

After Prison 31

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Diane still had not taken too kindly to Severin, but at the thought of her daughter and the sight of Severin's sincere expression earlier, she eventually gave in and allowed him to hold her hand. As they reached the door to her home, she took out her key and opened it. Inside, Selene was sitting quietly on an old sofa while watching cartoons.

"Mom! Is Dad back?" Selene immediately ran over when she heard her mother open the door.

Severin walked in, and when he gazed upon the four-year-old girl in front of him, the strong connection he felt from their blood relationship made his heart skip a beat.

"Mom...this man...is my dad?" Selene held Diane's hand and asked timidly. Severin was a stranger, after all, and it was only natural for her to feel wary of him.

Diane frowned slightly, but a smile soon unfurled across her face. She squatted down, caressed Selene's face, and nodded. "That's right, Selene. He's your father. Weren't you looking forward to his return? Well, here he is!"

"I'm so happy! I finally have a dad now!" Selene was ecstatic and jumped for joy.

"Dad!" she called out, running toward Severin.

In all the years that Severin was in prison, he was able to make even the most vicious of people submit to him. His heart had been tempered by those experiences, or so he believed. Yet when the little girl in front of him stammered as she called out to him, it managed to touch the depths of his heart ever so slightly!

"Yes, it's me, Selene!" Severin squatted down and hugged his daughter in his arms. Even his eyes were tinged with scarlet.

Selene smiled, tilted her cute little head back. "Dad! Mom said you went away to earn loads and loads of money! Are you rich now?"

Severin looked at the childlike naivete in her eyes and could not help but smile dotingly. He touched her round face and said, "I am. I've made a lot of money so none of us have to suffer anymore!"

"Can you buy me a lot of toys then?" Selene looked at Severin innocently.

"Of course! Let's buy them after we get something to eat!" Severin agreed right away. The closeness he felt toward someone who was his flesh and blood was such a novel feeling for him, and his affection for Selene grew with every glance he took at her.

"Yay! Did you hear that, Mom? Dad earned a lot of money, so he can buy me toys!"

Selene ran up happily to Diane and said, "Mom, you don't need to go to work anymore now that Dad has so much money! You'll spend more time with me now, won't you?"

Diane opened her mouth to answer but did not know what sort of response would be best. All she could think was, 'How are we going to survive in the future if I don't work?'

Severin smiled. "That's right, Mom won't have to go to work anymore, and I can spend more time with my precious daughter too!" He went over, carried Selene up, and said to Diane, "Come on, let's go get lunch! The car is still waiting below!"

Diane could only nod her head and smiled softly. "Okay."

"We're going out to eat? What about the cake, Mom?" Selene looked at the little cake on the table and could not help but lick her lips in anticipation.

Severin turned around and said to Diane, "Let's bring the cake."

Diane knew that Selene had been looking forward to eating cake with her parents for a long time, so she nodded and took that little cake as well.

It was Selene's first time in a luxury car, and she asked Severin, "Is this our car, Dad?"

Severin shook his head. "No, but we'll have our own soon! We'll go buy one some other day!"

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"Enough with those empty promises!" Diane glared at Severin and continued, "Don't just say yes to everything she asks for, or else she'll keep talking about it until we get it!"

"I'm not making empty promises." Severin smiled. "Relax. I've got money!"

"Ugh, fine, whatever!" Diane rolled her eyes at Severin again. From her point of view, Severin could only have been speaking about must be the money that he got back from the Orwells.

Soon, the two of them returned to the hotel with Selene and were welcomed like esteemed guests to a luxurious private room. By then, the food that Henry and Charmaine ordered had already been served.

"This is too much food, Mister Henry!" Severin exclaimed with a smile when he looked at the table full of food in front of him.

"Haha, everything they have on the menu is delicious, so I figured that I might as well let you try them all. Besides, I don't know what kind of food you folks like, so it wouldn't hurt to order a little extra!" Henry chuckled.

