started to pale. She bent over slightly at the waist in an attempt to alleviate her discomfort. Eugene was still there, dressed in a sharp black suit. Every button on his shirt was meticulously fastened.

He looked down at Melanie with his dark, penetrating eyes.

His gaze was deep and inscrutable, revealing nothing about his thoughts. When Eugene was called away by a call on his phone, Melanie still had not uttered a word. She stood in the same spot for a long time before there was the slightest tug on the corner of her mouth.

Her tears had dried on her face by then, leaving an uncomfortable sensation behind.

The next morning, Melanie did not go to the company. Instead, she went directly to Jepton Hospital. The scheduled medical check-up was a comprehensive one. Even Melanie could not help but think Eugene was surprisingly considerate.

When she was called into the gynecology office, however, she could not help her expression from turning unpleasant. "Go inside, take off your pants, and lie down," the examining doctor instructed coldly in a stern voice.

Melanie plac

the examination sheet on the table and entered the examination room with a wooden expression. While she had undergone routine medical check-ups before, she could not help but shiver when she saw the cold, mechanical instruments again this time.

The examining doctor was not gentle either and rather robotic. After the examination, Melanie left the room while feeling an indescribable sense of frustration.

The report would take a few hours to be ready, and Melanie had no intention of going to the company. She headed to a small park nearby. Before she left the hospital, however, she received a call from Xander. "How did things go with Blue Inc yesterday?"

Melanie hesitated for a moment before saying, "Hard to say. They have many options. They might not even choose LeapCo."

Xander chuckled lightly. "Really? I thought we could indirectly cooperate this time."

“Have you negotiated with Blue Inc?”

“Yeah, they’re considering promoting their niche series to increase popularity,” Xander replied. As if suddenly thinking of something, he asked, “Are you out now?”

Melanie took a deep breath and told him that she had matters to attend to outside. Xander suggested, “If you have time later, let’s have a meal together. Blue Inc should be joining too.”

He was trying to hook Melanie up with the company. Melanie replied with an affirmative hum,

trying to make her voice sound reasonably cheerful. “Alright, thanks.”

After the call with Xander ended, Melanie went to the nearby park. She bought a simple lunch and took a stroll. When her medical examination report was ready in the afternoon, she went to the hospital to pick it up. She then sent photos of the report to Eugene without saying anything. After that, she got ready to make the drive home.

She did not want to go to the company or see Eugene. She just wanted to spend some quiet. time alone. After arriving home, Melanie turned off her phone and left it that way until the next morning. Fortunately, no one tried to contact her.

Melanie did not receive any reply from Eugene regarding the medical examination report and not bother asking him about it either. Whatever he wanted to do was his business, it was no longer her concern.

The

next day, Melanie turned on her phone and glanced at her calendar. If she managed her time well, she could handle the matter with Blue Inc before resigning from the com

Chapter 226 The Moment Was Gone

It was a typical example of human nature. The second you want something from someone, his instinct would be to deprive you of it. However, when you decide that you no longer want it he would give you a truckload of it, and fill your world with it if he could.

Unfortunately, by then, you no longer want anything from him. It does not matter how hard he tries. Once the moment has gone, he would never get it back. Even the moon would not be enough to win you over.

“I came back so I could take revenge on the people who wronged me. Rita will never get away from me. She pushed me down the stairs and caused my miscarriage. She’ll pay for that.

“What do you think Cedric’s going to think about that? Humans are sentimental at heart. Rita is still his mother when all is said and done.

“He’s not going to stand idly by as I put her behind bars. That’s why we can never be together again...”

Maia’s grip on the can tightened as she talked about Rita. It was all bent out of shape. She hated Rita with every fiber of her being.

Hope could sense it. She also understood that she could not truly understand the pain that Maia had been through. She did not have the right to speak on Cedric’s behalf, much less forgive him.

I see it now,

Maia.”

Maia cocked her head as she looked at Hope. “What do you mean?”

