

Divorced Me 551

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And yet, she had no relationship with him.

The car came to a stop, and the light in Aveline's eyes gradually dimmed.

"Selena, do you like him?" Aveline asked softly.

Selena replied, "No, I don't."

Aaron had targeted her so many times that she had lost count. It was just a few casual encounters-how could she possibly like him?

Aveline responded with a nod, then quickly opened the car door and got out.

"Ave, where are you going?" Selena, seeing this, also stepped out of the car.

At this moment, they found themselves surrounded by several vehicles, with the bright headlights illuminating the small area around them.

Aaron slammed his car door shut. Seeing Selena stepping out of Aveline's car, he immediately burst into laughter.

He strode over, his presence radiating a dangerous aura.

Aveline swiftly pulled Selena behind her, her gaze calm as she looked at Aaron. "What are you doing, Mr. Fletcher?"

Aaron was dressed in a white shirt, the collar open, and his body still carried the scent of alcohol-clearly, he had just come from a bar or a drinking party. His demeanor was lazy and unrestrained, with a careless smile playing on his lips.

"I'm here for her."

Aaron raised his hand, pointing at Selena, who was hiding behind Aveline.

Aveline asked, "Mr. Fletcher, you're not exactly close with Selena. What's the need for all this commotion in the middle of the night?"

"Not close?" Aaron tilted his head, looking at Selena. "Tell her, are we close or not?"

Selena knew she couldn't avoid this anymore.

She stepped out from behind Aveline and calmly said to Aaron, "Aaron, can't you just let things go?"

"What?"

Aaron thought he had misheard. At this point, she still dared to speak to him like that?

Selena continued, "We just slept together a few times. Why are you still chasing after me? Is it because I didn't pay you?"

The smile on Aaron's face immediately took on a more dangerous edge. "Selena, what did you just say?"

Selena raised an eyebrow. "It seems like not only can you not take a joke, but your hearing isn't great either. I suggest you make an appointment with a specialist at the hospital."

"Excellent!"

Aaron finally understood-Selena really wasn't afraid of anything. She even dared to provoke him!

Selena took out her phone. "Mr. Fletcher, it wasn't that many times. How much do you think would be appropriate? Once I pay, stop bothering me. After all, it's quite degrading." Aveline glanced at Selena, sensing that she was deliberately provoking Aaron.

Aaron and Lucas were alike in many ways. What good could come from provoking him?

Aaron let out a sarcastic laugh. "You're right, I can't take it, so I'm going to keep playing with you."

He walked over, grabbed her wrist, and started pulling her toward the car.

Selena hadn't expected her taunts to fail. She began struggling violently. "Aaron, what's the point of this? I don't even like you, so why are you so obsessed with me?" With a sudden force, Aaron yanked her close to him.

In the darkness, his eyes were filled with disdain and coldness. "I don't care whether you like me or not. I'm a man, you're a woman, and I desire you. That's enough."

"You!"

Selena was utterly appalled by his shamelessness!

"Mr. Fletcher!" Aveline walked over, stepping between them. "Don't you think you should respect Selena's wishes?"

Aaron looked at her with amusement. "Why should I respect her? Is she someone special or powerful?"

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"You!"

Aveline's expression darkened.

Aaron's attitude made it clear he saw Selena as nothing more than a plaything.

If that was the case, there was no way she would let Aaron take Selena away tonight.

"Fine, let her go. You have no right to take her, and even less right to interfere with her freedom," Aveline said coldly.

Aaron raised an eyebrow. "Aveline, I'm being civil because of Lucas. Do you think too highly of yourself?"

Aveline's gaze remained icy. "You don't need to consider him at all. I have nothing to lose. If you insist on taking her, you'll have to go through me first."

There was a fierce determination in her eyes. She was resolute in protecting Selena. Selena was her only family now.

Moved by Aveline's resolve, Selena suddenly bit down hard on Aaron's hand, causing him to release her in pain.

Selena quickly ran to Aveline's side. "Ave, I won't go with him!"

Aveline nodded. "I'll protect you."

Selena was overwhelmed with emotion, nearly ready to pledge her life to Aveline.

Aaron watched the two of them, feeling a sense of frustration. Despite his words, he knew he couldn't do much to Aveline-after all, she was still Lucas' wife.