"Miss Diane, is the daughter you had with Severin? She's quite the cutie." Charmaine looked at Selene and said with a faint smile.

Diane nodded. "Yes. Her name is Selene, and she's just a little over four years old!"

"Come now, everyone. Take your seat and dig in! We wouldn't want the food to go cold now, would we?" Henry beckoned them with a smile.

"To be honest, I was planning to celebrate Selene's birthday today, and I even bought a cake for her. She's been looking forward to eating cake with her father on the day he returns." Diane awkwardly took out the cheap cake that she bought and put it on the table.

“Is that so? Since it’s Selene’s birthday today, it wouldn’t be very nice of me not to give her a present!” Henry said with a smile.

Diane was flattered to hear that, but she immediately explained in embarrassment, “Mister Henry, her birthday was some time ago, but I forgot to celebrate it with her because I’ve been too busy. She’s been asking for cake ever since, and it just so happens that I’ve decided to make it up to her today. Having you treat us to a meal is already more than we could ask for!”

“Haha, that’s so adorable of her. Well, birthday or not, I think a gift is in order anyway!”

Henry laughed again and took out a key, which he put in front of Diane. “I have a house at Dragon Lake that’s been left unoccupied for a long time. It’s a very quiet place, one that would be perfect for Severin’s parents to spend their old age in!”

Diane glanced at the key and handed it back at once. “Mister Henry, we can’t possibly. This is priceless!”

Diane knew very well that it was the key to a villa at Dragon Lake Vista. It was one of the most sought-after residential areas, no doubt because it was built on the mountainside and the scenery was simply breathtaking.

Not even the Shanahans were able to secure one, though it was not so much a question of whether the Shanahans could afford it as it was the limited number of villas. The Shanahans were just a run-of-the-mill wealthy family, and while they did lack the financial ability to buy it when the units were first put on the market, it was the upper-class families’ reluctance to sell that formed a stumbling block for the Shanahans by the time they were able to afford a villa there.

Henry, however, pushed the key back to Diane again and said earnestly, “It was Severin who saved my life, and I insist that this villa be given to you. I know that Severin won’t accept money because it’s a little crass, so I figured I could just give him this villa!”

Severin pondered over it for a moment. It was far from ideal for his parents to live in that leaky old house, and the same goes for the shabby place that his wife rented to stay with their daughter. Furthermore, it would be such a waste of time to go through the process of finding and buying a house by himself.

“But…”

Diane frowned and glanced at Severin, signaling for him to help her out.

Severin smiled, took the key, and placed it in his pocket. “In that case, I am very grateful to you, Mister Henry! No gift can be bigger than this!”

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Diane’s red lips parted open slightly and her face was that of utter bewilderment. She originally wanted Severin to refuse Henry’s offer because it was only due to Severin that she was able to sit there and have lunch with Henry that day. It did not cross her mind that Severin would just put the key into his pocket.

“Glad to hear that!” When he saw that Severin had finally accepted the gift, Henry smiled and quickly said to Selene, “Selene, I’d like to eat some cake too. Can I have a slice?”

“Okay!” Selene smiled.

Diane immediately unboxed the cake and had Selene cut it into several pieces to share with everyone.

“You’re not just cute! You’re a good girl too!” Charmaine could not help but pat Selene’s head.

“Have some cake!” Selene smiled, then ran back to her seat.

“All right, let’s have our cake!” Henry nodded with a smile. After taking a bite of the cake, he seemed to have been overcome with emotion. “You know, it’s been so long since I’ve eaten cake. The food at my birthday celebrations are all big main courses, and oddly enough, we rarely eat cakes anymore!”

“You should have some more then!” Charmaine chuckled.

“Haha!” Henry laughed too.

“Here’s to you, Severin.” Henry then raised his wine glass and said, “I’d probably be six feet under without your help that day!”

Diane raised her wine glass too, but she was still puzzled over the whole ‘save my life’ thing. “By the way, Mister Henry, when did our Severin save your life? He just ‘came back’, didn’t he? Did you know each other before?”

