

This is a continuation from last month's **unedited** first chapter for *ASSIGNMENT: BABY* by Lynne Marshall ©, Harlequin Mills and Boon Medical Romance®

I suggest you read January's article then pick up here -

"Good evening, everyone. Sorry I'm late," Hunter said realizing they were all staring at him and Mandy hadn't yet been able to make her mouth work. *Keep calm.*

With everyone watching, he bent to pick up the baby carrier and almost bumped heads with Sophie. Could things get any more awkward? Even though he'd rehearsed and prepared for this moment the entire drive over, the depth of pain at seeing her again almost took his breath away.

After three years of hell and soul searching since their divorce, the last thing he wanted to do was face her again under these unusual circumstances. But it seemed there was no way out. If he didn't help Mandy, the class would be history. And though he wasn't sure what her stake in it was, he was certain of his motivation.

Joel Hersh, the man who'd made sure Hunter had gotten a staff position at Mercy Hospital after his residency, had contacted him just that morning.

"You've heard about Charles Beiderman," Joel Hersh

said.

"Yeah. Poor guy. And so unexpected." He'd been diagnosed with lymphoma.

"Charles was set to mentor one of our nurse practitioners on a community outreach program at our Serena Vista Clinic." Dr. Hersh went on to explain in detail.

"Sounds interesting."

"Yes, her approach to reaching the patient long before they require cardiac surgical intervention is the way of the future. Wouldn't you agree?"

"Absolutely, preventive care is the best offense." If only his father had thought the same, maybe his stroke could have been averted.

"I'm in a bind. The patients have already been lined up and everything is set to go. It would be cost effective if you stepped in."

It was the first favor Joel had ever asked of Hunter. "Hey, I'm glad to help," he said, straightening his tie and feeling heroic. And since his father's recent death, he'd made it a personal goal to enlighten his patients about blood pressure and heart health. This would be an opportunity to reach more people.

"Good, then. I'll let Amanda know she can proceed with the study."

His shoulders stiffened at the name. "Amanda?"

"Yes. Amanda Dunlap."

Hunter's heart stumbled. His fingers clutched the knot on his tie just above a similar knot that had formed in his throat. Mandy? As in ex-wife, Mandy? Obviously, the medical director didn't know. This couldn't come at a worse time for him, but he couldn't very well weasel out now. And he did owe the man a major favor..

Placing the carrier on a nearby table, Hunter looked around the room filled with middle-aged faces, ignoring the painful reminder at the head of the class. "Don't mind me," he waved his hand pretending to have everything under control while feeling an earthquake in his gut at seeing Mandy again. If he felt this shook up, he could only imagine what must be going through her mind. "Go right ahead."

"Class this is my ex-huh ... er ... Dr. Phillips," Mandy said with a corrected business-like tone. She blushed crimson at her near mistake, which turned her blue eyes almost neon and softened the affect of her curt introduction. Obviously, she was no happier to see him than he was to be here.

He'd missed those fiery eyes, even though they looked mind boggled right about now, as though she'd just been

punked on reality TV. He could only imagine how he must
look.

This book is currently available to order at the Mills and Boon website
(<http://www.millsandboon.co.uk/books/medical.htm>) or as an E-Book.