

Chapter 144 No Longer Her Old Self

"Does it taste good, Mommy?" Lindsey chirped. "The soup that Mrs. Mayfield makes is so delicious that I finished two bowls!"

Her eager expression made her look even cuter than usual.

Melissa looked at the three people around her, her heart swelling with emotion. "Yes, it's very yummy."

Vivienne lit up at her words. "I remember you used to like the lotus root and spareribs soup I made."

After retiring from the business circle, she had taken on culinary education and eventually had several of her personal specialty dishes.

Melissa only nodded, her eyes turning wistful.

She had been sick back then, and it was Vivienne who had diligently tended to her. But Vivienne had gone abroad shortly after...

The twins couldn't stay still in the office and insisted on going out to play, so Vivienne instructed a handful of bodyguards to accompany them downstairs.

"Slow down, Melissa. It will be bad for your stomach if you eat too fast. Come now, you're a doctor. How come you don't pay attention to these things yourself?" Despite Vivienne's slight admonishment, deep in her heart, she felt sorry for Melissa.

She knew very well that it was all Everett's fault, but she couldn't really bear to punish her own son.

Melissa shot her a sheepish grin. "I get so busy with work sometimes, so I usually don't have enough time to eat. I'm used to rushing through my meals."

Vivienne clicked her tongue, concern marring her brows. "That won't do! No matter how busy you are, you must make time for

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a proper meal."

If only she had been home at that fateful period in time, she would have never let Arielle and Emily do those awful things. They were the reason why Melissa had to flee with her children and suffer hardships abroad.

Thinking of this, Vivienne reached out and took Melissa's hand. "Melissa, I know Everett has wronged you a lot. But now... Do you still hate him now?"

Did she hate Everett? Melissa lowered her eyes. She did loathe the man before, but he also gave her wonderful children.

Vivienne took note of her hesitation and silently rejoiced. "In that case," she said with some expectation, "do you think it's possible for you to get back together?"

If the couple did reunite, everyone in the Mayfield family would be happy.

But Melissa shook her head, without an ounce of hesitation this time. A bitter smile curled on her lips. She was no longer her old self. More importantly, there was no love between her and Everett.

She had tried to persevere with her unrequited affections in the past, but she couldn't do it again.

Vivienne let out a disheartened sigh, but she didn't press any further.

"I will always respect your decision, Melissa. Since you cannot be my son's wife, I will simply treat you as my own daughter."

Melissa was overwhelmed with emotion. She could only muster a teary smile and nod.

She might have been cast out of the Sherman family, but she knew that Johnny and Vivienne loved her very much.

It was late autumn and the air was getting chilly. It rained during the day, which only made the night colder.

Arielle tightened her clothes around her and cast a sharp glance at Everett. If it had been in the past, he would take off his coat without a second thought and drape it over her.

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"Everett, I'm cold."

"Then go back inside," he snapped.

Arielle's jaw hung open, and her eyes grew wide.

Feeling aggrieved, she whirled around and asked Everett's assistant to bring her an extra coat. She didn't wear it right away, however. Instead, she put it in Everett's hands and waited for him to put it on her.

Everett narrowed his eyes. Not wanting to drag the matter much longer or to even speak to her again, he carelessly threw the coat over her shoulders.

In the distance, Merrick and Lindsey had just popped out of the building, and this was the first thing that they saw.

Adorable Twins: Daddy, Stay Away!

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"Merrick, is that Mr. Mayfield? So, he is still with that woman." Lindsey's sweet voice was tinged with disappointment as she pointed at the pair not too far away.

Merrick balled his hands into fists before reaching out to cover his sister's eyes. "Stop looking. Let's just go back to Mommy."

"Okay." It was difficult for Lindsey to hide her distress.

No longer in a mood to play, the twins trudged back into Melissa's office.

Melissa took one look at their faces and frowned. "What's wrong? Why do you look so upset? Come here and tell me."

Vivienne also stepped forward and crouched in front of the children. "Who bullied you, hmm?" she asked as she dotingly caressed their cheeks. "Tell me, and I will teach him a lesson."

It had taken a series of tragedies for her to have these beautiful grandchildren. Whoever made the mistake of harming them would have hell to pay.

But then again...

Vivienne suppressed a helpless sigh at the thought that the twins didn't even know who their father was.

Lindsey's pouting lips quivered. She had never been one to keep a secret for long. "Mommy," she whined. "Mr. Mayfield is hanging out with that woman. He even helped her put on clothes."

Melissa's heart stuttered when she heard that. Arielle was truly important to Everett, after all.

"That's his own business. You don't have to worry yourselves about that," Melissa said.

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Vivienne, however, was seething. "I really don't understand what that bastard is trying to do!" she muttered, scowling.

Of all the idiotic things her son could possibly do, she had never expected him to do something with Arielle in front of his own children.