That was when Charmaine explained the incident. “Mister Severin is a prodigious doctor. Even the specialists at the hospital said that he’s incredible!”

“Hehe.” Severin shrugged. “It was nothing!”

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Severin smiled and clinked glasses with them before drinking his glass of red wine.

The Shanahans had just returned home by then. As soon as they got out of the car, Catherine asked Felicia, “Just how much do you know about Severin? How could he rub shoulders with someone like Henry? Henry was being so respectful to him too, and judging from that attitude, he probably holds Severin in very high regard!”

Felicia suddenly smiled awkwardly. “We have no idea either. Diane refused to tell anyone who Selene’s father was, and we didn’t even know that he was the same person who offended Easton five years ago. It was only today that we found out that Selene’s father is an ex-convict!”

The old lady frowned, looked at Felicia and William. “You’re well aware that the rules are always used against those who are powerless. Since Severin was imprisoned back then, we can be sure that he used to be an ordinary person with neither money nor power. However, having Henry’s protection right now means that there is more to Severin than it appears on the surface. There must be something special about him!”

William seemed to feel that his mother was trying to imply something, so he asked, “What do you mean?”

Catherine pondered for a moment. "The past was the past. It's been so many years since then. I think you should let Diane and her family move back here. What are three extra mouths to feed? We can still afford to expenses to take care of them."

William was overjoyed to hear that and immediately sought to confirm what Catherine just said. "Do I understand you correctly, Mom? Are we letting bygones be bygones? Does this mean you're fine with Diane, Selene, and Severin moving back here to stay with us in our villa?"

The old lady's face sank. "Have I not made myself clear enough?"

"Why would you do that, Grandma?" Diane's elder cousin brother, Stanley, immediately expressed his unhappiness when the old lady offered to have Diane's family move back. "Diane brought shame to the Shanahans. and her one-night stand is an ex-convict. Won't it be a slap in our faces if we just let them move back here? You said it yourself back then that she will forever be barred from stepping foot in our home if she gave birth to the b*stard she was carrying."

His words brought a frown to the old lady. "I only said that in a moment of anger to persuade her into getting an abortion. Her child has grown older, and that incident was all in the past. As much as I don't want us to face all that shame, the fact is that we already have. What am I supposed to do? Shove the child back into the mother's womb? Severin might be more capable than we think. We'll let them move back with us, and then bit by bit we'll try to get him to open up about his relationship with Henry and why Henry would invite him to a meal!"

William loved his daughter dearly too, but he did not dare to go against his mother's decision to drive Diane out. That, coupled with Felicia's temper, deterred him from visiting Diane and Selene. Even so, he did visit them secretly a few times in private and even gave Diane some money.

He was very happy to hear that his mother was planning to welcome Diane's family back. "Okay.

That's a wise choice, Mom! Diane suffered a lot in the past few years, and I'm sure she knows that she is wrong!"

Felicia, however, chimed in from one side and said with a cold expression, "I can hardly believe that she'll know what she had done wrong. If she did, she wouldn't continue to be with Severin!" At that point, she stepped forward and persuaded the old lady, "Edward's side contacted us again. him. and said that he'd give us a dowry of one-and-a-half-million dollars if Diane is willing to marry It's obvious that he still can't get over Diane, and that's what you called true love!"

"Is that so?" Stanley, who was afraid that Diane would one day vie with him for the position of heir to the Shanahans' assets, immediately agreed. "That's a good thing! We must bring Diane and Edward together. The Horsfields are a second-tier upper-class family, and they're much more powerful than we are. It would only be beneficial for our own family's prospects if Diane marries them!"

Stanley, however, did not expect that Catherine would be a little displeased. "Have you forgotten. that the situation Diane is in today is precisely because we forced her to marry Edward five years ago? She ran to some bar in a fit of anger, got drunk, and slept with Severin. Since she would rather sleep with a

random man than marry Edward, what makes you think anyone can persuade her to marry Edward now?"