“I see that I shouldn’t try to talk you out of it. It’s also clear that you aren’t who you used to be. A love that has been betrayed can never be put back together. So, do you think I should give Buck a call?”

Hope tried hard to divert the topic. She didn’t want Maia to lose herself in her rage over the tragic past.

“What do you think I should say to him, Maia? You’ve known him for a long time. Can you give me a clue, please?” Hope said affectionately as she took out her handphone.

Maia rested her head on her hands and stared at Hope, her sorrow and rage momentarily forgotten. Then, she smiled and asked her, “Aren’t you forgetting something?”

“What do you mean?” Hope asked, confused.

“I’m your boss and you work for me. Are you seriously about to give a call to a guy and start a relationship with him with your boss watching you?”

+15 BONUS

Maia saw that Hope was puzzled. “My company forbids celebrities from starting a relationship when their careers are taking off. You’ve been in the industry for a long time now. I’m sure you know about this.”

Hope nodded. Of course she knew. It was a common practice in the industry, and Starlight Entertainment was no exception.

“Are you going to make your younger sister choose between her career and her marriage?”

“You’re not even in a relationship yet, and you’re already thinking about marriage?” Hope seemed so serious about it. Maia could not help herself and burst out laughing as she picked up a bagel.

Hope felt a little embarrassed and lowered her head. Suddenly, her phone rang. Maia saw who the caller was and teased Hope.

“Well, if it isn’t the man of your dreams! What are you waiting for?”

Hope grinned, picked up the call, and headed to the balcony. She looked so happy that Maia could not help but chuckle, "I can smell it in the air... the scent of love."

She t

took a bite out of the bagel. Perhaps she should reward herself by eating some good food. Buck had found out that Hope was at Maia's place, so he had gone to the store, bought some ingredients, and headed straight to her place. Then, he started cooking dinner!

"How did you get back your memories so easily? What happened when you and Ms. Tess were in Osttahl?" Buck asked, showing his concern for Maia.

"It just came back to me. That's all," Maia said. "Isn't it nice that I remember you guys now?"

"Of course, it is!" Buck exclaimed. "We wished so hard for you to get back your memories. A lot of the company's staff left because of Ms. Tess. The experience left a bitter taste in their mouths."

"Aunt Tess will never meddle in the company's affairs ever again..."

Buck was a smart guy. He knew something must have happened between them. "Did Ms. Tess reconsider and decide to take it easy, Ms. Maia? Is she going to step back from the company?"

Maia shook her head and said, "Tess is gone..."

Buck and Hope were stunned when they heard that.

"W-what was that again. Maia?"

Hope had been cutting up the vegetables and she nearly chopped off her fingers with the knife.

"Tess is no longer with us. She's moved on to a better place.

Maia said this in such an indifferent tone that Buck and Hope could not read her true

+15 BONUS

After a few minutes, Buck said, "You're coming back to the company tomorrow, Ms. Maia. Do you need me to prepare anything for your return?" He really was an exceptional assistant.

"Ms. Tess promoted some staff when she was in charge. Give me their names." Maia was not sure who they were.

"Got it."

Maia added, "Also, investigate the CEO of Mykonos Studio."

"Victor?" Buck was puzzled. He had not expected Maia to be interested in Mykonos Studio. Do you want the good stuff or the dirt on him?"

"The dirt, of course. I want his deepest, worst secrets."

Buck looked at her and asked, "Are you going to do something to his company?"

"And what if I am?"

Buck gave her a thumbs up

in response. "Good going, Ms. Maia. Mykonos Studio has poached a

lot of our staff in the past. It's time to get even!"



As Hope put the veggies onto the pasta, she said softly, "I heard some rumors about Victor, but I'm not sure if they're true. Perhaps Buck can start with that and see if he'll turn up with anything more!"

