Mistaking A Magnate For A Male Escort Chapter 2293 - 2297

Chapter 2293 Reconciliation

Sean uttered evasively, "Ms. Felch, don't worry. We will save Mr. Lincoln. You should take care of yourself." "Where's Danrique? Let him answer the phone."

Francesca was anxious. She had been detained in the dungeon for a long time, so she knew well the brutal torment one would suffer in there. Back then, the first lady didn't dare to lay a finger on her, but the same couldn't be said for Lincoln.

"Mr. Lindberg is talking to the president on the phone." Sean covered the speaker with his hand and whispered, "He's gravely injured and is very weak at the moment. He will return your call after he finishes his conversation with the president."

Hearing that, Francesca couldn't bring herself to probe further. She had no choice but to say, "Okay. I'll wait for him to contact me."

After pausing briefly, she added, "Sean, Ms. Layla is dead. Mr. Lincoln is the only relative I have left. I cannot allow anything bad to befall him."

"I know, Ms. Felch," Sean replied politely.

After hanging up the call, he looked inside through the door to the study room that was left ajar. He couldn't help but sigh at the sight of Danrique overexerting his frail body to continue talking on the phone with the president.

Just as William had mentioned, the circumstances had been advantageous to them initially.

Danrique had managed to turn the tables. Unfortunately, Lincoln was captured by the president. Not only did that allow the president to garner sympathy, but the president also gained a trump card.

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Moreover, Gordon had been shot while rescuing Lincoln and was now lying in the hospital.

The present situation had become unfavorable to them.

Sean's subordinate hurried over and uttered in a hushed tone, "Mr. Lindberg's wound is bleeding."

Sean hastily returned to the study room.

"Aren't you tired of spouting so much nonsense with your indirect manner of speech?"

Danrique leaned against the backseat as he talked on the phone. Despite his enfeebled state, he still carried himself in the same authoritative manner.

Sean noticed blood coming out of the wound on Danrique's shoulder. He reckoned it was because Danrique had punched the tabletop when he grew agitated earlier.

Sean immediately took out the medical kit to stop his bleeding.

However, he didn't dare to approach when he saw Danrique furrow his brow.

"Just be straightforward with your request."

Danrique had lost his patience to beat about the bush with the president. This cunning man merely took a shot below his collarbone. The bullet didn't even come close to his heart, yet he announced to the public that he was in critical condition and was undergoing emergency medical treatment.

The president had stirred the citizens into thinking he was distressed with the news about his wife and daughter being kidnapped and his gunshot wound.

He had seized that opportunity to declare to the public how Danrique, the greedy and ruthless man, had been trying to secure the presidency for himself by causing so much trouble.

Danrique thought the president couldn't be more hypocritical and shameless.

"Danrique, to be honest, there isn't a second person as talented as you in Erihal. Losing you will not only be a loss to the nation but also to me. Why is there a need for us to fight

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against one another? Why don't we restore the harmony between us? You'll continue to manage Lindberg Corporation while I resume my position as president. Isn't this a wonderful outcome for both of us?" the president chirped, obviously hoping for a reconciliation.

He was well aware that holding Lincoln hostage was insufficient to force Danrique to yield, but there might be a chance for them to make peace.

"You brought about so much trouble, yet you're asking for a settlement now?" Danrique sneered. "Why should I agree with this?"

"I know you're feeling resentful, so I'm open to considering all the conditions you have in mind. Everything can be discussed as long as we can put this conflict behind us." The president spoke in a friendly tone.

He knew Danrique still had the high ground even though he had seized Lincoln.

Lincoln's life wasn't a bargaining chip worthy of convincing Danrique to give up the battle.

After all, he and his wife had previously gone overboard with their actions.

A vengeful person like Danrique would never let them off the hook so easily.

"I don't mind a reconciliation, but you'll need to admit your crimes publicly, issue an apology, and step down as the president to face legal punishments. Otherwise, you can forget it!" Danrique uttered unceremoniously.

"Danrique, are you not giving me any room for negotiation?" The president's face darkened instantaneously. "I've investigated Mr. Lincoln's identity and figured out he's your fiancée's godfather. Now that her godmother is dead, do you think your adorable fiancée will ever forgive you if something bad happens to Mr. Lincoln as well?"

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Chapter 2294 Let Himself Get Caught

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"I don't care about her forgiveness. Killing you is more important to me!" Danrique countered mercilessly. "You—" Lincoln was rendered speechless. "It seems that you don't even care if Mr. Lincoln lives or dies."

"Why should I care if someone unrelated to me dies? I can't believe you think I will compromise for his sake. What a joke!"

"You—" After being momentarily stumped, the president swiftly continued to provoke him, "Danrique, you are indeed cold-blooded!"