Her stern telling-off left Stanley with no choice but to shut his mouth. He was well aware of Diane's character, and knowing how stubborn she was, there was no way they could persuade her now, when Severin had returned, since their efforts all those years ago proved futile as well. To him, she was nothing more than a blockhead.

Be that as it may, Felicia still did not give up and could not help but say, "If you think about it, Diane used to be so stubborn because she was pampered young lady. Now that she suffered for five years and experienced the harsh realities of life, I believe she might be inclined to agree if I try to persuade her!"

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Catherine thought about what Felicia said and eventually replied, "A dowry of one-and-a-half million dollars is nothing. It's not like we lack that kind of money. What's more important is building a relationship with the Horsfields. It would indeed be good if Diane marries into their family!"

"Yes! Exactly!" Felicia's eyes lit up. For the record, after Diane was kicked out of the Shanahan home, the money in Diane's bank card was all taken back by the Shanahans.

Though Felicia, William, and Megan were still living with the Shanahans, they had been sidelined by Stanley.

William was never a capable person to begin with, so he could only work in the company's warehouse. The salary was not very high to begin with, but Stanley slashed his salary and even came up with all sorts of reasons to deduct it even further. In the end, his pay was peanuts.

Felicia did not work, so she spent her free time playing bridge with her friends.

Megan, on the other hand, graduated from university only recently and had yet to find a suitable job. Besides, there had been no shortage of money when Diane was still the company's general manager. Life was good for Megan, so it follows that she would most certainly look down on normal jobs.

Without Diane's income, their family's life became difficult overnight. Stanley even took the car that the company provided to them. It was frustrating to constantly be pushed around by everyone.

The potential million dollar dowry that Felicia was eyeing would make their family's life a whole lot better.

That being said, the Shanahans did give them some money every month for their living expenses, but those few hundred dollars that they received were far from sufficient for Felicia and Megan. They were used to the high life, and a measly couple of hundred was barely enough for them to purchase some better handbags.

Back when Diane was the general manager, they received more than 10,000 dollars a month, and Diane's high monthly salary reached tens of thousands too. When Diane was chased out of the home, their bank cards were frozen and all that money was taken back by the company. Felicia and Megan's

life took a a hundred and eighty degree turn overnight. For those reasons, Felicia was very eager to marry off Diane to Edward.

Alas, she was taken aback by the old lady's subsequent remark.

"I heard that Edward's a terrible person. He's a womanizer who always goes out frolicking with women even though he already has a wife! Since we're still unsure of Severin's relationship with Henry, I still think it's best to persuade Severin and Diane to come back here and live with us!"

Felicia became anxious when she heard that and immediately protested, "But all Henry did was invite Severin to a meal. Just how good can their relationship be? Let's not forget that Severin is an ex-convict. What sort of benefits could we expect to get from him?"

Catherine's face soured and she shot back, "Then why, pray tell, did Henry invite Severin instead of us?"

Felicia opened her mouth to refute, but there was nothing she could say.

At one side, George frowned as a sudden thought came to mind. "Mom, are you considering using Severin's relationship with Henry to help us secure the project at Liberty City?"

The old lady nodded. "Liberty City is a commercial project that the Longhorn family set up and poured a lot of money into. Plenty of upper-class families and wealthy businessmen are targeting this project. If we manage to enter into this Liberty City project and secure a spot there, the long-term profit would be more than just several million... We stand to earn more than tens of millions!"

There was a hint of excitement in Catherine's eyes as she mentioned that. "If this project lands in our hands, our status as a third-tier upper-class family will be cemented, and there might even be hope for us to become a second-tier family in the coming years!"

"That's right! Why didn't I think of it?" George facepalmed and said, "We once sent someone to contact the person in charge of this project, but unfortunately, we were completely ignored. They even said that we Shanahans have only been a third-tier family for just a few years, so we lack competitiveness and all that. But all that aside, there's still hope for us if we manage to build a good relationship with Henry!"

