

Chapter 603 I've Moved On

Marcus whispered something under his breath and walked forward.

Observing Marcus' movement, Sylvia hastened to follow.

Meanwhile, as Melissa prepared to depart with the diamond ring, the manager intercepted her, presenting a lengthy gift box. "Miss Brown, I've learned yesterday was your birthday. Allow me to offer you this as a birthday present."

Melissa hesitated. "No, I can't accept this."

Lowering his voice, the manager added, "Mr. Waston is a valued patron, spending approximately eight million dollars annually. This small token of gratitude from us pales in comparison."

Intrigued, Melissa opened the box to reveal a diamond-adorned bracelet inside.

The piece exuded exquisite craftsmanship.

Judging by the size of the diamonds, the bracelet must be worth hundreds of thousands—truly a lavish gift.

Furthermore, the bracelet's design bore a striking resemblance to the one Marcus had gifted her before. Yet it lacked the same allure. Melissa found herself speechless, lost in thought.

Observing this, the manager grew somewhat concerned and inquired, "Is something amiss, Miss Brown? Don't you care for it?"

Collecting herself, Melissa shook her head, replying, "No, I love it. Thank you!"

Relieved, the manager swiftly put the velvet box into a delicate gift bag, offering Melissa birthday wishes in a hushed tone.

In the past, Melissa might have felt awkward, but now she was

accustomed to such gestures. She flashed a smile at the manager before departing.

However, upon turning she collided with a sturdy form.

At that moment, the person seized the opportunity to encircle her waist with his hand, a gesture that came across as quite impolite.

Instinctively, Melissa moved to push the intruder away, but a familiar scent halted her. It was Marcus. Her face found refuge on his shoulder, taking a moment for her senses to return.

In addition to his perfume, she sensed the fabric of his suit against her skin.

Upon regaining composure, they found themselves standing eye-to-eye.

Under the crystal chandelier's glow in the shopping mall, Marcus appeared particularly striking. Perhaps his impromptu decision to venture out led to his attire—a black overcoat paired with a suit, imparting a sense of casual elegance.

His gaze, as frigid as ever, remained fixed on her.

"Shopping for jewelry, are we?" Marcus inquired.

Unaware of his intentions, Melissa offered a brief smile and responded, "I'm just running some errands for Mr. Waston," keeping her reply succinct.

Yet Marcus continued to scrutinize her.

After a considerable period of silence, it was Sylvia who finally broke the ice. Having not seen each other for several years, Sylvia was filled with excitement at the prospect of reuniting with Melissa. Following a brief exchange of updates, Sylvia extended an invitation for them to share a cup of coffee together.

Melissa didn't want to cause embarrassment.

However, she foresaw the likelihood of ending up having coffee with Marcus rather than Sylvia.

Politely declining she suggested, "Can I take a rain check? I'm pressed for time today. Mr. Waston awaits my report."

Sylvia cast a helpless glance at Marcus upon hearing this.

Marcus remarked coldly, "Mr. Waston appears to hold significant importance for you."

Melissa responded calmly, "Of course, he's my employer. Good day, Mr. Fowler, and Sylvia. Another time for coffee, perhaps."

Melissa concluded with courtesy.

Upon turning away, she silently wished she'd never cross paths with Marcus again.

Perhaps, when Albert returned to Heron the following year, she'd seek a transfer to the head office with him. After all, Duefron held no ties for her anymore. She planned to relocate to Heron with Julie and Matthew.

Upon departing the shopping mall, Melissa didn't head straight back to the company.

She visited another jewelry store and opted to sell the bracelet. While acknowledging its beauty, she preferred to convert it into cash. Despite having a decent salary, she was on her own and understood that she alone would be responsible for any unforeseen expenses or challenges.

This wasn't her first visit to the jewelry store.

The owner, straightforward as ever, offered her three hundred thousand for the bracelet.