"That's right, Ms. Maia. It slipped our minds that Hope knows a lot of celebrities from Mykonos Studio, and she was quite close with some of them too. It's natural that she'd have heard some rumors. I wouldn't know where to begin otherwise."

Buck knew that there were always rumors or pieces of information that were only known among the celebrities on set.

Chapter 227 I'm Here

Hope nodded, "When we're on set, the cast and the film crew would usually gossip about industry affairs. There were a lot of unfavorable rumors about Victor. The celebrities in his company aren't exactly open about it, but the rumors always find a way out to us."

Hope cast her mind back to the rumors she had heard and said, "Victor mismanaged the A-list Actors' resources. For instance, if one of them has to endorse a certain popular brand, he'd force his client to feature another actor or actress who isn't as famous to pit them against each other.

"It wasn't a fair fight most of the time. When we pushed for details, all we had to go on were the expressions on people's faces. They were very secretive. Maybe there's a unwritten code of silence..."

Maia blinked while listening to Hope.

"Furthermore, one of my celebrity friends told me about her experience in Mykonos Studio when she was a trainee. Victor used to take advantage of her.

"He even asked his secretary to tell her that he could give her a leg up in the industry if she let him have his way with her. She had a hot temper, though, so she slapped him right then and there..."

Maia was surprised to hear that. She laughed and said, "He had it coming!"

Hope nodded. "Victor's personal life isn't a bed of roses either. Rumor has it that it's a mess, but Mykonos Studio is a big player in the industry so he has some strong backing too.

"Some celebrities think that putting out for him is the only path to success." Hope sighed.

Maia frowned. She understood that it was common to run into such twisted people in every industry, but understanding it and accepting it were two very different things.

"Follow the lead Hope gave us, Buck. We're not just taking out Victor for our own benefit, but also for the sake of everyone who has fallen victim to him."

In a way, it reflected what she said in the past.

"I'm here. Everything's going to be fine."

If they could verify the truth behind the rumors that Hope had heard, then they could tear down the facade Victor had built of himself in the eyes of the public! He would pay for his

behavior!

"Understood," Buck said to Maia. "Leave it to me, Ms. Maia. I'll investigate it thoroughly."

Maia nodded.

+15 BONUS

It was almost nine o'clock by the time they were done with dinner.

Hope yawned a couple of times. "I should head back, Maia. I have two magazine interviews tomorrow."

Mala nodded and looked at Buck, "Send her home, Buck. Keep her safe. Okay?"

"Leave it to me, Ms. Mala!" Buck nodded instantly.

As Maia walked them out the hallway, she whispered in Hope's ear as Buck went to the elevator. "Now's your chance to make a move on your future husband."

Hope blushed and nodded. Then, Hope and Buck waved Maia goodbye and went into the elevator together.

Hope stole a glance at Buck and lowered her head timidly. Her words were caught in her throat.

"I think your interviews are going to be exhausting tomorrow. Have the interviewers been briefed already?"

Hope nodded and said, "They have. Wesley talked to them and made sure there won't be any complications. I've also gone through the questions they're going to ask in the interview as

well."

"That's great. Wesley's doing a good job."

Hope smiled, "So are you, Buck. You do a wonderful job as Maia's assistant."

"Ms. Maia gave me a job that suited my talents. I can't thank her enough. Naturally, I have to put everything I have into it and make her proud."

"What's that thing people are always saying? A man is judged by his family and his career..The

pay

and benefits package you received from Starlight Entertainment was very good. You've got the career part covered.

"Do you

have any plans to start a family? If I recall correctly, you don't have a girlfriend."

Hope had shot countless films and played various characters. She acted out numerous love confessions and romantic scenes on camera. Never once did she think it would be this difficult

to do it in real life.

Buck was no fool. He knew where she was going with this. He looked at Hope from the corner of his eye as they walked to the underground parking lot together. He did not give her an immediate answer. Instead, he remained quiet for a good while.