Danrique replied disdainfully, "Thank you for the compliment. Still, I am nothing compared to you in terms of being hard-hearted. Mr. Lincoln is just someone with no relation to me. On the other hand, you are even capable of disregarding your wife's and daughter's lives. You are the true epitome of ruthlessness."

"Capturing them won't do you any good since they don't know a thing," the president said indifferently.

Danrique seized that opportunity to make a suggestion. "Let me give you a chance. I'll let go of your wife and daughter in exchange for Mr. Lincoln. This should be a very worthwhile deal for you."

Danrique had spoken so much earlier for the sole reason of achieving that goal.

"It looks like you still care after all." The president smiled. "Two people in exchange for one is indeed a good deal. However, I refuse!"

"You-"

"I understand now." The president sounded smug. "You still care about Francesca. You're willing to give up marrying my daughter to become the president's son-in-law and collaborating with me through this arranged marriage because of her. In that case, you will continue to give up more things for her sake. You're such a loyal young man. This is so touching. Consider my offer well. As long as you're willing to reconcile, I'll let go of Mr. Lincoln at once!"

With that, the president hung up the call. The corner of his lips curled into a wicked smile. At that moment, he understood Lincoln's value as a trump card.

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"Was the phone conversation earlier recorded?"

"Yes, Mr. President."

"Trim out the few sentences Danrique said just now, and think of a way to send the modified recording to Francesca."

"Understood!"

"The audacity!" Danrique hurled the phone in anger.

Sean quickly comforted him, "Calm down, Mr. Lindberg. Your wound has ruptured. Let me help you apply the medication. You need to stop moving."

"Go away!" Danrique was livid. "That fool, Gordon, has repeatedly failed me in carrying out his duty. Tell him to come here immediately to receive his punishment!"

"Gordon was shot. He's at the hospital right now," Sean answered in a low voice.

Danrique was instantaneously stunned. After the president was shot, the situation spiraled out of control. He had ordered Gordon to bring Lincoln back at once, yet the latter had still been taken away by the president's men.

Overwhelmed by rage, Danrique had bellowed and begun thinking of ways to handle the predicament. He didn't know Gordon had also suffered a gunshot wound while trying to rescue Lincoln.

"Is he all right?" Danrique asked in a hurry.

"He's not in any mortal danger, but his internal organ is damaged." Sean's voice sounded a little hoarse. "We're short-staffed at that moment, so I've asked Lupine to bring two men with her to come back and help out."

Danrique did not respond. No matter how formidable he might be, he still wasn't a match for the president's armed forces.

If this impasse drags on, I'll continue losing my subordinates and end up short-handed. Sooner or later, I will be at a disadvantage.

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"Mr. Lindberg, let me treat your wound first." Sean carefully tended to Danrique's injury as he consoled, "The president is playing mind games with you right now. Even if he disregards his wife and daughter's survival, he'll need to be wary of his wife divulging his secrets. You did the right thing by pretending not to care about Mr. Lincoln just now. If the president fails to hold out against the pressure ultimately, he will use Mr. Lincoln to trade for his wife and daughter."

"Yes. This is a time to test out which of us is more heartless."

Sean said thoughtfully, "Actually, I can't shake off the feeling that Mr. Lincoln deliberately let himself get caught."

"What do you mean by that?" Danrique promptly asked.

"Gordon's subordinates who went with him earlier mentioned they could've saved Mr. Lincoln initially, but he shoved them away. Then, he picked up a gun again and rushed toward the president. That was why he got caught."

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Chapter 2295 No Will To Live

A conflicted expression crossed Danrique's face. He had heard Francesca mention that although Lincoln and Layla liked to fight like cat and dog, they had actually gone through life-and-death situations together since they were young. They had shared weal and woe and had been very close.

After Layla's passing, Lincoln had no will to live either. At the time, he probably already knew that the president didn't get killed by that gunshot and was worried he would not get another chance after he left. Hence, he was willing to rush over and fire another shot even though it meant risking his life.

"Perhaps he had already considered all the possibilities before going and had no intention of making it out alive," Sean speculated.

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Danrique frowned. "I guess so."

"Actually, things couldn't be simpler. I've discovered that Mr. Lincoln is locked up in the same dungeon where Ms. Felch was previously imprisoned. I can bribe the guard responsible for keeping watch. Then we can talk to Mr. Lincoln over the phone and find out just what's going on," Sean suggested.

Hearing that, Danrique fell silent.

"You think it's a bad idea?" Sean asked softly.

"There's no need to ask. Since Mr. Lincoln dared to rush into the International Conference Center to assassinate the president, he must've prepared himself to meet his end. Perhaps it's just as you said. He had no intention of living..."

