

Chapter 45 Napier's Plans

A gentle smile appeared on Millie's face as she greeted the older gentleman in front of her. "Good evening Mr. Evans. It's me, Millie."

Napier studied Millie after she pulled down her mask. His face showed only a slight trace of surprise though he kept his composure.

Understanding settled in Millie as soon as she saw his reaction.

She walked over to where Napier sat, holding the box of premium coffee beans Charles had arranged for her, and began to unwrap it carefully. "Charles told me this is Blue Mountain Coffee, your favorite. Would you like me to make a cup for you?" she asked.

A simple nod from Napier gave his answer.

Only the gentle sound of Millie preparing the coffee filled the otherwise quiet room for the next few minutes.

Every movement she made seemed unhurried and practiced.

Soon, the rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee filled the air.

When the coffee was ready, Millie poured a cup and offered it to Napier, who accepted it and took a thoughtful sip.

"Very few people can make coffee this well. He must have taught you everything he knew," said Napier as he savored the drink.

Lowering her eyes, Millie busied herself with the coffee pot. "There's no one else he could have passed them to but me. I am his daughter, after all."

Both understood that the "he" in their conversation meant her late father.

That man, once so lively and full of pride, was taken from the world forever on a rainy afternoon.

"You almost had me convinced you would never take your mask off," Napier continued.

A quiet laugh escaped Millie as she met his gaze. "There's no way a small trick like that could fool you, Mr. Evans. Surely you'd already

figured it out," she replied.

She met his eyes without hesitation.

Ever since she received his invitation, Millie knew there was no dodging this meeting.

Even though she and Charles had signed confidentiality agreements and usually took extra care, some secrets simply could not stay hidden if Napier decided to look into them.

On top of it all, Millie donated the tanzanite to tonight's charity auction, and Napier would easily figure things out since the event was hosted by the Evans family.

Millie decided not to keep up any sort of disguise the moment she stepped into Napier's lounge.

Napier wasted no time and asked, "What exactly is going on between you and Charles?"

She responded, "Mr. Evans, could you tell me which part you mean?"

"Every part of it," Napier replied, his tone making the air feel heavier.

No hint of anger showed on Millie's face. She offered a gentle smile and explained herself. "First, there's nothing romantic between Charles and me. Our relationship is a straight-up business where both sides benefit. Also, I never asked Charles to get into a bidding war against Brandon, but he was dragged in anyway."

The moment Millie finished, Napier struck the armrest with his palm, frustration flashing across his face.

Remaining calm, Millie met his eyes and said, "You might want to take care of your hand, Mr. Evans."

His anger still burned. "You know very well how powerful the Watson family is here in Crobert, yet you let Charles get tangled up. Are you planning to pull the Evans family down with you?"

She kept her voice steady as she replied, "You've got the wrong idea, Mr. Evans. That was never my goal."

After realizing Millie wasn't shaken by his display, Napier relaxed and let the tough act fall away. "The Evans family doesn't need to meddle in your problems with Brandon. I have no desire to make an enemy of him."

Her smile returned as soon as he finished.

"You always know how to lighten the mood, Mr. Evans," she said, letting the subject drop there.

His eyes drilled into her, sharp and full of challenge.

Everything Napier built for the Evans Group had not come without a fight. The old hint of a bandit's grit lingered in him from his early years.

It took the tragic loss of his eldest son at sea to bring out a little restraint.

Still, the cold, unyielding part of him had never truly faded.

Letting his three grandsons battle among themselves proved just how cutthroat he remained.

Backing down just because Brandon's name was mentioned would never fit his nature.

A short pause hung in the air before Napier finally asked, "What exactly are you getting at?"

Millie spoke gently. "You should actually be pleased, Mr. Evans, that someone finally has the nerve to stand up to the Watson Group."

A bright smile lit up her face. "Mr. Evans, you encourage your grandsons to compete so the family stays strong. If you back down just because Brandon is involved, it's only a matter of time before the Evans family loses its edge. Besides, the Evans Group is not so easily swayed. I'm sure you've already measured the risks and had them under control."

A squint narrowed Napier's gaze as he studied Millie, sizing her up again.

There was something in her that reminded him of his proud eldest son.