When they got to the car, he started the engine and tried to keep his emotions in check. As she got into the car with him, he said, "I don't have a girlfriend right now. I'm still single."

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+15 BONUS

A sense of hope stirred in Hope's heart. Just as she was about to say something, Buck said, "That said, I haven't given it much thought. I had a great start to my career and I want to focus on it. I'll think about the rest after my career is more stable."

Just like that, Hope's dreams were dashed to the ground.

"S—So that's how it is..." Hope said, sounding a little disappointed.

Buck felt that he had to salvage this awkward moment.

“What about you? Are you going to start a relationship with someone? I know for a fact that it’ll affect your career to some extent. Is Ms. Maia going to allow it?”

“My career is important, but I can’t give up on my personal life for its sake. Maia knows my stand on this. She’s not going to stop me from pursuing romance.”

“Well, do you have someone in mind?” Buck smiled.

Hope lowered her head, pursed her lips, and shook her head, “I’m the same as you. I’m going to focus on building my career for now.”

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She made a casual excuse. She was not about to let herself be embarrassed again..

Buck nodded, “Sure. I support your decisions, no matter what they are.”

“Are you going to support me if I say I want to be a nun?” Hope was somewhat mad at him. She had made the first move and given him a huge hint, but he he went ahead and threw a wet blanket on it.

Buck was startled for a few seconds. He looked at Hope when he stopped at a traffic light. Then, he smiled and nodded, “Certainly. I would support you unconditionally.”

If she became a nun, then he would simply be the monk next door.

Chapter 228 Fat Chance

Buck knew that Hope’s career was taking off. Not only did she need to work hard, she also had to keep herself free of any scandals if she wanted to ride the wave of her success for a few more years.

If news ever got out that she was in a relationship, then it would be a big hit for her career.

He was her most loyal fan. He had seen every social media update she had ever written. He knew how much courage it took for her to step foot into the entertainment industry. He knew about the lonely moments she had to endure during her time as a student overseas.

He knew how much she loved her career. The level of dedication she demonstrated in the past few years made her a role model for her fellow celebrities to follow. That was exactly why he was reluctant to ruin it for her. After all, she had not known him for very long.

Buck was no fool. He could tell Hope had a thing for him, but he could not cross that line with her. People could easily tell by the way they looked at each other.

“We’re nearly at your place, Hope. I’ll walk you up later.”

There was a lingering silence after that..

Hope hid her disappointment very well and said, “You don’t have to. I can go up on my own. I’m not a kid. Why would I need someone with me just to ride the elevator?”

“Ms. Maia’s orders. I need to see to it that you’ve returned home safely. It’s my duty.”

Hope was stunned. So, sending her home safely was just a job for him.

They drove to her place and went upstairs together. Hope kept quiet the entire time. She said a curt goodbye to Buck when they were at her doorstep.

True to form, Hope kept her emotions well hidden. Her acting skills were coming in handy now. Buck stood at her door for a long time after she closed it. He did not realize that tears had formed in his eyes.

“I can’t ruin the career you’ve built for so long just to satisfy my desire to be with you.”

Buck looked at Hope's door longingly before eventually leaving. What he did not know was that Hope had been leaning on the other side of the door. Her body trembled as she burst into

tears...

Meanwhile, at Cloud Nine Residences, Maia had just taken a bath. As she walked out of the bathroom, her phone vibrated. At first, she did not recognize the number. Nevertheless, she picked up the call.

1/2

+15 BONUS

It was almost nine o'clock by the time they were done with dinner.

Hope yawned a couple of times. "I should head back, Maia. I have two magazine interviews tomorrow."

Maia nodded and looked at Buck, "Send her home, Buck. Keep her safe. Okay?"

"Leave it to me, Ms. Maia!" Buck nodded instantly.

As Maia walked them out the the hallway, she whispered in Hope's ear as Buck went to the elevator. "Now's your chance to make a move on your future husband."

Hope blushed and nodded. Then, Hope and Buck waved Maia goodbye and went into the elevator together.

