

Chapter 19: Melody? Or Nicole!

Melody's hair was back to its rich dark brown color. She had carelessly cut her hair and wore sunglasses despite leaving in the middle of the night. She wore a jacket and a hoodie over her head. From that night onwards, she was no longer Nicole Lively. She was back to being Melody Campbell. She settled at the back of their car while her father, Thomas Campbell, drove to the exit of the private community.

This was their chance to escape. "At least this time, with your hair changed back, they won't look into you closely," her father suggested.

True enough, when they arrived at the nearest checkpoint, presented with Melody's old school ID, a mere birth certificate, the police did not look into the car closely. They simply asked Melody to roll down the car window, and seeing her dark-colored hair; the police returned to his post.

"I think they bought it," Melody said nervously. The officer who took their identification was speaking through a radio transceiver from a distance. After some time, the same officer approached their vehicle and returned their ID. He asked, "Why does Melody not have a valid ID?"

"We lost it when we arrived," Thomas Campbell replied. "We are going to get her new ones." "I see," the police officer replied. "And where are you headed to at this night?"

"Um.. we are driving early to the next state," Thomas replied. "We are meeting some friends there." Next, the police officer's radio called him in. He had to step aside and exchange with whoever was commanding him. "Yes, sir. Got it."

When he returned to Thomas and Melody, the police said, "You may now... leave." He smiled, but to Thomas, the way the officer smiled appeared to have a meaning behind it.

Still, Thomas was relieved. He hurriedly drove off to the main road. "We got out. There may still be another checkpoint, but getting through the first meant Evan has not identified us."

"Oh, my god. We are going to get out, dad!" Melody was equally relieved that she was teary-eyed. "Wendell did not suspect us at all, and Evan, he – he was never able to connect me to my real identity!"

Melody still could not believe it. With Evan's power, she thought Evan would have already learned! She exhaled, saying, "Luck is on our side."

After making it a kilometer away from their neighborhood, Melody thought about Evan again. She inwardly said, 'I'll come back for you, Evan. When I do, I'll be prettier, and I won't make the same mistakes again.'

The two of them drove for half an hour more, making their way to the middle of the city, when they encountered another inspection. This time, they were more confident. Yet again, they surrendered their identification. The officer in front of them smiled courteously.

They noticed two private vehicles arrived a few yards behind them, but since they were only private cars, they assumed they had been pulled over for inspection too. Seeing how the officer in front of them was so collected, Thomas and Melody suspected nothing.

The father and daughter exchanged approving nods. Out of nowhere, the police declared, "Mr. Campbell, someone is here to see you. Can you and your daughter please step out of the car?"

“Excuse me?” Thomas asked. “Is there something wrong?” Melody had her eyes widened. She turned to look out the back window and saw figures stepping out of the vehicles. However, it was so dark she could not decipher who they were.

“Please, step out of the car, sir,” the officer insisted, leaving Melody and Thomas with no choice. Soon the two were outside, leaning against their car. Thomas kept asking the officer what the problem was, while Melody did her best to hide her face.

“Good evening, Mister Campbell.” Eventually, they heard a man’s ice-cold tone calling out to them. The voice came from Evan Thompson, and he was pacing towards them with his friends, Wendell and Sean. 6

When Evan stood before them, Melody quickly looked down. She repeatedly gulped air down her throat. Whereas, Thomas spoke to Evan defensively.

It was already midnight. The air was cold, but with the sudden arrival of Evan Thompson, Melody and Thomas felt the temperature drop to near zero degrees. Melody’s knees were shaking, and Thomas could not contain the drumming of his heart.

“Evan, what is the meaning of this? Were you not satisfied that your family nearly ruined us over a simple fit of teenage argument?” Thomas reacted defensively.

“A fit of teenage argument?” Evan asked. “Really? Pushing Shanty onto the road was just a fit of teenage argument? Shanty did not even fight back. Something! Is seriously wrong with your daughter? Have you considered having her head checked?”

Thomas gulped. He answered, “Stop holding grudges of the past! That was a long time ago, and Shantelle was not hurt! We don’t want any trouble. We want to leave – Melody and I.”

“Melody?!” Evan said the name with complete sarcasm. “Melody. Melody. Melody!”