His gaze, now tinged with coldness, fell on Selena's face, and a wicked smile curved his lips. "You better pray she can always be there for you."

With that, he walked past them, got into his car, and drove off.

The other cars followed, allowing Selena to finally relax her tense body.

She let out a bitter smile. "Great, now I've caught the eye of a scumbag."

Aveline held her hand, and the two got back into the car.

After a long silence, Aveline spoke. "You should stay at my place."

Selena was quiet for a moment, then shook her head. "No, I'll find a way out. I can't just wait for him to come after me."

Aveline frowned. "But he's already set his sights on you."

Selena said, "I'll figure out how to throw him off. When the time comes, I'll ask Russ for help. He'll help out for your sake, and you can take the credit." Aveline hesitated for a moment. This plan of Selena's was certainly bold.

But after thinking it over, it seemed like their only option.

Aveline drove back, and by the time they returned to Maple Garden, dawn had already broken.

Selena insisted on going home.

On the way, she said, "Aaron probably thinks I've gone to your place, so I won't go there. I'm going home to rest, and then I'll consider leaving Cloudflare City."

Aveline felt it was a bit risky.

But Selena responded, "The safest place is often the most dangerous one. If something happens, I'll just have to accept it."

Unable to argue with her, Aveline dropped her off at a street corner and watched as Selena's figure disappeared before returning to Maple Garden.

After a night of running around, she found herself unable to sleep.

Her mind was filled with worry for Selena, along with a nagging suspicion.

How did Aaron find out so quickly about Selena's plan to escape? Aveline thought for a moment before dialing Mason's number.

"Miss Young," Mason answered, his voice sounding a bit weary.

Aveline asked, "Have you noticed anyone else following me?"

Mason was taken aback and quickly replied, "No, Miss Young, only Jason and I are around you."

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"Is that so? Was I mistaken?" Aveline thought before replying, "Alright, I understand. Get some rest; I won't be going out today."

"Okay, Miss Young."

After a quick wash, Aveline lay down on her bed. Her mind was still a mess, but her body was exhausted, and she quickly fell asleep. When she woke up, it was already afternoon.

She picked up her phone and saw numerous messages from Selena, all detailing her escape plan.

Aveline replied briefly, then got up to wash her face before heading to the kitchen to cook.

Just then, the doorbell suddenly rang.

Aveline paused, her expression turning cold. Who would come at this hour?

She walked to the door and looked through the peephole. Upon seeing who it was, her face became even more indifferent.

She ignored it and continued cooking.

After waiting for a while, Lucas realized Aveline wasn't going to answer the door.

Undeterred, he kept knocking, showing remarkable patience.

It was only after about half an hour that the door finally opened.

Aveline stood there, her expression cold, holding a kitchen knife in her hand. "What do you want?"

Lucas glanced at the knife in her hand before looking back at her face, clearly unimpressed by supposed threat.

"Can't I visit without a reason?"

"No."

Aveline's response was blunt.

With that, she moved to close the door.

But Lucas suddenly blocked it with his hand and stepped forward, trying to enter.

Seeing this, Aveline immediately raised the kitchen knife toward him. "Stay out!"

"Heh."

Lucas chuckled softly, ignoring the knife as he continued to walk forward.

"Go ahead, Aveline. I bet you don't have the guts to cut me."

Aveline's heart sank, but she immediately raised the kitchen knife and swung it toward his shoulder!

Lucas didn't flinch, simply watching her calmly.

The knife halted just before it reached his shoulder, her hand trembling slightly.

"You maniac!" she exclaimed.

He really didn't dodge! Was he not afraid of getting hurt?

Lucas gently took hold of her hand, removing the knife and placing it on the nearby counter. His deep voice was steady as he said, "Aveline, I just came to tell you to stay away from Russell. He's not as simple as he appears to be."

Aveline pulled her hand back, finding his concern amusing. "Mr. Tudor, we're divorced. Who I choose to be close to or distance myself from is none of your business, right?"

A frown creased Lucas' brow-he didn't like her treating him with such detachment.

"Russell might be an illegitimate son, but he's fought his way to the top with ruthless cunning. Do you really think he's someone to underestimate?" Lucas asked, his tone grave.

Aveline's expression remained cold. "Whether he's simple or not doesn't matter to me. What matters is

that he treats me well!"