Hope stole a glance at Buck and lowered her head timidly. Her words were caught in her throat.

“I think your interviews are going to be exhausting tomorrow. Have the interviewers been briefed already?”

Hope nodded and said, “They have. Wesley talked to them and made sure there won’t be any complications. I’ve also gone through the questions they’re going to ask in the interview as

well.”

“That’s great. Wesley’s doing a good job.”

Hope smiled, “So are you, Buck. You do a wonderful job as Maia’s assistant.”

“Ms. Maia gave me a job that suited my talents. I can’t thank her enough. Naturally, I have to put everything I have into it and make her proud.”

“What’s that thing people are always saying? A man is judged by his family and his career. The pay and benefits package you received from Starlight Entertainment was very good. You’ve got the career part covered.

“Do you have any plans to start a family? If I recall correctly, you don’t have a girlfriend.”

Hope had shot countless films and played various characters. She acted out numerous love confessions and romantic scenes on camera. Never once did she think it would be this difficult

to do it in real life.

Buck was no fool. He knew where she was going with this. He looked at Hope from the corner of his eye as they walked to the underground parking lot together. He did not give her an immediate answer. Instead, he remained quiet for a good while.

When they got to the car, he started the engine and tried to keep his emotions in check. As she got into the car with him, he said, “I don’t have a girlfriend right now. I’m still single.”



2/3

“Hello? Who’s this?”

+15 BONUS

“I’m from the CelebClicks, Ms. Maia.” That was when Maia recalled that it was indeed their number.

“Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Are you aware that Hope, one of your artists, is in a secret relationship with someone?”

Maia chuckled, “Are you serious? Where did you hear that from?”

“So, are you admitting that Hope is indeed in a relationship? One of our own shot some pictures near her apartment. A man drove her back to her place and they went upstairs together.

“It’s late now, Ms. Maia. It’s peculiar that she should go back home with a man at this hour. Furthermore, we got a picture of the man’s side profile. It’s not her assistant or chauffeur.

“Now, who exactly is this six-foot-two man? I’m sure the netizens are dying to know.”

Maia understood the situation. The paparazzi from CelebClicks must have gotten pictures of Buck sending Hope home. They were trying to extort money from her. They wanted her to buy their silence.

She did not give the caller an answer. She merely kept quiet, which made him impatient.

“Pictures. Videos. We have them all, Ms. Maia. You should forget about the public relations angle. Hope is such a big name in the industry. Her rendezvous with the six-foot-two man would cause quite a stir.

tell me how much you

Maia laughed. “Why don’t you just want?”

“Splendid, Ms. Maia! It wasn’t easy getting your number, but it looks like my work paid off. I knew I’d have to talk directly to the top brass.” He sounded so pleased with himself.

“Ten million dollars and the evidence is all yours. What do you think?”

Maia said nonchalantly, “Fat chance!”

She hung up the phone. The guy from CelebClicks stared at the phone, puzzled. Then, Maia gave a call to Buck. It just so happened that he had just arrived home.

“I just got back home, Ms. Maia. I’ll get started on that research on Victor and his company.

“We can talk about that later. How are things between you and Hope?”

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“Huh?” Buck paused for a while before answering. “Nothing happened between us. I sent her home, like you asked. That’s all.”

Maia was a little puzzled. She asked incredulously, “Is that all?”

15 BONUS

Did Hope not confess to him after all? Did she not say that she would seize this opportunity and confess?

“That’s all,” Buck said, firmly. “Did something happen, Ms. Mala?”

Buck’s scases were sharp. He knew something was amiss based on the way the asked him.

“Paparazzi from CelebClicks took pictures of you sending Hope home. They found her new address and shot both of you together. One of their higher-ups contacted me and asked for ten million dollars for the pictures and videos.”

“What? Those paparazzi are truly everywhere!” Buck was surprised too. He had been extra careful, but he still fell prey to them.