Danrique looked grave as he continued, "However, whether or not he wants to live is one matter. As for whether I rescue him or not, that's an entirely different matter."

"That's true."

Realization dawned on Sean. Danrique did not only care about Lincoln's fate but also Francesca's feelings.

After all, the whole situation stemmed from Danrique, and he was already overwhelmed with guilt for involving Layla. If something happened to Lincoln, Francesca would probably never forgive him.

"Oh, I nearly forgot," Sean said, slapping his palm against his forehead. "Ms. Felch called just now to ask about Mr. Lincoln's condition. I told her you were on the phone and would get back to her later."

With that, he had someone go and get a new phone, then inserted Danrique's SIM card into it.

Danrique had smashed his phone earlier.

He stared at the new phone and motioned for the subordinate to take it away.

At this time, I genuinely have no idea how I should face her.

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Meanwhile, Francesca had been waiting for Danrique's call after returning home with no luck.

She was on pins and needles. She took Anthony's phone and was thinking of calling Danrique when a message from Erihal suddenly came in.

She checked the message curiously, only to find it was an audio recording.

"Danrique, are you not giving me any room for negotiation? I've investigated Mr. Lincoln's identity and figured out he's your fiancée's godfather. Now that her godmother is dead, do you think your adorable fiancée will ever forgive you if something bad happens to Mr. Lincoln as well?"

"I don't care about her forgiveness. Killing you is more important to me!"

"It seems that you don't even care if Mr. Lincoln lives or dies."

"Why should I care if someone unrelated to me dies? I can't believe you think I will compromise for his sake. What a joke!"

"Danrique, you are indeed cold-blooded!"

Those words struck Francesca like a bolt of lightning. She had fully expected that Danrique would do everything to save Lincoln and was even eagerly waiting for his call.

I certainly never thought it'd end up like this. What does a person's life mean to him? And what do I mean to him? Does nothing matter to him apart from his power and status?

Anthony was also enraged after hearing the recording. "How deplorable of Danrique! How could he say such things? Is he really not going to rescue Mr. Lincoln?"

Francesca did not respond. She gripped the phone while trying her hardest to compose herself.

Suddenly, Anthony thought of a crucial question. "Wait a minute. Who sent the message? Danrique and the president should be the only ones who know about the conversation between them."

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Chapter 2296 It Is War

The question jolted Francesca. Then, she muttered under her breath, "There's no way Danrique would've sent it. It must be the president's doing." "He actually knows my number and even knows that you're with me?" Anthony was stunned.

"The second you and Mr. Lincoln stepped into Xendale, you had no way of escaping his radar." Suddenly, something seemed to click in Francesca's mind. "He's probably also aware I returned to S Nation with you. In that case, does that mean he has long known that Mr. Lincoln wanted to find him and seek revenge? Could he have deliberately set up that press conference to lure Mr. Lincoln into his trap?"

That made Anthony's hair stand on end. "That's so scary. Everything about the political world is terrifying. It feels as though others are monitoring my every move. There's a motive behind everything those people do and say."

Francesca cradled her head in her hands. "Indeed. I must remain calm and composed. I have to. I can no longer pay heed to anyone's provocations at this time."

She was thoroughly racked with guilt. Back then, I was too trusting of the president's wife, thus allowing others to take advantage of it. I was framed and thrown into jail, dragging Ms. Layla and Sloan into the mess and causing their deaths. One should learn from one's mistakes. I can't act so rashly again.

"Yes, you're absolutely right," Anthony said while nodding emphatically. "Ms. Layla and Mr. Lincoln approved of Danrique's character, which means he's not a bad person. It's just that the situation he's in and his status will attract danger to those around him."

"I suppose so," Francesca murmured, struggling to gather herself.

Just as her thoughts were running wild, William called again. Francesca told him about the recording and discussed rescuing Lincoln.

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Upon hearing that, William immediately said, "It has to be a plot by the president. You mustn't fall for it. Recordings can be edited, and it's easy to take things out of context. Besides, even if Danrique did say those things, it could be a form of strategy. After all, one can't falter when negotiating with one's rival. He can't possibly beg for the president to release him, right?"

"What you say does make sense," Francesca replied, digesting his words. "But what do we do now? Is there any other way to rescue Mr. Lincoln?"

"I'm afraid not. The only way is to wait," William responded.

Francesca grew anxious. "How long do we need to wait? Ms. Layla is dead because of me. I can't let anything happen to Mr. Lincoln. Forget it. I'll come up with a rescue plan on my own."