She grabbed the doorknob. "Mr. Tudor, I don't think our relationship is close enough for this kind of conversation. Please don't come looking for me again, or I'll call the police and report you for harassment. With that, she forcefully pushed the door shut.

"Harassment?" Lucas used a bit of strength to stop her from closing the door, a low chuckle escaping him as if he'd just heard a joke.

A sense of unease crept into Aveline's mind as she eyed him warily.

Lucas stepped inside, closing the door behind him with one hand.

"Aveline, you've already accused me of harassment. If I don't take action after that, wouldn't that be a bit unfair to me?"

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Aveline eyed him warily, his dark, piercing gaze fixed on her as if she were already his prey.

Memories of past traumas resurfaced, and she bit her lip, suddenly raising the kitchen knife to her own throat.

"You're right, I don't dare to hurt you, but that doesn't mean I won't harm myself. Lucas, if you take one more step, I'll cut myself. Let's see if you can keep talking like this while facing a corpse!"

Lucas stopped in his tracks, the playful expression vanishing from his face as he glared at her, his gaze dark and intense. "Put the knife down!"

Instead of lowering the knife, Aveline pressed it closer to her neck, stubbornly saying, "Get out! You're not welcome here!"

Lucas remained still, his gaze locked on her with a menacing intensity.

Seeing his hesitation, Aveline gritted her teeth and pressed the blade even closer. Her delicate skin barely brushed the knife's edge, which had been sharpened-just a slight touch and it immediately left a thin line of blood on her slender, pale neck.

Lucas' eyes narrowed in shock.

In an instant, he lunged forward, snatching the knife from her grasp before she could react. The knife clattered to the floor.

Staring at the cut on her neck, his expression grew even darker. "Aveline, you've really grown bold, daring to attempt suicide in front of me!"

Aveline's face paled as she struggled against him. "Let go of me! Let me go!"

She fought desperately, trying to reach the knife again.

Seeing the resolve in her eyes, Lucas was both horrified and enraged.

He held back his anger, saying, "If you stay still, I won't touch you!"

Aveline's whole body trembled slightly, the cut on her neck stinging. Who knew what kind of bacteria might have gotten into the wound? If it entered her bloodstream, the consequences could be dire. Gripping her wrist tightly, Lucas turned and dragged her out the door.

"What are you doing?" Aveline asked, her voice filled with suspicion.

Lucas replied in a low voice, "We're going to the hospital!"

Aveline struggled for a moment, but Lucas abruptly turned his head to glare at her, his expression dark and menacing.

"If you keep moving and speed up your circulation, any harmful viruses could spread through your body and cause serious damage. If that happens, you'll only have yourself to blame!"

Hearing this, Aveline immediately stopped struggling. Deep down, she was afraid of dying, too. She just didn't want to be under Lucas' control any longer.

As she quieted down, a bitter irony struck Lucas. She was willing to go as far as attempting suicide just to get away from him-how desperate she had become!

The drive to the hospital was silent. Neither of them spoke, one too angry and the other overly reluctant, creating a tense atmosphere.

At the hospital, they gave her a tetanus shot first, followed by a blood test. By the time the results came back, two hours had passed. Fortunately, there was no sign of infection.

The wound on Aveline's neck was disinfected and didn't even need bandaging-a simple adhesive bandage was enough.

Lucas walked ahead, his tall, imposing figure radiating an icy coldness.

Once outside, he pulled a cigarette from his pocket and lit it.

Aveline walked past him, not wanting to acknowledge him at all.

"Aveline."

Lucas called her name in a deep voice as he watched her retreating figure.

Aveline didn't pause; she had no intention of stopping.

Lucas took a long drag on his cigarette, his cheeks hollowing slightly as he inhaled. Then, exhaling a cloud of smoke, he looked at her through the hazy mist and spoke again...

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"Do you know why Aaron found you both so quickly?" Lucas asked.

Upon hearing this, Aveline stopped in her tracks.

She slowly turned around, her face filled with disbelief. "It was you?"

Lucas smirked. "That's right."

He approached Aveline with a cigarette between his fingers. Seeing her face pale from shock, he gently caressed it. His tone was low and soft, like a lover's whisper, but his words were incredibly cruel.

"Did you really think I'd let anyone who could keep you company slip away? Face it, Aveline. Selena's trapped, and so are you. There's no escape for either of you."

