

Chapter 597 Melissa, Are You Punishing Me

Marcus had spent a considerable amount of time scrutinizing the draft, and his eyes were beginning to ache from the strain.

The soft, ethereal glow of the lamp cast a vague light upon his handsome face.

With a sigh of resignation, Marcus sank into the sofa by the window, resting his head against its back. In this melancholic moment, memories that had long been sealed away began to resurface in his mind.

Images of all the kindness she had once shown Melissa and all the harm he had inflicted upon her flooded his thoughts.

He had hoped that a year's time would allow people to release their grip on the past and forge ahead.

Yet, despite the passing of time, Marcus found himself unable to quell the unease that welled up within him upon hearing tidbits of news concerning Melissa.

Had she returned?

If she had forgiven him and was willing to see him, she wouldn't have refused to provide even a real address; instead, she simply returned the money.

Marcus couldn't fathom the depths of the suffering she must have endured to accumulate such a sum.

Slowly, Marcus retrieved his phone from his pocket and opened the photo album.

Among the few pictures he had, one was of Melissa.

Despite their breakup and the resentment he once held, he couldn't bring himself to delete it.

Now, as he gazed at her image once more, his heart ached.

After a prolonged moment of silent contemplation, Marcus dialed a



familiar number. It still didn't get through. Although he had mentally prepared himself for it, the result still left him with a suffocating disappointment.

He gently tapped his phone screen and couldn't resist revisiting the photo album.

Suddenly, the door swung open, and Waylen entered.

Observing Marcus' pensive expression, he stood by the doorway for a moment before offering a faint smile. "What's on your mind? Your sister called you from the stairs for quite some time, but you didn't seem to hear her."

Marcus pocketed his phone, snapping back to the present.

Marcus calmly folded the letter and tucked it into his pocket, but Waylen's keen eyes didn't miss his distraction. Waylen smiled and remarked, "What's got you so engrossed there? You seem lost in thought."

"Nothing" replied Marcus, his expression guarded.

He rose from his seat and headed toward the door. "Isn't dinner ready?"

As Marcus approached, Waylen placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder and said, "Marcus, sometimes it's okay to express your vulnerability. Your mother and I won't ridicule you. It's just a breakup after all."

Marcus' tone remained indifferent as he responded, "I'm not getting into a new relationship."

Waylen sensed that Marcus might still be putting up a facade.

If not a new relationship, then perhaps an old one? Wasn't that what was in his pocket?

As they descended the stairs together, Waylen smiled and quipped "In fact, with the influence of our family, it wouldn't be difficult to bring Melissa back and have her marry you."

"Dad, if something isn't meant to be, trying to force it won't make much of a difference," Marcus replied, his tone firm.

Knowing his son, Waylen didn't press the matter further. Instead, he exchanged a meaningful glance with Rena.

Marcus obviously had not moved on from Melissa, as she would remain an inseparable part of his life no matter what.

During dinner, they avoided mentioning Melissa, but an air of tension hung over the table.

Unable to contain herself, Elva finally spoke up first. "Marcus, while you were at Alexis' place, someone from the Smith family paid a visit."

Marcus looked up at Elva, concern in his eyes.

Without hesitation, Elva continued, "They said they want their daughter back and that once they find her, they'll hold you responsible."

Marcus turned to his father for a response.

With a feigned smile, Waylen began serving food to his son. "Marcus, don't worry, even though I don't typically get involved in company matters anymore, I'm more than capable of handling those Smith brothers. Actually, your mother could handle them on her own."

Rena cast a discreet glance at Waylen.

Waylen snorted dismissively. "I won't do anything to them for now, for Melissa's sake."

Hoping for acknowledgment, Waylen had intended to ask for credit, but Marcus responded firmly, "Don't do it for Melissa's, or anyone else's sake. If they return, just drive them away."

Waylen's expression became inscrutable, his eyes revealing a mix of emotions.

After a momentary lull, he questioned, "Are you not interested in marrying her?"

Marcus, not in the mood for dinner anymore, stood up and walked outside. He stated firmly as he walked, "Melissa's surname is Brown, not Smith. Our family never had, and never will have, any connection with the Smiths, and we don't need them trying to get close to us."

Marcus was acutely aware of the Smith family's true intentions.

While they claimed to want their daughter back, in reality, they merely sought connections with the Fowler family. However, Marcus knew this was an impossibility.

As Marcus opened the car door and settled in, he couldn't help but reflect on how things might have been different with Melissa if it weren't for the Smith family's interference. Perhaps she wouldn't have been so distant, and he wouldn't have misunderstood her.

Anxiety creeping in, Marcus started the car and drove away.

Back in the living room, Rena spoke gently. "You really touched a nerve with Marcus."

Waylen sighed, a habit he would normally accompany with a cigarette, but he refrained due to his wife and daughter's presence. After a while, he confided, "When I went upstairs earlier, I found Marcus leaning against the sofa. That look on his face... Rena... it's rare for me to see Marcus like that. He hasn't let go of Melissa or moved on."

Rena nodded, sharing her husband's concern.

Marcus drove to his apartment, lost in his thoughts.

After parking the car, Marcus made his way to the security room located next to the elevator. He offered a cigarette to the security guard and took a drag alongside him. Only then did Marcus casually inquire "Has my ex-girlfriend visited here in the past six months? She left something behind when she left."

The security guard immediately recognized the prominent figure standing before him.

Marcus was a well-known figure in Duefron, and the security guard realized he had a unique opportunity to brag about sharing a smoke with him. He concentrated hard, trying to recollect, and eventually replied, "I don't recall her coming by during my shifts. As for the times I wasn't on duty, I couldn't say."

The security guard was forthright in his response.

He continued, reminiscing "I still remember that night about six months ago, when she left early in the morning I was on duty that night. She seemed profoundly upset, sobbing incessantly. Her clothes were drenched, and she was shivering. Mr. Fowler, you can't treat your girlfriend like that no matter what. Women are like delicate flowers, finest creations of God. Men should love and cherish them..."

Marcus was taken aback by this unexpected insight from the security guard.

After a moment, he expressed his gratitude to the security guard and handed over the two packs of cigarettes as a token of appreciation.

Marcus then made his way to the top-floor apartment.

It had been more than half a year since anyone had been here, including the cleaning ladies, and the place was shrouded in dust.

Upon entering the guest room, he noticed that the velvet box and the receipt from when Melissa had purchased the pills were also covered in dust.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, he opened the box, placed the folded draft inside and closed it.

Marcus grappled with conflicting emotions.

In truth, he had resigned himself to the end of his relationship with Melissa when she had left in disappointment. If she hadn't sent the draft to him, he might have eventually moved on and forgotten her in a year or two.

Perhaps he would have gone on meeting new girls, gotten married someone suitable, and started a family, gradually leaving the past behind as everyone did.

However, Melissa's actions had resurrected the past in vivid detail.

Marcus lowered his gaze and whispered, "Are you punishing me? Are you making me pay for not being able to forget you throughout my life?"

Between him and Melissa, it was impossible to determine who owed whom.

Yet, Marcus couldn't help but worry about her and wanted to know how she was faring. He stared at the box for a long moment before finally picking up his phone and dialing a number...