"Don't do anything reckless. Now is not the time to be rash," William quickly advised. "Ms. Layla and Sloan were too impulsive, which led to their tragic end. Had they calmed down and waited for a while, Gordon would've brought people to rescue you. Since Gordon and the others are familiar with the layout and traps of the underground prison, it's possible to avoid any mishaps. I know you won't like to hear this, but I still have to say it. You may possess many incredible skills, but you're still no match for the military. The current situation is unfavorable for Danrique. The president has gained the upper hand. If the president wins this battle and Danrique loses, not only will Mr. Lincoln be in danger, but also you, Anthony, and even the orphans. I'm not trying to be a scaremonger. All this isn't an exaggeration. You have to understand that the moment something happens to Danrique, the president will wipe out everyone who has anything to do with him. He'll spare no one, including Mdm. Norah and the other servants. If that happens, the Lindbergs' blood will spill like a river, and neither you nor your family and friends will have any chance of surviving."

Francesca gulped, shocked by his dark words.

I did think about what would happen if Danrique lost, but I definitely didn't anticipate that things would become so bad and cruel.

William's warning made her realize that she had been too naïve.

"On the surface, it appears as though both sides are merely engaging in a tussle over public opinion and power. In truth, it's war!"

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Chapter 2297 The Greater Good

William turned serious. "War is brutal and cruel. The ones who lose not only risk their own life but the lives of their family and loved ones. Why else do you think Donald made peace with you at the most crucial moment? It's because he was well aware of this principle!"

After a brief pause, he continued, "I know Ms. Layla's death is devastating to you, but you have to understand that one person's death is insignificant in the big picture. Otherwise, more people will die..."

"So what you're saying is"—Francesca finally understood—"Danrique should sacrifice Mr. Lincoln for the greater good?"

"I'm sorry. I know you must be incredibly upset with what I've just said, but that's how reality works." William's tone became gentle. "At a time like this, you can't do anything else anymore. The best thing that you can do is to stay in S Nation to recuperate and wait for more news."

"I understand."

Not knowing what else to say, Francesca could only lower her head dejectedly.

"Francesca, you must listen to me this time. Do not be rash. Otherwise, you could really make things worse," William reminded. "I won't disturb you any longer. Good night and rest well!"

Francesca's grip tightened around the phone in her hand. She was feeling so lost.

"Francesca, what Prince William said makes sense," Anthony said softly. "Stop thinking too much about it. You should be focusing on resting and recovering."

"Okay."

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Without saying another word, Francesca headed into her room with her phone in her hand.

As she passed by Layla and Lincoln's room, the memory of the three of them being a loving family flooded back into her mind. She felt a pang of sadness in her heart. If I hadn't met Danrique, if we hadn't ended up together, maybe all of this wouldn't have happened. Ms. Layla and Mr. Lincoln might still be here...

Danrique could feel his ears burning then. He wondered if Francesca was cursing him.

But as he thought about it, he was willing to be cursed by her if it meant that she would feel better after doing so.

Lounging on the sofa, he turned his gaze toward the snow outside as he yearned for Francesca.

He had no idea how long the war would last or when it would end.

All he knew was that he missed her deeply and wanted to see her as soon as possible.

Time passed quickly as the couple continued to yearn for each other.

Seven days flew by in the blink of an eye.

Francesca had already recovered. Every day, she would check her phone, waiting for Danrique to call. But to her disappointment, he never did.

On the other hand, William would call her every day, comforting her and updating her about the situation.

As of then, Danrique and the president were at a standstill, waiting for the other to break from the tension.

Dirt on the president was still spiraling around, but for the past few days, the discussion and rumors seemed to have settled temporarily ever since the president got shot.

People started to share the stories about all the past charities that the president was involved in on the internet, painting him as a good person.

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Coupled with the photos of him getting shot and fighting for his life in the hospital, the president had gained a huge surge of sympathy from the public.

Either way, Lincoln's shot had become a turning point for the president.

Moreover, the president's council members were intelligent. The first lady had openly admitted her wrongdoings. Combined with the fact that Francesca had immense support from the Chanaean doctors, the first lady was deemed guilty. There was no way for her to clear her name.

The council members had hired ghostwriters to initiate a rumor saying that the first lady's actions were all her own and that the president had nothing to do with it.

They even pushed the president's guilt of bribery onto the first lady. In other words, the president was cleared of any guilt. All of the detestable actions were committed by the first lady, and they had nothing to do with the president.

The president had also published a video online saying that he had been so focused on work for the past few years as a good president that he had neglected his wife and daughter, causing his wife to go astray and commit so many wrongdoings as well as his daughter's mental illness.

In the video, he was visibly pained and ridden with regret.

At the same time, he showed the world that he was a good and selfless president, sacrificing his family for the sake of his country and responsibility.