Aveline was furious. She raised her hand to slap him, but Lucas caught her wrist effortlessly. He looked into her angry eyes.

"Aveline, things between us won't end so easily. Have you heard the phrase 'till death do us part'?"

Aveline was trembling with rage, her whole body shaking.

It was him! Why would he do this? How could he?

Selena was so close to leaving! She could have escaped a fate similar to Aveline's!

They were so close, just a little bit more!

She saw Selena as her chance to escape, her hope for freedom. But Lucas had personally clipped the wings that might have carried her away.

How could he be so cruel?

At this moment, she couldn't control her emotions. Tears welled up in her eyes. "Lucas, why are you doing this to me? Why?"

Her tears fell, seeming to sear Lucas' heart, burning a hole through it, searing and painful.

He wiped the tears from her face, his gaze intense, his tone still soft. "Because I don't want to let you go. I want you by my side always, Aveline. I've never been a good person. Your expectations of me were too high, and the result was bound to disappoint you."

Aveline shoved him away and ran off desperately.

It felt like the universe had played a cruel joke on her!

She thought that by divorcing Lucas, their relationship would end, and they would have no more ties or interactions.

But Lucas had no intention of letting her go. Even without love, even if being together meant mutual torment, he still wouldn't let go.

Everything before her blurred as tears streamed down her face. She felt powerless against Lucas, unable to change the events unfolding in her life.

He refused to let go, and he wouldn't let her find peace,

Why? How had it come to this?

Her heart felt like it was thrown into a volcano, repeatedly scorched, burning with pain. Then suddenly it was plunged into a glacier, eaten away by extreme cold. The intense pain tore at her soul, leaving her in

agony.

A cold wind blew as rain began to fall, quickly soaking her. Cars sped by on the road as pedestrians grew scarce. She stood at the roadside, wishing she could die right there in the downpour.

She had tried to fight against the injustice of fate, but her strength was so small.

The icy rain enveloped her, and her vision went black as she fainted.

Lucas had been following behind her. Seeing her collapse, he rushed forward and caught her. With a grim expression, he carried her to his car, turned on the heat, and wrapped her in a blanket. She was still shivering.

Her lips were deathly pale. Even unconscious, she mumbled, "Why... why won't you let me go... I don't love you anymore, Lucas. I don't love you!"

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A cold, shadowed look darkened Lucas' eyes as he watched her pale face and heard her murmurs.

He scoffed.

Love?

What did it matter?

As long as she remained by his side, love was irrelevant.

At Maple Garden, Lucas carried Aveline upstairs, used her finger to unlock the door, and strode inside. He went straight to the bathroom and began running hot water in the tub.

Once it was ready, he gently placed her in the bath, and the tension in her furrowed brow eased slightly.

She was already running a fever.

First, he needed to warm her up and then give her medicine.

Lucas carefully bathed her, then wrapped her in a towel and carried her out. As he dressed her in clean pajamas, he couldn't help but notice her delicate curves and smooth, ivory skin. His gaze darkened, and he found himself swallowing hard more than once.

When it was time to take the medicine, Aveline's body instinctively resisted, her lips refusing to part.

Lucas lost patience.

He placed the pill in his own mouth, grasped her chin, and kissed her forcefully.

"Mmm..."

Aveline whimpered in her dazed state, but Lucas pressed on, prying her lips apart and pushing the pill into

her mouth.

He quickly followed it up by taking a sip of water and continued to feed it to her.

The bitterness spread through her mouth, and Aveline tried to spit out the pill. But before she could, another mouthful of water came in, causing her to swallow instinctively. The medicine went down smoothly.

Repeating this process several times, he made sure she took all the pills.

Lucas, unable to resist any longer, pressed his lips to hers, this time in a real kiss. His tongue explored every corner of her mouth, leaving nothing untouched.

Aveline started to struggle as breathing became difficult, resisting him weakly.

Reluctantly, Lucas ended the almost out-of-control kiss, his gaze burning as he looked at her unconscious form.

"Aveline, since you're sick, I'll let you off this time."

After speaking, Lucas got up and went to the bathroom.

When he returned, Aveline had curled up into a tight ball, her body trembling uncontrollably.

"Cold... so cold..." she murmured.

Lucas lifted the blanket and got into bed, pulling her into his arms.

His body radiated warmth, and Aveline instinctively pressed closer to him, her shivering gradually subsiding.