Catherine smiled and agreed. "Yes, but we still don't know the true nature of the current situation. Is Severin's relationship with Henry merely that of an acquaintance? Or are they good friends? If it is the latter, then there's hope for us! When the time comes, we'll just let Severin bring it up to Henry! Then, everything will fall perfectly into place!"

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Felicia's expression became exceedingly ugly. Those projects did not matter to her at all, and all she wanted was the dowry.

The old lady looked at Felicia. "My dear Felicia, I'm not asking you to reject Edward immediately now, am I? You can drag it out a little longer while we figure out the relationship between Severin and Henry. If their relationship turns out to be very good and Severin can help us secure the Liberty City project, wouldn't you accept him as your son-in-law? If their relationship isn't all that impressive, then you can

always try to persuade Diane to marry Edward. If she still won't listen, then there's nothing we can do about it."

"I understand now."

Felicia nodded and was roughly able to grasp the old lady's intentions.

Megan thought for a while and then said, "Don't worry, Grandma. Diane was only stubborn back then because of her reluctance to part with her baby, not Severin. Now that we're willing to welcome her back home again, I'm sure she'll come back. She is a very filial daughter, after all, and she'll leave Severin if it means giving Selene a better life in the future!"

-The old lady chuckled. "That's for a future time. If we want to persuade the two of them to break things off with each other, we'll only do so later. My priority right now is to find out if Severin can help us secure the project! If he can't, you can always fall back on persuading her into getting together with Edward!"

Megan smiled awkwardly and thought to herself, "This old lady sure is a sly old fox. She keeps all those options open so she'll get the best out of whatever happens."

After Severin and Diane finished their meal, they led Selene down to the hotel lobby.

"Mister Severin, please feel free to seek me out if you ever need my help in the future!" Henry said to Severin with a smile.

"Mister Henry, you're more than welcome to give me a ring if you require any help next time!" Severin reciprocated.

His response prompted Diane to roll her eyes at him. "What else would Mister Henry need your help for? It'd be better for you not to trouble him!"

"Haha, that might not necessarily be the case, you know. Severin here is no ordinary individual, haha!" Henry laughed, got in the car with Charmaine, and left.

Severin led Diane to the front desk and said to the beautiful receptionist, "Did Lucy and the others bring the money?"

The receptionist immediately lifted a big red-and-white woven bag, which she gave to Severin."

"It's all here!"

Severin smiled. "Wonderful. Thank you very much!"

"You're more than welcome. That incident with the Orwells is all everyone's talking about now.

You were amazing back there! Vain women like Lucy ought to be taught a lesson! Even bystanders like us were rooting for you when they refused to return that huge dowry!" The receptionist exclaimed with a big smile.

"Really? I didn't think it'd spread so quickly. I wanted to keep a low profile!" Severin smiled, threw the woven bag directly on his shoulder. "Honey, my clothes don't fit too well anymore, so I'm thinking of

getting some new ones. I haven't bought any for you and Selene yet either, so why don't we go shopping and buy some clothes?"

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"You son of a bitch! I can't believe you accepted that key! I think we should find a chance to return it!" Diane's brows furrowed as she walked on the street with Severin and Selene.

"Return it? Wouldn't it be rude to return it after I've already accepted it?" Severin frowned. "Don't get so worked up. It's just a house! He gave it to us so we could stay there, so that's what we'll do! We just so happen to need a house right now too, and my parents' house is also really run-down!"

"What do you mean 'it's just a house'? Do you know how valuable that house is? It's a villa in Dragon Lake Vista! Not even my grandmother could buy a unit there now that they're all sold out. The Shanahans couldn't afford it last time, but when they finally had the means to buy one, no one was willing to sell! Living in this villa doesn't just prove that you're rich-it's more of a status symbol!" Diane immediately explained to Severin "The Longhorns bought one that's the biggest out of all the others and has the best location! It's worth at least eleven million!"

"Really? That old man is quite the big spender then!" Severin was awestruck.

"You weren't planning on keeping it, were you?" Diane was dumbstruck because the villa was simply too precious.