As Melissa exited the store and approached her car, her attention was drawn to a white Bentley parked across the road, its window lowered. It was evident that the person inside the car was Marcus.

After a brief contemplation, she decided to enter the car directly.

Meanwhile, the driver Kevin spoke of something fun at work. Melissa listened with a smile, her amiable demeanor endearing her to everyone at the Waston Group.

Finally, wiping his face, Kevin expressed, "My eyes might be playing tricks with me, but I believe I spotted the Fowler Group's boss just now. His car was parked across the street."

Wearing a faint smile, Melissa remarked, "Well, it seems there's someone who bears a striking resemblance to him."

"Yes, you're right!"

Subsequently, Melissa paid little heed to the driver's further remarks, gazing out the window with a subdued demeanor.

Three years had passed, yet Marcus' presence still wielded influence over her.

Abruptly, the driver voiced his concern. "Miss Brown, that car has been tailing us relentlessly. Could they be aware of your delivery to Mr. Waston? Are they attempting to rob us?"

At the thought of it, Kevin appeared flustered.

Sensing his agitation, Melissa reassured him, "Relax. See, the occupant is the CEO of the Fowler Group. They wouldn't rob us."

Her words left the driver dumbfounded.

Melissa's earlier certainty about the person not being Mr. Fowler now seemed premature.

Kevin wasn't oblivious. Sneaking a glance at Melissa through the rearview mirror, he noted her composed demeanor, gradually easing his own nerves. As long as she returned to the company unharmed, Melissa paid little mind to the driver's thoughts.

Thirty minutes later, the car halted outside the Waston Group's premises.

Melissa alighted from the vehicle, swinging the door open.

Suddenly, she felt a hand grasp her arm. Raising her head, she met Marcus' gaze.

Observing the crowd at the company entrance, Melissa questioned in a hushed tone, "Marcus, do you realize what you're doing?"

Yet Marcus maintained his hold, unyielding.

He sneered. "Miss Brown, why not address me as Mr. Fowler as you always do?"

Shaking off his grasp, Melissa demanded, "What do you want?"

Marcus stated bluntly, "I want you to join me for coffee."

Of course, Melissa had no desire to share coffee with Marcus. However, she had little say in the matter. Persisting with their conversation at the gate would undoubtedly fuel gossip about her and the Fowler Group CEO, spreading throughout Duefron by tomorrow—a situation she desperately sought to avoid.

Contemplating, she shifted her tone, speaking with gravity.

"Certainly, Mr. Fowler. I'd be delighted."

Gesturing toward the coffee shop across the street, she suggested they grab a cup there.

However, Marcus declined the offer to visit the coffee shop she chose.

Approaching the passenger side, Marcus opened the door, instructing Melissa, "Get in."

Considering her options, Melissa complied and entered the car.

Observing her buckle up, Marcus shut the door and settled into the driver's seat. Once secured, he glanced at her once more.

Yet Melissa disregarded his stare.

Feigning indifference, she inquired "Mr. Fowler, where are we headed?"

Balancing the steering wheel with one hand, Marcus retrieved a cigarette with the other, hesitating before discarding it.

In a gravelly tone, he questioned, "What if I prefer going to my place?"

His place? What could he possibly mean by that?

After a brief pause, Melissa grasped Marcus' implication. He referred to their former shared apartment, a place she loathed.

Her demeanor shifted abruptly as she questioned, "Can't we choose a different location for coffee? Or are you unwilling to treat me, Mr. Fowler? And let's not forget, you have a girlfriend. Wouldn't it be improper to bring

another woman to your place?"

"Are you envious of Violette?" Marcus inquired

"Not at all. I simply wish to avoid any complications."

Just as Melissa finished speaking she tried to exit the car. However, with a click, Marcus locked the car doors, preventing her from leaving.

Turning back, she demanded indignantly, "What do you think you're doing?"

Marcus offered no reply, instead starting the car and driving toward his apartment.