Throughout the night, Lucas checked her temperature several times. When he finally saw her fever break, he massaged his temples, exhaustion etched into his features. At last, Aveline slept peacefully.

The next morning.

The sunlight streamed in as Aveline opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was the man's defined Adam's apple. She was clinging to him like an octopus.

She froze, her expression turning sour in an instant.

Roughly, she pulled herself away and threw off the covers, getting out of bed.

Lucas woke up from her abrupt movements. Noticing her displeased expression, he said coldly, "I took care of you all night, and now that you're better, you're giving me attitude?" Aveline replied icily, "You should be grateful there isn't a knife within reach, or you'd be dealing with a lot more than just attitude."

"Heh!"

Lucas let out a cold laugh, not taking her words seriously.

Aveline went straight to wash up, and when she emerged, Lucas was still lying in bed. His face looked weary, and his expression was fatigued.

"Get out," Aveline said coldly.

Lucas lifted his eyelids and glanced at her. "Say that again."

"Get out," she repeated, unyielding.

Lucas threw off the covers and got out of bed, striding directly toward her.

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Aveline stood still, not moving an inch.

Lucas let out a cold laugh, pulling her back onto the bed, his heavy body pinning her down, his hot breath washing over her.

But Aveline remained unresponsive.

Just as his breath was only inches from her cheek, Lucas suddenly stopped, staring into her overly cold eyes. An inexplicable sense of defeat washed over him.

The air between them grew thick and tense.

Noticing his hesitation, Aveline shoved him aside and got out of bed. "Lucas, maybe all you're interested in is my body. But what if my body won't react to you anymore? What if nothing you do can stir me anymore?"

She walked to the door, glancing back at him. "How defeated would you feel if that happened?"

With a mocking smile, she left the bedroom.

Lucas leaned against the headboard, his face dark and stormy, his mood plummeting.

What did she mean? Her body wouldn't react to him?

Ridiculous!

He knew exactly how sensitive she was-he had a thousand ways to make her respond!

But as he thought back to the recent scene, the more he reflected on it, the more his expression darkened. Her eyes were filled with nothing but indifference, her body completely unresponsive.

In the past, she would have struggled fiercely, blushing with a mix of shame and anger...

When Lucas finally left the bedroom, Aveline had already finished breakfast and was sitting on the couch in the living room.

"Lucas, we need to talk," Aveline said calmly.

Lucas let out another cold laugh. "Talk about what?"

Aveline asked, "How long do you plan to keep playing this game?"

Hearing this, Lucas raised an eyebrow, seemingly surprised by her words.

Aveline continued, "I've been thinking. My constant running and hiding only seem to intrigue you more, and it even puts those around me in danger. So, how about this? Name your terms. I'll do my best to meet them, and we'll coexist peacefully until it's no longer possible."

Lucas walked over, leaning down, one hand resting on the couch, the other gripping her chin. As he stared into her cold, indifferent eyes, a hint of amusement flickered in his gaze.

"So, are you giving in to me now?"

Aveline remained silent, simply looking at him calmly.

Lucas smiled—a smile she knew all too well, that familiar, wicked grin. "What if my condition is for you to stay by my side for the rest of your life?"

Aveline's delicate brows furrowed. "Did you hear what I just said? After everything you've done to me, I'm filled with fear at the thought of being with you. I might not be able to satisfy you anymore." "Doesn't matter," he replied indifferently. "As long as you're still a woman, you're of use to me. I'll keep you around."

Aveline thought she had reached a place of calm, but his words reignited a spark of anger in her eyes.

Noticing the shift in her emotions, Lucas smirked with satisfaction. His thumb brushed across her lips. "That's better. Instead of being a lifeless shell, you might as well be a person with real emotions. If you're angry, let it out; if you're sad, cry. The end result is the same, so why suppress yourself?"

Aveline's eyelashes trembled violently. "So, no matter what, you're not planning to let me go, are you?"

"What are you talking about?" Lucas leaned down, planting a kiss on the corner of her mouth. "Once I'm dead, I won't be able to keep you trapped anymore. Aveline, maybe you should consider killing me. A hint of madness gleamed in his eyes."

"You're insane!"

A trace of fear appeared in Aveline's eyes, completely unprepared for how far Lucas would go in his madness.