"Everett has been independent ever since he was a child. His father and I seldom reprimanded him for his actions, but this is too much! I can't let him off this time. No matter what happens, I will never let Arielle marry into our family!"

As far as Vivienne was concerned, she would always have one daughter-in-law, and that was Melissa.

Merrick suddenly jerked his head up and asked, "Are you angry, Mommy?"

He didn't care for that man at all, and never really thought highly of him. But if his mother became sad because of this...

"No, of course not. What reason do I have to be angry?"

"That's good, then. We only want you to be happy."

Melissa gazed at her children, a ball of warmth blooming in her chest. With her little angels around, she felt like nothing in the world was worth getting distraught over.

"Melissa, you should take better care of yourself. If you're exhausted, just clock out of work and get some rest at home. You don't have to work so hard. My husband and I are more than capable of supporting you and the children."

Vivienne silently cursed her son. Everett might be heartless toward Melissa, but she and Johnny would always have her back.

"I'm all right," Melissa smiled kindly at the older woman. "This is the career I chose, and I love it. I won't buckle that easily."

Besides, it hadn't been easy for her to get to where she was. How could she give up now?

They spent a few more moments chatting, and then it was time for Vivienne and the twins to go home. She was about to usher

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them through the door when it was suddenly opened from outside.

"I see that you are here, too, Mrs. Mayfield!"

Howell stood there, his disgustingly hypocritical expression on full display.

Melissa instantly frowned. What the hell was he doing here? What business could her so-called father possibly have with her?

Vivienne gave him a polite nod, and then silently left with the children.

The atmosphere grew awkward as Howell and Melissa were left alone. "Melissa," the man said in a careful tone. "Vivienne seemed to be fond of you and your children."

"Yes, even though we are not related, she treats us better than our actual family," Melissa replied casually while reading the documents on her desk.

Howell had the decency to appear embarrassed by her words, and his face shifted ever so slightly.

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Howell couldn't dispute with her about it since he had never genuinely cared for Melissa.

However, a bright idea suddenly struck him.

"I'm sorry, Melissa. I know I've done you wrong in the past, but we're a family. We are linked by blood, so you will always be my daughter."

Clunk!

Melissa suddenly dropped the pen she was holding.

She looked up and stared at Howell with a trace of cynicism. "Family? When I was homeless and on the verge of dying under a bridge, why didn't you consider me as your family? You should have said it before bringing your mistress to our house and forcing my mother to leave."

He had never shown compassion to her or her mother.

She was ready to erupt in rage as she thought about this.

"You... Please stop being so aggressive," Howell said in a voice dripping with sarcasm.

Melissa smirked and said, "Get to the point. Why did you come here?"

She knew Howell wouldn't just come without reason.

"Let's go home to my house," Howell blurted.

When Melissa heard his words, it was like a bomb going off in her head.

She was in disbelief and wondered if she had heard him correctly.

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"Let's leave the past behind. Please come back home, Melissa. You're still the Sherman family's daughter."

Howell looked sincere.

Melissa might have been moved by his words had she not recognized him for who he was.

But she was no longer the trusting daughter she once was.

"Aren't you worried that you and Emily may get into a fight?"

"In my family, I have the last say. She won't dare say a word," Howell said sternly while waving his hand.

Melissa sneered, "I'm sorry. I don't care about that family. You may now go."

"You..."

Howell was enraged by the woman's harsh attitude before him.

He mentally cursed her.

But after that, he faked a grin and continued, "I hope you'll give it some thought. Being around family would be nicer compared to living alone." He then turned around and walked away after saying that.

Melissa sneered. Family? That sounded hilarious. When did they start treating her as a part of the Sherman family?

Melissa felt frustrated and no longer wanted to work after speaking with Howell. She then walked to the window and breathed in deeply, only to find two people standing below.

Everett and Arielle seemed to be sharing a private moment as Arielle leaned on him.

Melissa believed Arielle had a special place in Everett's heart and couldn't be replaced.

Seeing this made her even more upset. She then turned around, pulled open the drawer, and gently removed an old photograph of her mother.

"Mom, what should I do?"

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Howell's sentiments were visible on his face. Arielle had just come back inside the building, and he ran into her as he emerged from the hallway.

"Dad!" It took Arielle's persistent calling for him to come around finally.

"What have you been up to?" Howell asked.

After glancing at Everett, Arielle replied, "I got bored in the ward, so I invited Everett to go on a stroll with me."

"Okay." Howell turned at Everett, who looked impatient and offered no signs of affection, which was disappointing.

Finally, he understood that Arielle would never succeed in winning Everett's affection, no matter how hard she tried.

"Everett, please look after Arielle well," Howell said.

Everett gave him a sidelong look and nodded. He remained silent and aloof.

Howell was embarrassed by his response. He didn't dare to annoy Everett despite their arrangement. In such a situation, it would be detrimental to Howell and his family.

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