

Chapter 136 Negotiation

Melissa arched her brows and grinned at Howell.

Why did Howell come to her? She was about to leave work, but he suddenly showed up. It seemed insufficient for the Sherman family to cause problems during the day.

"Melissa, can we please talk?"

Howell obviously had a specific reason for coming at this time. He wished for a wider audience to witness his arrival.

"I'd rather not talk with you. Prioritize seeing your daughter first if at all possible."

Melissa gave her assistant a nod and prepared to go.

Howell walked up to her, frowned, and said softly, "I want to speak with you regarding your mother."

He knew exactly what Melissa's concern was. He was culpable and caused Melissa and her mother the greatest grief.

When Melissa heard this, her expression drastically changed. Although a long time had passed, her rage only grew stronger when she heard this man speak about her mother.

It pained her.

"How dare you mention her name! After so many years, you've probably forgotten her grave's location."

Melissa was aggressive at this point, which was exactly what Howell wanted.

"Let's have a talk over here."

He headed toward the open area behind the hospital, looking back to see whether Melissa was following him.

"Dr. Sherman, please allow me to call a cab to send you home."

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The assistant always had a sneaking suspicion that Howell had ill motives.

"No, thank you. I'll be back shortly. You may go now. I'll call someone to come get me."

Melissa squeezed her assistant's hand and rolled her wheelchair behind Howell.

They came to a halt under a tree. With a grin, Howell said, "Your mother and you are quite similar. You both don't want to be treated unfairly."

"Shut your mouth! You have no right to bring her up."

Melissa was being hostile at this time. She felt snarky every time Howell remarked about her mother.

Didn't he know the cause of her mother's so-called mental illness?

"Indeed, I'm not deserving of it. But how else could you and your mother have survived for so long without me? People should learn to be thankful, Melissa."

Melissa snorted and raised an eyebrow at Howell as if she had overheard a joke. Her expressionless eyes showed no sign of warmth for Howell.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Sherman. If not, my mother would not have died in the psychiatric hospital. Don't worry. I'll be sure to return the favor."

With her teeth clenched, she managed to get the last words out.

However, Howell abruptly left, which caused her to feel odd.

Melissa had no idea why he had come, but she had already made up her mind about something. She first objected to Arielle's treatment in her department since it was obvious that she felt a plot was in store for her, but she eventually agreed.

She was curious to find out what the Shermans were up to this time. That way, she might be able to learn the truth about that year.

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It would be unfortunate if Everett missed the event.

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At the Mayfield family's residence, the assistant informed Everett about the recent events, including Arielle's attempt to leap from the building and Howell's visit to Melissa.

"What did she say?"

Everett glanced up from his desk. When he learned that the sly Howell had gone to Melissa, he couldn't help but feel concerned.

"Dr. Sherman has agreed to move Arielle to the Department of Surgery I."

Everett was taken aback. Did Melissa suddenly change?

Suddenly, his phone rang. He took one look and immediately frowned.

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Everett was confused. What prompted Howell to contact him now?

Everett wanted to avoid talking to him and pretended not to notice the buzzing of his phone.

He had a feeling something unpleasant was about to happen if he answered Howell's call.

His phone stopped ringing after some time. To his surprise, his assistant's phone rang just as he had assumed that Howell had given up.

"Mr. Mayfield." The assistant's expression shifted. The call completely caught him off guard.

"Okay." Everett nodded. He was interested in hearing what Howell had to say.

"Everett, I need to talk with you privately."

Everett nodded slightly, signaling for his assistant to go.

"Have you and Melissa not told your children about what happened that year?"

Everett's heart jumped in response to the affirmation in Howell's voice.

"What do you want?"

He didn't doubt that the ever-shrewd Howell wouldn't readily concede defeat. Now, Howell knew about exploiting the two children.

Those children were also Howell's grandchildren, and now they were being used as a weapon against Everett.

"It's really simple. I want my daughter to leave the hospital in good condition. Although I won't require you to marry her, you must stay by her side until she gets better."

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Howell knew he couldn't put too much pressure on Everett, especially taking into account Everett's vicious nature.

Everett chuckled and rolled his eyes.

Howell must be daydreaming. Would Everett have to constantly be by Arielle's side if she wasn't healthy all the time?

"I'm not opposed to doing anything if you insist."