Lucas noticed the shift in her emotions, and a fleeting complexity crossed his deep gaze. He leaned in closer, kissing her lips with a tender intimacy, as if they were lovers lost in the moment.

But the more gentle he was, the more Aveline's fear grew, trembling from deep within her soul.

Suddenly, she pushed him away.

Lucas didn't get angry; instead, he stared at her lips, as if still savoring the moment.

Aveline steadied herself and asked, "Why did you help Sophia?"

"Hmm?"

Lucas paused at her question, and after a brief thought, he realized she must have misunderstood something related to what Brian had done.

So, she was acting this way because she thought he helped Sophia?

"I didn't help her," Lucas replied calmly.

Aveline looked at him with disdain, unable to believe he was playing dumb at this point.

"Lucas, you can't even admit to what you've done. I really have no respect for you."

Her sarcasm didn't faze Lucas in the slightest. He remained composed, his emotions unshaken by her

taunts.

He walked over and sat beside her, his voice steady. "What about her is worth helping?"

Aveline was momentarily at a loss for words.

After a pause, she said, "She saved your life."

Lucas let out a cold laugh, as if he'd heard something ridiculous. "The only person who ever truly saved

me is you."

Aveline's eyelashes flickered in surprise. What exactly did he mean by that?

Two years ago, wasn't it Sophia who saved him? What about her injured leg?

Lucas continued, "Can you imagine someone going so far as to harm themselves just to achieve their goals?"

Aveline glanced at him. "Aren't you exactly that kind of person?"

"You're right," Lucas nodded. "When you think about it, she and I might be the same at our core."

Aveline remained silent.

"But," Lucas continued, "people who are alike in that way are destined to never be together. I still prefer

you."

Aveline responded coldly, "Being liked by you is really unfortunate for me."

Lucas smirked. "Aveline, if you had just walked past me without a second glance, your life now would be exactly how you wanted it." Aveline pressed her lips together, not replying.

She regretted it, but what was the point of regret now? What should have happened, and what shouldn't have happened, had all already taken place.

Seeing her still cold expression, Lucas added, "Aveline, stay by my side, and I'll give you what you want. Don't try to run, and don't do anything that would displease me, or I can't say what I might do." Aveline closed her eyes. "No time limit?"

Lucas answered, "No time limit."

A shadow of despair fell over Aveline's face, like a rabbit trapped in a cage, having given up on escape- even the trembling from fear was gone.

Lucas gripped her chin, turning her face toward him, and kissed her deeply. This time, he kissed her thoroughly.

Aveline neither responded nor resisted, her body stiff like a wooden plank.

This only piqued Lucas' interest further. His slender fingers traced over her body, skillfully teasing every sensitive spot until he felt her stiffness gradually give way. He smiled, satisfied with the reaction.

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"Your body is far more honest than your words, Aveline," Lucas murmured.

Aveline closed her eyes, remaining silent. It was true-her body couldn't resist Lucas' teasing. He knew her body even better than she knew it herself. Taking a steadying breath, Aveline said, "Lucas, I need to go to work."

But Lucas had no intention of letting her go. Watching as the corners of her eyes gradually reddened, his amusement only deepened. "What's the rush? It's not like you need to clock in."

As he spoke, his hand continued its deliberate movements, making Aveline tremble and bite down on her lip.

However, the moment she heard the sound of his belt buckle, her body tensed, and her face turned pale. "No... please, no..."

The painful memory of their last encounter filled her with fear, and she began to recoil from his touch, desperate to avoid further intimacy.

Noticing her trembling, Lucas' eyes darkened. "Aveline, are you playing games with me?"

Her shaking grew worse, her face becoming even paler. "I can't, Lucas... I don't want to keep going..."

She hugged herself tightly. "It hurts... it really hurts..."

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In that instant, all of Lucas' desires vanished. He released her and watched as she curled up in the corner of the sofa as if that was the only way to ease the pain she felt. Lucas' expression grew increasingly grim.

Every time he touched her, she ended up like this. How could they continue like this?

His tone was stern as he said, "Once you've pulled yourself together, we're going to the hospital."

"I don't want to go..." Aveline responded with clear resistance, shame biting at her lip. "As long as you don't touch me, I'll be fine."

Lucas looked down at her with a cold, commanding gaze. "Don't kid yourself."

With those words, he turned and walked out onto the balcony, lighting a cigarette.