CelebClicks were infamous in the industry. They took pictures of celebrities’ private lives and extorted their companies for a huge amount of money!

Shaking them off was no easy feat. Buck was glad of the choice he made earlier. Otherwise, they would have been in a world of trouble. He made the right call.

Maia had not been there. She needed to have a full understanding of Buck and Hope’s situation.

She would reveal their relationship to the public if the paparazzi took pictures of them together in an intimate way. Otherwise, she would ask the public relations department to foil the rumors.

“I sent Hope back home, Ms. Maia. That’s all. We didn’t do anything unseemly. I took off once I saw her enter her home. I didn’t stay there.”

Perhaps Hope decided not to confess to him, Maia thought.

Chapter 229 You Rock, Ms. Mala

“Get in touch with the public relations department. Have them nip the rumors in their buds as soon as CelebClicks releases the news about you and Hope. You work with us. It makes perfect sense for you to send her home. It’s not a big deal.”

Buck said stiffly, "The news is already out there, Ms. Mala..."

Mala checked her phone swiftly. Notifications about the news flooded her phone. It made it onto the trending lists as well! Hope had zero scandals attached to her since her debut. She never even got too close to any male celebrity. All of her partnerships were purely professional!

It was just as the guy from CelebClicks said, the news about Hope and the mysterious six-foot-two man had caused quite a stir!

"I'll contact the public relations department now and tell them to get on it at once."

"Okay."

Maia hung up the phone after that. Her company released a statement five minutes later, clarifying that the man in question was a staff of Starlight Entertainment. It stated that he was Maia's assistant and released a picture of his side profile for netizens to draw comparison to.

The statement did nothing to quell the discussions. The news remained the top searched topic online.

"Hope isn't in a relationship. She's not! Her company has denied it! In Hope we trust! In Starlight Entertainment we trust! Please don't believe or spread the rumors, everyone!"

"Look at the side profile. It's Buck, alright! The six-foot-two man is him. He followed Maia around like a bodyguard. She must've been at least five-foot-five. He's so tall!"

"Starlight Entertainment is treating us like we're dumb. Why would Maia's assistant drive a celebrity home? Here's the thing. Nebula Entertainment might've been acquired by them, but it's still just a branch company!"

"Furthermore, it doesn't matter if Hope brings in a lot of money. She simply isn't important enough for Maia to order her assistant to send her home. Didn't he also send her upstairs?"

“Hear, hear. I agree with you. Starlight Entertainment’s statement isn’t convincing at all!”

“Seconded. There are a lot of other famous celebrities out there, but none of them were sent home by one of the company drivers. Why was she sent home by the CEO’s assistant? Not even Aiken was treated that way!”

The statement from her company got more than sixty thousand retweets and the comments kept rolling in. Then, Maia logged into her Twitter account and quoted her company’s tweet.

+15 BONUS

go

back

“Buck is my assistant. Hope is my younger sister. I didn’t feel good letting my sister on her own. So, I asked him to send her back and make sure she got home safely. Does anyone have a problem with that?”

Soon, her quote became one of the most searched topics. The netizens ran wild with it!

“Holy shit! Revelation after revelation! Are they really sisters?”

“Hope took the role of a domineering CEO in the past. Did she get the inspiration from Mala? I love that Maia, a domineering person herself, moved to protect her younger sister! I want a sister like her too!”

“Alright. Some of you said Starlight Entertainment wasn’t convincing at all earlier. How do you respond to this? Hope’s sister is here to dispel the rumors!”

“Now that she said it, Hope and Maia do look a little alike! Do you guys remember when Hope left Starlight Entertainment with Maia in her arms? Now, we know she was helping her sister!”

“One of them is a Burgess, while the other is Warren. How are they sisters? Was Warren her stage name? I’ve never heard about this! I need answers!”

“Let me tell you now! Hope’s real name is Hope Burgess!”