"Think about it, if I returned a gift that was already given to me, won't that be the same as slapping Henry in the face? And besides, I didn't know it was THAT expensive. I thought it was only worth about a million!" Severin smiled wryly. "It's okay, if the Longhorns need my help in the future, I'll be sure to help him. Besides, I saved his life once. That's an old man's life we're talking about. That's gotta be worth more than this house, right?"

"Fine!" Diane nodded. It would indeed leave a bad impression if the keys were returned to Henry. She could only blame Severin for accepting it in the first place. Still, she did not think that Severin would be able to help the Longhorn family in any way.

After pondering briefly over it, Diane said, "You're too impulsive, you know that. You offended both the Loughs and Blade today. They only let you off out of respect for Henry. I'm worried that they might come back in the future to settle scores with you! Henry already returned your favor to him by giving you a house and treating you to a meal. We can't expect to always rely on him if we find ourselves in trouble, right?"

Severin smiled slightly when he heard her worries. "Don't worry, honey. Neither the Loughs nor Blade are a match for me. I'll give them a good whacking if they so much as dare to lay a hand on you and Selene!"

Diane rolled her eyes at Severin. "You and all your big talk! This attitude of yours is going to land you in hot soup sooner or later!"

Moments after Diane ended her sentence, she pondered for a moment. "Don't call me 'honey'. It sounds weird to me!"

Severin looked at Selene prancing happily in front of him. "Hey, don't say that in front of Selene. Don't you

think we need to be more loving toward each other? And besides, you're the mother of my daughter, so in my heart, you're my one and only honey. I'll marry you even if it's the last thing I

do!"

After walking for some time, they soon found themselves at a mall.

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"The clothes here are expensive. Let's go someplace else!" Diane immediately urged when she saw Severin walking toward the entrance of the big shopping mall.

Severin patted the bag he was carrying. "This bag is full of dough! What's there to worry about when we have a hundred and ninety thousand dollars here?"

In response, Diane glared at him and rolled her eyes. "As much money as you have right now, it's still important to spend your money sensibly. Why do you have to act like someone who got rich overnight?"

Severin smiled. "If I'm honest, I don't really care about my clothes, but things have changed now. I have a wife and a daughter, two people whom I mustn't let suffer. I've never bought you two clothes or gifts, so the least I can do is spend like there's no tomorrow on you two! It'll be just this once!"

"Pfftt!" His words amused her and she felt her heart warm slightly.

Her life was undoubtedly difficult during the past five years and she had been the subject of everyone's disdain. During the initial two or three years, she was forced to bring Selene with her when she was out working as a food delivery person. Since Selene had gotten older and was more obedient, she could let Selene stay home and watch television while she was out working. Needless to say, she was still a little reluctant to just leave the little girl alone like that.

Even so, life was generally very overwhelming for Diane, and she felt like she could not even manage to get a breather. After all, Selene was getting older and was almost at a kindergarten- going age. The little girl could only look on with envy as other children around her age were already going to kindergarten.

Severin would have to spend ten years in prison before his sentence was complete. When she thought about how his release was still five years away, Diane made countless considerations and wondered if it was about time that she gave up on waiting for him and just settle for some rich young man. There had been a few of those rich men who had shown an interest in her during the five

years.

She had no problem enduring hardship, but it broke her heart to see Selene suffer. It was ridiculous to wait until Severin completes his sentence and earns some money to afford kindergarten, as Selene would already be nine years old by then.

Unexpectedly, Severin was released five years into his imprisonment, and that came as something of a relief for Diane. She hoped that Severin could turn over a new leaf and become a good father to Selene.

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She gave his words some thought and then responded, "You're right. You really should be making to us. Hmph, I'm not going to hold back today. You're going to spend an arm and a leg on us! I'll have you know that I haven't bought any new clothes for the past five years! All I'm wearing are old ones, and I'm glad that I used to own a lot of clothes!"

When Severin heard that, he caressed Diane's head lovingly. "Don't worry, honey, I'll pamper you to the fullest from now on!"