The nerve of this man to threaten him. In such a situation, Everett would not be merciful.

Howell was silent for a while. After some time, he smiled and added, "I must not be scared since I have already spoken about this. If you don't care for the two children, this news will..."

He deliberately paused and continued, "By the way, you didn't mention wanting the two children in Melissa's womb while you were with Arielle."

These statements hurt Everett. What should he say to explain it? At that time, he did force Melissa to leave.

He lacked the courage to tell the children the truth since he felt guilty about them.

He might have wagered everything, but he couldn't risk hurting Melissa and his children.

"If you annoy me, the Sherman family will suffer the consequences," Everett yelled while clenching his teeth.

"Ha-ha, we're both fathers. I don't expect you to comprehend how I feel, but I'm doing all I can to keep my child safe."

Howell spoke with moral authority as if he were a loving parent in reality.

"Isn't Melissa your daughter?"

Everett felt bad for Melissa. He was baffled as to how Howell could be so biased.

Melissa was also his daughter.

Everett's question caused Howell to pause for a while. After

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some time, he said quietly, "However, Arielle now needs more protection."

Everett remained silent. He seemed to have said something similar in the past.

"I won't give a damn about anything else as long as Arielle gets released from the hospital safe and sound. I won't meddle in your children's affairs."

Howell's remarks tempted Everett. A bigger concern was that he didn't want his children to know what had happened in the past. Although he knew he couldn't keep it a secret forever, he hoped that day would arrive a little later.

"Okay, I agree to stay with Arielle for three months. However, she will be moved to another country after that time, regardless of what happens," he said emphatically.

After a short pause, Howell was ready to negotiate until he thought about how powerful the Mayfield and Blake families were. He then gave his consent.

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Since this was the first time he had been threatened, Everett showed resistance in his eyes.

Howell dared to take the chance since Arielle and Melissa were grownups, but Everett couldn't. Lindsey and Merrick were only five years old and had been through a lot since birth. Everett didn't want them to suffer any more pain.

"Come in."

Everett wasn't someone who would only stand by and do nothing while things unfolded. He wanted the Shermans to bear as much of the burden as possible.

"Mr. Mayfield." The assistant looked down at the floor while he waited for his boss to speak.

"Impose sanctions on all the Sherman family's companies and figure out a way to send Howell on a business trip. Watch their people carefully. If they approach my children..."

As he said this, Everett's face darkened, and he abruptly paused. The office instantly became silent.

"Don't worry, Mr. Mayfield. I won't allow the Sherman family to contact Lindsey and Merrick," the assistant said.

The assistant's heart was pounding, and his palms were clammy.

Everett dropped his head to mask his rage. He had to consider Melissa's sentiments, even if he could have let the Sherman family leave Andeport tonight.

However despicable the Shermans might have been, Melissa was still born into their family.

He had no desire to hurt her in any way.

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In the hospital, Melissa closed her notebook and turned to face the patient.

"Melissa."

Arielle couldn't stop herself from speaking, seeming to be weak.

Melissa didn't respond. The hospital had been abuzz with gossip recently. She decided to become the harsh sister everyone assumed she was.

But word also quickly got around the hospital that Arielle was the mistress's daughter.

"Do you still refuse to forgive me?" Arielle asked.

Her voice sounded so pitiful and subservient.

Arielle's affectation might have deceived Melissa if she hadn't known what kind of person she was, but...

"Stop acting like this."

Melissa walked away after saying that.

"It's time for your injection, Miss Sherman." After some time, a nurse entered the room and prepared to inject Arielle.

After hearing this, Arielle hid under the quilt, not wanting to come out.

She would sob loudly every time someone touched her. The nurse was forced to get in touch with the Sherman family again.

But unexpectedly, Everett showed up.

He was annoyed when Howell called but was forced to maintain a polite demeanor.

Everett would have to follow his instructions in case Howell took things too far.

If Howell hurt the children and Melissa, it would be his fault.

"Arielle, take your medicine now," Everett said coldly as he stood near the window.

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He ordered his subordinate to remove the quilt after seeing that she didn't come out.

"Ahhh!"

Everyone in the hallway turned to look as Arielle screamed.

Arielle was huddled in a ball on the bed, holding her head firmly, and she looked awful.