During the journey, Melissa gradually regained her composure.

Choosing silence, she purposefully ignored Marcus, unwilling to offer any false hope.

Memories of their past relationship were tainted.

Marcus and Melissa were polar opposites. He was born into privilege while she struggled to rise from adversity. Having left those days behind, Melissa had no desire to engage in romantic entanglements with Marcus.

Perhaps she had finally awakened from her dream.

The journey was brief, and soon Marcus' car halted outside a building. Rather than exiting the vehicle, he inquired softly, "Have you returned in the past two years? Do you ever miss this place?"

"Absolutely not!"

Mr. Fowler, you've taught me to be pragmatic. Coming from humble origins, I'm undeserving of you. It's best I rid myself of such foolish notions sooner rather than later," Melissa stated bluntly.

Marcus' expression softened as he lowered his head, a smile playing at his lips.

However, his smile turned to a sneer as he retorted, "Indeed, everything has changed."

Abruptly, his gaze snapped upward, filled with fury, his voice quivering as

he demanded, "Is it because of Albert that you've changed?"

Serenely, Melissa replied, "No, it's simply life."

She feared Marcus might not comprehend

She elucidated, "Consider this: today, I purchased jewelry for Mr. Waston, receiving a birthday gift from the store manager. I gladly accepted it, only to sell the bracelet for three hundred thousand. You might find this behavior distasteful, even petty, but I couldn't care less. Survival in this world demands a fight. If I'm to live a fulfilling life, I must fend for myself."

In response to her declaration, Marcus fixed his gaze on her without so much as a blink, his expression unreadable.

Then, in a cold and calculated tone, he uttered, "Wouldn't you stand to gain more if you were to become Albert's lover?"

Melissa felt a surge of anger and was almost tempted to slap him for his audacity.

However, she restrained herself, aware of the consequences of antagonizing Marcus. Even Albert, despite his stature, had to depend on the Fowler family in Duefron. As a modest secretary, how could she possibly act entirely according to her own desires?

Masking her anger, Melissa replied with a smile, "Certainly, Mr. Fowler. I'll give it some thought. It does seem like the quickest path to wealth, doesn't it?"

With that, she released her seat belt.

Marcus leaned closer, pinching her chin, his intense gaze roving over her. Though he refrained from kissing her, his scrutiny made her uneasy.

"Indeed, you've grown more alluring.

Would you entertain the idea of being my secret lover?"

Melissa felt embarrassed and irritated under Marcus' pressure, his words further fueling her anger.

"Are you insane? What about your girlfriend?"

Are you seriously proposing an affair while in a relationship?

How much are you offering? Two million for a night? Ten for three whole days?"

Melissa struggled to maintain her composure, though her eyes glistened with tears. Pushing Marcus away with frustration, she straightened her attire. "Let me out," she said in a flat tone.

Marcus straightened up in his seat as well.

Lighting a cigarette, Marcus took a few puffs. Though the smell overwhelmed Melissa, she remained silent.

Marcus stubbed the cigarette and said in a low voice, "I did mention that I want you to join me for a cup of coffee."

Enraged, Melissa exclaimed, "What more do you want, Marcus? We ended things three years ago! You accused me of dishonesty and claimed I wasn't worthy of you. It's irrelevant now. I've moved on. Why can't you accept that?"

You're with someone else. What more do you expect from me?

To be your illicit lover? To become like my mother? Marcus, you know better than to belittle me like this."

She finished with heavy breaths.

Unable to maintain her facade, Melissa broke down.

Despite recognizing Marcus' intentions, she couldn't contain her emotions.

Exhausted from her outburst, Melissa slumped against the passenger seat, biting her hand as she muttered, "Please, just let me go. You can have anyone, Marcus. But I only have myself."

Meanwhile, Marcus remained silent in his seat.

Eventually, he lowered the window to dissipate the lingering scent of smoke.

He then suggested casually, "Let's just have that cup of coffee."