Severin's handsome smile left Diane in a daze. For some reason, she felt as if she had a little more security in her heart.

"Who said I wanted you to pamper me?" Diane blushed. When she realized that her face was red, she immediately pouted and said, "Plenty of rich young men tried to woo me. I might be a mother, but I'm still smoking hot. Do you honestly think I'm doing this because I like you? Well, I don't! I'm only letting you play the role of a father for Selene's sake!"

Severin was taken aback by how beautiful Diane looked when she blushed. He stood rotted to the ground after being awestruck by her appearance, but he soon chased after her. "Rich young men? Hehe, none of those rich young are as rich as I am. And come to think of it, if you did like them, you probably would have married one of them a long time ago, right? That just goes to show that you're still hoping for Selene to reunite with her biological father."

Having said that, Severin remained silent for a moment before adding, "Don't you worry, Diane. I won't blame you if you don't like me now, or even if you hate me. Feelings can be nurtured slowly, and I'm grateful that you've given me this opportunity. I promise to make up to you and prove to you that I can be a good father and a good husband!"

Severin's sincerity touched Diane's heart deeply, he was both handsome and genuine.

As Diane thought to herself, her eyes flickered and she said, "Don't assume that saying something nice will soften my heart. Like I've said, I'm going to make you spend an arm and a leg. When that happens, you won't even get the chance to feel sorry for spending all that money. The clothes here are mighty expensive!"

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"Go ahead! Buy whatever you want!" Severin said with a smile.

"Dad! Mom! Hurry up!" Selene was in a buoyant mood as she walked, and it was clear that her happiness was different than usual.

"I've never seen her so happy in a long time!" A smile appeared on Diane's face as she looked at Selene. The only reason she could persevere up until then was because of her daughter.

Severin grinned. "That's because she saw her parents being all lovey-dovey with each other!"

“Quit it. When did I get lovey dovey with you?” Diane rolled her eyes at Severin and quickened her pace. Severin soon led the two of them into the shopping mall.

“Don’t go to the second floor!” Diane stopped him in a panic when she saw him planning to go up to the second floor.

“What’s wrong?” Severin frowned. “Doesn’t the sign above say that the second floor is for women’s clothing?”

That was when Diane explained. “The stores on the first floor are cheaper. The most expensive ones are several hundred dollars. The second floor is where all the luxury brands are, and they can cost up to tens of thousands!”

Severin, however, held the bag in one hand and carried Selene up with his other hand before walking toward the elevator. “How am I going to spend an arm and a leg if you don’t buy something more expensive? Besides, my wife is such a beautiful woman, and it’s only right that she wears beautiful clothes too!”

“I can’t believe this man...”

Diane was both exasperated and amused as she looked at Severin from behind. She felt that Severin was wasting money, but in the same vein, she could see that he was genuine in his efforts to treat her and Selene well.

“Sure thing, then. What he said makes sense. Can’t blame me for being born with good looks!” Diane had a rare vain smirk on her face as she followed the up.

Once they reached the second floor, Severin put Selene down and led her into the first shop they saw.

“Hey, honey! The clothes here look pretty good!”

Severin’s eyes lit up immediately when he saw what they had on offer and he went in with Selene. “Why don’t we go in and have a look?”

Diane followed closely, but she had a slight frown on her face. The store was a well-known international brand that Diane used to patronize very often. Needless to say, she had not been there for nearly five years.

“Good afternoon, sir...” A female shop assistant greeted Severin when she saw him enter their premises. However, as soon as she saw Severin’s clothes and the white-and-red woven bag that looked like those used by farmers, her expression turned weird all of a sudden.

Brief though that expression was, Severin still caught sight of it and asked in an unhappy tone, “What’s wrong? Am I not welcome here?”

The woman smiled awkwardly. “No, no, no, of course you’re welcome! We hold all our customers in very high esteem!”

Despite saying so, she looked down on him tremendously deep down. A country bumpkin like him - might not know that their store was a luxury brand, and she figured that he would leave without saying a word after looking at the price tag and being scared out of his wits.