Everett frowned when he saw this.

What the heck was happening?

He said, "Call the doctor."

He felt more perplexed as he stared at the woman on the bed.

Why did Arielle become like this after two days of not seeing her? Was she suffering from a mental illness, as Howell claimed?

The attending doctor arrived shortly after. He was stunned to see Everett, but he quickly relaxed.

"Hello, Mr. Mayfield. It's good to see you again," the doctor said.

"Right now, Miss Sherman's sister is the only one who can approach her. She had to be sedated so that we could treat her, but if this keeps up..."

Everett understood what the doctor had meant. He immediately walked outside to look for Melissa.

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Melissa was looking through some medical records when her phone rang. When she saw the name flashing on the screen, her mood instantly lightened.

"Aloys."

A gentle male voice came through the line. "Hello Melissa. Have you been busy lately?"

Melissa smiled. She said nothing about the recent events in her life. Instead, she talked about trivial things, which Aloys was relieved to hear. It was what he said next, however, that caught Melissa's attention.

"I finally obtain some information on that matter you asked me to investigate. You were right, the doctor is on a vacation abroad, and I've managed to find him. I'll try to score an opportunity to get something useful out of him."

Melissa's grip tightened around her phone, a myriad of emotions flashing in her eyes. At last, she was on the cusp of learning the truth of Arielle's miscarriage.

She closed her eyes and scoffed at the thought.

"All right," she said after a while, her tone turning gentle again. "Take care, Aloys."

"I'll be fine. It's you I'm worried about. I'm sure you have your hands full, taking care of two children all by yourself while keeping up with your profession. If the circumstances tire you out, don't hesitate to come back."

A grateful expression appeared on Melissa's face. Aloys had never failed to support and reassure her.

She was just about to end the call when she noticed someone at the door of her office.

Everett grimaced when he saw Melissa's relaxed smile transform into a glum expression at the mere sight of him.

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She hung up in a hurry and raised an eyebrow at him. "What can I do for you, Mr. Mayfield?"

"Arielle wants to see you. She refuses to listen to the other doctors. You..." Everett spoke as though the words were being wrung out of his mouth. He knew more than anyone that the fuss Arielle was kicking up was pure nonsense. Even so, he felt like he had little choice but to comply.

Melissa's lips curled in disdain. Just as she had expected! Why would the bastard ever seek her out if not for the sake of his beloved Arielle?

She looked Everett in the eye and said, "Don't you think you're crossing the line, Mr. Mayfield? Why do you always get me involved in your affairs with your fiancée?"

"I promise, this will not happen again. I know you don't want to see her. I will find a way to make her unable to show up in front of you." Everett had made up his mind before coming here. Once this whole debacle blew over, he would force Arielle to go overseas and stay there for the rest of her life.

Melissa was unaware of this, of course, and therefore did not appreciate his words. She turned her attention back to the medical records on her desk and said nonchalantly, "It sure is easy for you to arrange for a person to disappear, huh?"

She knew firsthand just how heartless Everett could be. After all, she had almost died in his hands. Perhaps Arielle had finally lost her value in his eyes, and had become something he could discard with the flick of his hand.

Not that it mattered. Whatever it was between Everett and Arielle, it had nothing to do with Melissa anymore.

Everett felt a dull ache in his chest as the spite in her words registered in his mind. Unbidden, flashes of the incident from five years ago swam in his vision.

"Well, don't just stand there. Let's go." Melissa decided to go and take a look. Since Arielle had gone to great lengths to reach this point, Melissa might as well oblige her with her schemes.

Her voice jolted Everett back to his senses. He moved aside to

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let Melissa pass through the door. "I'm sorry," he suddenly said as she brushed past him, his voice gentle and contrite.

For a moment, Melissa was stunned. As far as memory served her, Everett had never been the type to apologize, regardless of whether he was at fault or not.

"If you're apologizing on behalf of Arielle, save it. You don't have to do it, and I certainly don't want it." She threw the words at him casually before striding away.

Of all the worst things she could imagine Everett doing, she never expected him to apologize for that bitch.

"I'm not doing it for her," Everett argued, his tone serious. "I apologize for what happened that year."

Melissa's heart jumped to her throat. That year, she found herself struggling to survive an immeasurable pain. Could her suffering be erased with a simple apology?