By now, Melissa had regained her composure. "Fine, I'll join you for coffee," she agreed. "But after that, we're strangers. No more dredging up the past or pestering me."

With that, she exited the car first.

Alone in the car, Marcus offered a faint smile before following suit.

Upon reaching the apartment, everything appeared unchanged from their past.

A pair of slippers remained by the door, once belonging to Melissa. It was evident that no one had worn them since her departure.

She averted her gaze, unwilling to dwell on memories of the past.

"Is the coffee maker still in the kitchen? I'll brew us some," Melissa suggested.

Nonchalantly, Marcus discarded his coat and loosened his suit. "There're some ingredients in the fridge," he mentioned. "Why don't you stay and dine with me?"

"You want me to cook for you?"

Marcus, are you serious?" Melissa questioned.

Marcus gazed at her earnestly. "I'll do it. I never had the chance to cook for you before," he offered sincerely.

However, Melissa declined firmly, "No, thanks. I'm not interested."

With his piercing gaze fixed on her, Marcus asserted, "Well, if you decline my offer, I don't mind seeking out Albert and proposing to borrow you for a few days. I believe he'd be willing to exchange a secretary for a project worth ten billion."

"You audacious bastard!" Melissa cursed.

Marcus gestured toward the sofa. "Have a seat and watch some TV. I'm heading to the kitchen. We've got some mutton chops, your favorite," he announced.

He softened his tone, averting his gaze. "Trust me, you'll enjoy it," he

assured her.

Melissa felt a pang of sadness at his words.

She sat on the sofa, unable to focus on the TV. It all felt surreal to her.

She swiftly retrieved her mobile phone and dialed Albert's number, simultaneously sending messages to her subordinates. Engrossed in her tasks, she processed paperwork using her phone. In truth, she refused to be idle, purposely avoiding thoughts of Marcus to the point of momentarily forgetting her surroundings.

Despite her efforts, memories of their past flooded back.

Marcus poured her a glass of milk.

He then disappeared into the kitchen to prepare dinner.

The mutton chops were expertly roasted in the oven, perfectly seasoned to capture the essence of authentic French cuisine.

Alongside, an array of other dishes adorned the table, each equally enticing in appearance.

Marcus, while serving the dishes, maintained his noble and elegant demeanor.

"Dinner's served!" He announced it loudly.

Seated at the table, Melissa glanced at her watch, which was from a famous brand but only the basic model.

Marcus glanced at her watch. "Aren't you well compensated by Albert?"

Melissa responded calmly, "It's not about the money. I'm content as long as I can keep track of time."

Marcus served her a mutton chop, his tone gentle. "How have you been these past three years?"

Before Melissa could respond, he interjected with self-deprecation, "Of course, you must've thrived these past years."

Melissa replied casually, "Yes, not too shabby! I don't plan on changing

anything."

Marcus' gaze lingered on Melissa, noting her changed appearance and enhanced allure. Abruptly, he sneered. "Are you afraid I'll pester you?"

"Certainly not. I trust someone like Mr. Fowler wouldn't stoop to such levels."

"But what if you're mistaken? What if I simply want you back?"

Marcus paused, and then continued, "You're single, aren't you? Why not stay with me?"

Marcus reached for a cigarette from the nearby box.

Lighting the cigarette, he took a drag. "I'll transfer this apartment to your name," he declared.

Situated in the heart of Duefron, this apartment spanned a vast area and easily boasted a value exceeding one hundred million. Marcus' proposition held undeniable allure for anyone considering its substantial worth.

However, Melissa declined.

Instead, she poured the entire glass of juice over Marcus' face, the sticky liquid trickling down his handsome features and leaving him visibly flustered.

Marcus shot her a glare.

With a cold smile, Melissa retorted, "Mr. Fowler, kindly keep both the money and the house for yourself, and perhaps consider seeking medical advice to ensure you're not afflicted with some form of hypersexual disorder."