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After flashing a forced smile to Severin, she turned to a young assistant near her. "Hey, Bree, will you be all right if I handed these customers over to you? You need to make a good impression since you're new and all!"

Oh, sure, Miss Debra!"

The young female saleswoman nodded, and then said to Severin and Diane, "Sir, ma'am, good afternoon. These right here are all our new models. You have a good figure, ma'am, and I think a person of your grace should try them!"

Debra walked to one side and chatted secretly with two of the more seasoned employees. "Bree's pretty dumb, isn't she? I didn't think she'd be brave enough to accept those customers after I said. I'll pass them to her. She's wasting her time with them!"

Another of the senior employees said, "How can someone who looks like a farmer be able to afford our clothes? That was mean of you to pass them over to Bree!"

"Tch. You can't blame me if she accepts them. Did you see how respectfully she's explaining the new models to them? It's like she's not worried that they might cause trouble. If I were her, the most I'd do is just tell them that they can have a look around. It's good enough that I didn't chase them out of the store. People with as poor a judgment as Bree aren't suited to working here, haha!" Debra continued to sneer.

Unbeknownst to them, Severin could still hear their whispers clearly despite their best abilities to keep their voices down.

"Mom! This dress looks so pretty! I think you'll look good in it!"

Selene grabbed a white skirt with an innocent look on her face.

Debra's expression soured the second she saw what happened. She strode over and yelled at Bree's face. "What is wrong with you, Bree? Did you even care to wash this little girl's hands? Do you know how dirty they are? How could you just let these children touch those clothes so casually? Letting them look at the clothes is good enough. Are you going to pay for the clothes if they get soiled and the customers can't afford to buy them?"

Bree opened her mouth and did not know what to say. She glanced at Selene with a smile. "But Miss Debra, her hands are super clean!"

Debra was speechless for a moment, for she did not expect the newbie to be speaking up for the other party.

Meanwhile, Selene was frightened by what happened and hid behind Severin in fear.

Severin glanced at Selene's reaction and his expression took a turn for the worse. He immediately said to Debra, "What's with this attitude of yours? How dare you speak to my daughter like that? Would you like me to report you to your superiors?"

When Severin made that threat toward Debra, she was taken aback and immediately apologized with a smile. "I'm sorry, sir, it wasn't my intention to scare your daughter. I was just trying to teach this newbie a lesson. The point is, this dress costs a very high price of thirteen thousand. She will be in trouble if it gets dirty and you end up not being able to afford it!"

"Get out of my face! You're the one who can't afford it!" Severin lashed out coldly at Debra.

"Yes, I'll leave right away!" As unhappy as Debra was, she responded with an awkward smile and left.

Once she was out of sight, Severin squatted down, cupped Selene's face, and said with a smile, "Don't be scared, okay? Your hands are clean. Some people just have a black heart, you see. That's even scarier!"

He then turned to Bree and said, "Take this skirt down and let my wife try it on!"

Although Diane felt that the skirt was a bit expensive, she was also very upset by the way the other saleswoman looked down on her earlier. At that moment, she no longer refused to wear the clothes and immediately went into the fitting room with the clothes.

Coincidentally, Edward was passing by outside with a woman around his arm. "Hey, Edward, that woman who went in to try on some clothes looks just like Diane."

Edward froze for a moment. "That can't be. You must've mistaken someone else for her. How can Diane afford to shop here?" He sneered. "Diane is a stunner, that's for sure, but it's a shame that she's too naive. I offered to marry her, but she turned me down! Man, I'm so f*cking pissed off that she got pregnant with an ex-convict!"

"Look, it is her!" The woman was Edward's side chick, and when she saw that the woman was Diane, she smiled wickedly and said, "Looks like she'd rather be with a poor country bumpkin than with you!"

Edward's face turned blue with anger, and he said coldly. "We're going over. I'm curious to see who's the man that's buying clothes for the woman I like!"