Napier indeed had his own plans—plans that ran deeper than she realized, and his strategies were much harsher than she could imagine.

The Watson family might seem unstoppable, but the Evans family wouldn't be toppled so easily. If Brandon decided to press the issue, Napier was fully prepared to sacrifice Charles and offer an apology. He could always say he never knew Serena's true identity was Millie.

If Charles proved himself and took the upper hand, Napier would gladly let him guide the Evans Group to new heights.

Winning this gamble would send the Evans Group even higher.

Losing, however, meant letting Charles take the fall and leaving him to face Brandon alone.

He was ready for that possibility and had already steeled himself to lose a grandson if needed.

Light poured across the room, and the rich scent of coffee gave the space a touch of elegance.

A few moments passed before Millie spoke again. "So, Mr. Evans, does this mean I've passed whatever test you set for me?"

Napier cast a look at Millie, a small chuckle escaping him. "I never really understood why you stayed with Brandon for as long as you did."

A laugh slipped from Millie. "Well, I've walked away now."

Napier's years of experience meant he had already seen through the nature of Millie's relationship with Brandon.

Millie stood her ground, waiting for what Napier would say next, refusing to be brushed aside.

A quiet standoff hung in the air, neither one willing to show their hand.

It took a while, but Napier finally spoke up. "The only thing I'll promise is not to interfere in the affairs between my three grandsons. The rest will play out as they are. Like you said, I'm letting them battle it out, and we'll see who comes out on top."

A genuine smile touched Millie's lips.

Her visit today had accomplished what she set out to do.

Charles once explained that each of the three Evans brothers managed their own affairs, and that Oakley only managed to stir up trouble this time because he poisoned Napier's mind against Charles.

Napier's opinion shaped the actions of everyone else, so his stance mattered most.

Now that he had promised to stay out of it, Charles finally had a clear path forward.

That assurance was all Millie needed.

She exchanged a few last polite words with Napier and then reached for her mask.

Just as she was about to leave, Napier's voice came from behind her. "It's a shame he left us so soon."

Millie held onto the doorframe, every instinct urging her to turn around and demand answers from Napier about the past.

However, logic and self-control stopped her from acting on impulse.

She had already used up all her strength today, keeping up appearances, pretending confidence, and hiding her true thoughts. Asking questions about her father's death would have to wait for another day.

Letting go of the frame, Millie stepped outside, offered Napier a respectful bow, and gently shut the door before her.

"How did things turn out?" Charles stood waiting, his nerves stretched thin.

Soundproof walls made sure not a single word reached him, even with his ear pressed against the door.

With Charles' two brothers looking on, Millie kept her face unreadable and replied, "Let's go back."

She set off down the stairs, leading the way.

At the same time, Charles couldn't keep his frustration in and started to argue with Oakley, who had been provoking him all along.

Choosing not to get involved, Millie made her way quietly down the steps.

Just as she turned into a hallway, someone stepped in front of her.

When she lifted her gaze, Millie saw a familiar face.

A member of the Elliott family stood in her way.

In Crobert, the Watson Group, Evans Group, and Elliott Group each controlled different corners of the city's industries.

The Elliott Group owned the largest share of the jewelry and gemstone trade in town.

Her tanzanite stone had come straight from one of their jewelry boutiques.

"Serena?" The person looked her over, an amused spark in their eyes.

Calm as ever, Millie offered a greeting "Mr. Jayceon Elliott."

A look of surprise flickered across Jayceon's face. "You know who I am?"

Millie met his eyes and answered, "Your reputation precedes you. It would be impossible not to recognize you."

Jayceon paused for a moment, considered her words, and quickly brushed it aside as nothing remarkable.

"Tell me, why were you and Vivian both after that tanzanite stone?" Jayceon leaned closer, searching her face. "Are you willing to share the real reason?"

Millie answered him with a quiet smile, choosing to remain silent.

"I did some digging to find out why that stone caused so much buzz, and had my people check into it. Do you want to hear what they discovered?"

Her gaze stayed forward, her expression unreadable as she kept her silence.

Jayceon only grinned "Maybe you're not curious, but I'll say it anyway. The last owner of that stone was Millie, Brandon's wife."

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