Evan glowered significantly and moved closer to Melody. He left only a few inches away, his frame towering over her. He was breathing loudly, almost like he was purring in anger.

Behind him, Wendell was shaking his head, and Sean was narrowing his eyes at the woman. “Or should I say... Nicole Lively!” Evan announced, his voice strengthening.

“Do you honestly think I would not connect the dots, Melody?” Behind Evan, Wendell said. “I knew you looked familiar. Even with your face changed. Your eyes remained the same!”

“What?” After hearing Wendell, Melody unwittingly looked up. “I-I don’t know what you are talking about! Who is this Nicole Lively?”

It was earlier that evening that Wendell came to Evan’s office. He discussed his inkling about his neighbor. Shortly after, Evan’s private investigator returned with the news! They confirmed that Nicole Lively was Melody Campbell!

After learning the truth, they set the plan in motion. With the help of the authorities, they allowed the father and daughter to believe they had gotten away, but Evan just wanted them to have a taste of freedom, knowing it would leave them more frustrated. Regardless of their route, the police already had the entire city surrounded!

“Nicole Lively, you are under arrest for perverting the course of justice by claiming to have been raped. You will also be charged for fraud, for falsely misleading Mister Thompson about your identity,” another police officer said behind Evan.

“You are mistaken “Melody tried to deny it, but the police kept speaking. “And Mister Campbell? You are also under arrest for conspiring with your daughter,” the police added.

“No-no. This can’t be.” Thomas was shocked. He never expected to be pinned down together with his daughter.

“You don’t need to deny it, Nicole or fucking Melody!” Evan barked. “We already know how you changed your name and face. I had you investigated!”

“No! No, that’s not true!” Melody said back. “What nonsense are you spouting about, Evan?!” Thomas countered.

Throughout the entire arrest, the father and daughter denied the accusations. They fought back, physically and verbally, to the point where the officers had to force them into a police car. Ultimately, Melody and Thomas Campbell were brought to the police station for questioning. “Mister Thompson’s private investigator traced your previous apartment in Lockwood. The landlady gave up the storage room you had rented for the right price. So now we have this,” the man said. Inside the interrogation room, the police sat in front of Melody and opened an envelope containing the pieces of evidence.

There were several pictures of Evan, taken from his later years in college until he was taking his master’s degree. Some photos showed Evan relaxing during his free time.

“You hired a private investigator yourself. Isn’t that right? You stalked Mister Thompson for years. You knew where he ate breakfast, lunch, dinner, where he bought his coffee, and where he spent most of his time studying – at the library,” the officer pointed out.

Another document showed how she changed her name. “You paid off a judge in Lockwood to allow your name change, and then you planned your meeting with Mister Thompson.”

“Of course, this was after you had a series of surgery to look like Miss Shantelle Scott,” the police added. “ You were so jealous of Miss Scott that you tried to look like her. Isn’t that right, Miss Campbell?”

“I am not jealous of Shantelle! I don’t know what you are “When the police slammed another set of photos on the table, Melody jumped in her seat.

The following photos were of Shantelle. Each one had a big red “X” mark on them. It was clear to the officer that whoever drew the marks on the pictures had deep-rooted anger toward Shantelle.

Next, the police showed Melody a video of the teenagers’ statements and the recording from the hotel. The police took a pen and paper. He pushed it toward Melody and suggested, “We can go all night and day at this. You can keep denying it, or you can admit to everything. Either way, the pieces of evidence against you are solid.”@

“The choice is yours, Miss Campbell, the easy or the hard way?” The police added. There was a long silence as Melody gawked at the documents and photos. After nearly five minutes, she turned to look at the one-way glass mirror. She knew exactly who was behind that mirror.

“Evan!” She howled in tears, her palms pressed against the glass. “Evan, forgive me. I won’t do it again. I promise! I’ll leave Rose Hills!”

Water flooded her cheeks as she described, “Don’t forget, I listened to you. I was that person you leaned on. I was your friend too. You must have cared for me at some point.”

Melody pleaded, but nothing changed after hours of standing behind the glass mirror. She kneeled and begged, but nothing happened. The officer behind her remained unchanged. The police said, “Mister Thompson left the station two hours ago. Your begging is pointless. Besides, it’s out of his hands. The prosecutor is determined to file a case against you. You will definitely be locked behind bars.”