

Apocalypse 681

Chapter 681 The Two Family's Feud

Yet, no matter how strained their relationship had become, she had still raised Melody—had cared for her, nurtured her. And seeing her like this, broken and sobbing, shook her to the core.

She knew she had acted impulsively, that she had made a mistake. But at the same time, the sound of Melody's heart-wrenching cries, the girl she had loved and raised for over a decade, made it impossible for her to remain indifferent.

Mrs. Evans tried several times to explain, but no words came out. She opened and closed her mouth repeatedly, yet no sound escaped.

Guilt weighed heavily on her as she glanced at her best friend, Mrs. Winters, whose face was twisted with rage. Then, her eyes shifted to Duke, whose cheeks had flushed red, though he remained regal and composed, as if nothing had happened.

However, the chilling coldness in his eyes was unmistakable, sending a shiver down her spine, making her feel as though she had been plunged into an ice cellar.

"Emma, I know we had a verbal agreement when you became pregnant the last time. Since I only gave birth to a son, and Duke was just the same age as your second son, we agreed that if you had another son, our boys would treat each other as brothers."

"And if you had a daughter, we would betroth them in the hopes that they would marry one day, strengthening the bond between our families. However, my son's opinion matters."

"After all, we made this decision without consulting them—without considering whether they truly wanted to fulfill our wishes. Since my son does not wish to go through with it, I would still treat your daughter as my own, believing that you, as my best friend, understood my stance."

"I truly feel sorry for your daughter, and I am willing to make compromises and offer compensation—but not at the cost of my son's happiness."

"Olivia! What do you take our family for? Do you think you can just go back on your promise whenever you please without properly discussing it with both families?"

"Have you even considered my family in this decision? Do you even respect us?" Mr. Evans stepped in front of his wife protectively.

He knew she had acted impulsively and made mistakes, but he didn't like the way Olivia spoke, as if placing all the blame solely on them.

This wasn't just about Melody anymore—his family's name was at stake. He couldn't stand the thought of the Winters looking down on them, believing they could do as they pleased without consequences.

And so, the misunderstanding between them only deepened. To Mrs. Winters, it seemed like the Evans family was reacting so strongly because they couldn't accept Duke marrying someone else and were looking down on his wife, Kisha—something she strongly disapproved of.

Meanwhile, the Evans family believed the Winters were belittling them by openly rejecting the childhood betrothal agreement.

What the Evans didn't realize was that the Winters were unaware of Kisha's true identity as their long-lost daughter, and from the Evans' perspective, it felt like they were simply being cast aside.

After all, they were no longer considered the second most powerful family in the country—their status and influence had diminished.

Now, they were living under the Winters' protection, residing in their hidden base and relying on their resources, which only made the situation feel even more humiliating.

Even Mr. Evans momentarily forgot that Kisha was his biological daughter, meaning Duke marrying her was still, in a way, fulfilling their original childhood betrothal.

However, with everything that had happened, that detail slipped his mind. Instead, he fixated on Mrs. Winters' words, feeling as though his pride had been wounded by her perceived disrespect.

Perhaps his frustration stemmed not just from the situation at hand but from the deeper reality of living under someone else's roof, stripped of his former influence and power.

He hadn't yet fully adjusted to this new reality, and all the emotions he had been suppressing since the start of the apocalypse came rushing to the surface.

Unfortunately, with Mrs. Winters standing before him, she became the unintended target of his pent-up frustrations.

But Mrs. Winters, despite her gentle and composed demeanor, was not someone who would easily back down when it came to her son. After all, Duke was her only child, and she refused to let him sacrifice his happiness for a promise she had made in the past.

"Edward, I don't mean to disrespect your family or belittle you, but we can't force the children to have feelings for each other. Besides, we're already living in this hellish nightmare—we don't even know if we'll survive tomorrow."

"Why impose such strict expectations instead of allowing them to love freely? I know Melody has liked Duke for a long time, but as Duke has made clear, he only sees her as a sister, just as he sees the Evans brothers as his own."

"You've watched Duke grow up, just as my husband and I have watched your children grow. We care about them deeply, trust me—but this is something I cannot compromise on." Mrs. Winters' voice was firm, her eyes filled with emotion and resolve.

Duke gently held his mother's arm, displeased by her words about not knowing when they might die due to the apocalypse. With his strength, he would never allow his parents to perish so easily.

However, what Duke didn't realize was that Mrs. Winters was deliberately appealing to the Evans' emotions. Though it could be seen as emotional manipulation—perhaps even playing dirty—she had no other choice.

Duke was already with someone else, and he had never led Melody on. He had always been clear about his feelings, making it evident whom he liked and whom he didn't.

And although she claimed that Duke treated Melody like a sister, the reality was that Duke barely acknowledged her existence. To him, she was like air—someone he intentionally ignored.

He knew that if he showed even the slightest kindness, Melody would cling to him obsessively, becoming even more brazen and controlling. Worse, she might even go after any woman who got close to him.

While Melody maintained a facade of kindness and gentleness in front of others, Duke could see the obsessive, almost deranged love hidden in her eyes. Wanting to avoid unnecessary complications, he always made sure to steer clear of her.

So, the Evans couldn't claim that Duke had led them on or acted like a jerk, because even they knew there was never a real relationship between Duke and Melody. Everyone was aware of that fact.

Since that was the case, they had no choice but to accept that Duke simply didn't have feelings for Melody, and it was time to stop forcing the issue.

They remained at a standstill for a long time, with no one speaking. Then, Kisha strode over to Duke and stood beside him, reaching out to gently check his reddened cheek.

She knew that with Duke's high defense, the slap wouldn't have physically hurt him—but Mrs. Evans, on the other hand, was likely feeling the sting in her palm.

And she was. A prickling numbness spread through her hand, a sharp reminder that she had struck Duke with all her strength. The realization only deepened her guilt, she had lashed out at someone who didn't deserve it.