The revelation that Hope was Maia’s younger sister broke the internet. There were both good and bad comments.

Some netizens said Maia acquired Nebula Entertainment to help Hope escape her unfavorable contract. It was such a blessing that Hope had a sister looking out for her like that!

Others questioned the reason Hope signed an unfavorable contract when her family ran an entertainment company. What was the full story?

Hope had been exploited by Nebula Entertainment for a long time, but Starlight

Entertainment had never bothered helping her in the past. It was an intriguing mystery that netizens were desperate to solve.

Overall, there were more good comments than bad ones. Many netizens rejoiced that Hope’s hard times had come to an end.

They praised her for making her mark in the entertainment industry all on her own. She deserved every good thing coming her way now because she had indeed made a lot of effort.

Meanwhile, Hope turned off the notifications on her phone before she cried herself to sleep. She had no idea what had gone down on the internet. She only got to know that there was some exciting news the next morning.

She went on the internet and realized that the news was about her. She was lost for words at

“Maia treats me so much better than he did.”

With that, she went to the interview with bloodshot eyes.

+15 BONUS

It was nine o'clock when Maia arrived at Starlight Entertainment. Tess had made a mess of the company when she was in charge and that led to discontent among the staff.

Work efficiency had dropped. It was clear to Maia that staff morale had been very low under Tess's reign.

t once. "Good

She walked into her company. The receptionists saw Maia and perked up at once, morning, Ms. Maia." She nodded in response.

No one was quite sure what to make of her return. Maia walked toward them and said, "Give me the microphone."

"Of course."

e of the receptionists did her bidding. Maia took it and ordered, "Activate the company broadcast system."

"On it." Another receptionist went into the control room and did what she was told.

"It's done, Ms. Maia."

Maia nodded and started her speech, which was meant for all departments.

“Good morning, everyone. It’s me, Maia Burgess. I knew everyone had been putting in extra hours as of late. As a sign of gratitude, your bonuses will be doubled for the month.”

Everyone cheered. Some of them could not contain their emotions and leaped up from their seats. Some even ran out to the central court, applauded, and yelled, “You rock, Ms. Maia!”

Money was definitely the best motivator!

Maia stood on the ground floor central court, raised her head, and flashed a smile at the gathered staff. Then, she said again, “I know everyone had a hard time. If you stand by the company, the company will recognize and reward your hard work in return!”

This was a promise she made to everyone in the company.

Chapter 230 She Can Still Turn Back

Influenced by the staff in the center court, the staff in the offices started applauding as well Maia boosted staff morale so early in the morning. Everyone was pumped after her speech.

Instead of taking her personal elevator, she got into the one that everyone used. She stepped out of the elevator when it stopped at her office floor. Buck, Paige, and the other administrative assistants applauded her.

“Welcome back, Ms. Maia.” Paige said.

Maia nodded and said, “Look at the smiles on your faces. It seems I’m not such a bad boss, after all.” Everyone laughed at that.

“No one would ever think of a pretty lady as a bad boss!” One of them said and made everyone laugh again. Paige nodded in approval, “That’s right. A pretty lady could never do anything wrong!”

All of them laughed and went back to work, Buck quickly handed Maia the documents he had prepared the night before. “This is the list of people Ms. Tess had promoted in your absence.”



She took the documents and scanned the list of names.

“Tess picked people who don’t question their superiors. They wouldn’t make a peep even if their superiors’ way of doing things is questionable.

“They’d follow orders to the letter. They stand on the fence, devoid of principles. They don’t take their jobs seriously.”

Buck had gone around and chatted with some friends in different departments when he was compiling the list of names. He knew some of the people on that list were good at sucking up to their superiors.

“Jordan mentioned something about this lady in the finance department. She used her connections to the former finance manager to get into our company. We didn’t pay attention because she was insignificant and did minor work in the department.”

Starlight Entertainment was a big company. It was hard to completely filter out all the inefficient individuals.

her any

“She threw her weight around as if she was the company director when I went looking for Jordan last time. We should sack anyone who got in because of the former finance manager just to be safe.”

Maia nodded and said decisively, “Fire her, then. Keep the rest of them on probation for a month.”

“Gotcha.” Buck nodded and was about to do her bidding when he thought of something. He

+15 BONUS

“I’m sorry about what happened with CelebClicks yesterday, Ms. Maia. From here on out, I’ll be extra careful when I send Hope back to her place.”

“That won’t be necessary anymore. Now that I’ve revealed to the public she’s my younger sister, there’s no need to be so careful about everything. I’ll arrange a chauffeur and a car for her.”

Maia said this as she was going through the documents. She did not forget about the text she received from Hope in the morning.

The confession had been a failure. Buck did not love Hope. She was confused by it, but she decided not to press further.

It would be hard for Hope if she had to see Buck again, so Maia had no choice but to make that decision. Buck was rooted to the spot for a good ten seconds when he heard what she said.

“Are you saying that you no longer need me to be Hope’s chauffeur?”

“Bingo. There’s more. You no longer have to contact her or cook for her. We’ve confirmed previously that Hope was going to be the female lead for ‘24 Hour Romance.’ I’ll ask them to speed up the process and start the show as soon as possible so Hope can get started soon.”

Maia spoke so resolutely that it left no room for argument. She had suffered terribly in her love life. She was not going to let Hope make the same mistake and suffer the same fate. Buck was completely thrown. He lowered his head and whispered, “Can I ask why, Ms. Maia?” “Don’t you know the reason already? You’re not dense, Buck. You made friends everywhere. You handled yourself really well in all departments. You could even mediate a dispute at times. “People with low emotional intelligence couldn’t have done that, and yet you handled it like it was nothing. Why are you such a buffoon when it comes to Hope?”

Maia was slightly confused. She even encouraged Buck to woo her younger sister. So, how was it that Hope said her confession failed? Could it be that he really was that dense?

Buck looked at Maia and said solemnly, “Are you referring to the fact that I rejected Hope before she could confess to me, Ms. Maia?”

“I have no interest in asking what went down between the both of you, but Hope is my younger sister. I need to protect her and make sure you don’t see her again. It’s the only thing I can do for her.”

Maia closed the document folder and looked at him sternly. “Leave her alone if you don’t love her, Buck. Don’t make her wait for something that won’t happen. I’ll talk to Hope too.

“Fortunately, nothing ever got off the ground between you two. It isn’t too late for her to turn back.”

+15 BONUS

Maia had been too stubborn before. She knew Cedric did not love her and yet she threw herself at him without a care in the world.

She had ended up with nothing to show for it. She lost the love of her life and her sense of self. She also almost lost her life.

Mala could not help but to smile bitterly. She had done it all wrong. She could not let Hope make the same mistake. She knew Hope was headstrong too.

There was a lingering silence in the office. Buck stood where he was and said nothing. He merely lowered his head, looking all solemn.

He totally got why Maia did what she did. However, he did not turn Hope down because he did not love her. He did it because he could not.

“It’s not that I don’t love her, Ms. Maia. I had to do what I did because I love her too much.” Maia frowned. Then, it hit her. She understood why he did it.

“You turned her down for her own good.” Maia was sure of it.

Buck nodded, "That's right, Ms. Maia. Hope's career is taking off. Out of the four popular actresses, she was the most famous. With Starlight Entertainment at her side, Hope is getting better resources.

"The people in the marketing department said Hope has a lot of clout at the moment. She delivers impressive performances and won the Best Actress award when she was still so young.

"Now, they're just waiting for her to nab the Best Actress title at The Horizon Awards. I can't ruin the career she loves just because I want to be with her..."

Buck made a sound argument. Hope was indeed at the peak of her career right now. If Maia wanted to split hairs, then Hope was merely a step away from that. As her boss, she had thought about that angle as well.