Aveline closed her eyes in despair. As his presence moved away, her body gradually calmed, and the deep-seated fear that had gripped her soul began to fade.

After a long while, Lucas returned from the balcony.

Noticing the slight color returning to her face, he spoke in a firm tone, "Come with me."

Aveline still resisted, "I don't want to."

Lucas grabbed her chin, forcing her to look up at him. His voice was icy as he said, "Aveline, you need to understand something-you don't get to refuse me. Either you comply and make it easier on yourself, or I'll have no problem using more extreme measures to ensure your obedience."

Aveline bit her lip, anger flaring in her eyes.

"Lucas, am I just some toy to you? Why are you doing this to me?"

He stroked her cheek, his gaze growing even darker. "How could you say that? You're the woman I care about most."

Aveline let out a bitter laugh. "Hearing the word 'care' from you cheapens its meaning."

How could someone who claimed to care about her do so much to hurt her? His version of affection was twisted.

Lucas replied calmly, "Think what you want. Now, come with me."

But Aveline remained still, continuing to resist.

Lucas' patience began to wear thin, but just then, the doorbell rang.

Both of them turned to look at the door. Lucas' expression darkened, remembering how often Russell had shown up here. "This early? Who could it be?"

He walked over and opened the door, and sure enough, Russell was standing there, a smile on his face until he saw Lucas, and that smile quickly faded.

"What are you doing here?" Russell asked, frowning.

"Heh!" Lucas let out a laugh, as if he'd just heard something amusing, his eyes cold and sharp. "I could ask you the same thing-why are you here?"

Russell's smile faded further from his refined, handsome face. "I'm Aveline's friend. It's perfectly normal for me to visit her."

"Oh, and I'm her husband. So, it's just as normal for me to be here," Lucas replied calmly.

Russell's frown grew more pronounced. "But aren't you two divorced?"

Lucas raised an eyebrow. "Being divorced doesn't mean we can't still share a bed."

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Russell's expression grew darker as he stepped forward, grabbing Lucas by the collar. "Lucas, you're already divorced. Can't you stop tormenting her and let her go? She's much happier without you."

"Is that so?" Lucas remained unfazed by Russell's aggression. Instead, he turned to Aveline. "Ave, is what he's saying true?"

Aveline trembled slightly before walking over. She addressed Russell, "Russ, why did you come so early? Is there something you need?" Russell noticed her pale face and immediately released Lucas' collar, his concern evident as he asked, "Aveline, are you feeling unwell?" She shook her head. "I'm fine."

Russell frowned. "But you don't look well at all."

Aveline opened her mouth to say something more, but Lucas wrapped an arm around her shoulders, interrupting.

"Answer my question," he murmured.

Her eyelashes fluttered as she responded, "I... I'm no different from usual."

Lucas didn't seem pleased with her response but chose not to press the matter.

Instead, he turned back to Russell. "You're here, watching us play the happy couple first thing in the morning. Don't you feel a little out of place?"

Russell's frown deepened, sensing something off in Lucas' words, but he couldn't quite decipher his meaning.

Suppressing his frustration, Russell addressed Lucas, "Aveline is her own person, capable of making her own decisions. You shouldn't keep her trapped like this. If you do, she's no better than a lifeless shell." Lucas, still holding Aveline close, seemed to ignore Russell's words.

Instead, he asked her softly, "How are you finding that car? Do you want to switch to a different one?"

Aveline replied, "I'm perfectly comfortable with it."

Lucas nodded slightly. "Good. If you want anything, just tell me. I can fulfill all your requests."

Aveline glanced at him, noting the complete absence of warmth in his eyes. She gave a cold, tight-lipped smile but remained silent.

Turning to Russell, she said, "Russ, I need to get to work. We can talk later."

Russell could see the reluctance in her eyes, but why wasn't she resisting? Had all his efforts been for nothing, only to end up right back where they started?

That couldn't be.

"Alright, I'll wait to hear from you," Russell replied, turning to leave.

Just as the elevator doors were about to close, Russell caught sight of Lucas grabbing Aveline's chin and kissing her roughly, with her making no attempt to pull away. In that instant, his heart sank to the bottom. Lucas continued to kiss her forcefully, noticing how she winced in pain. He let out a cold laugh. "You two really are close, aren't you?"

Aveline replied, "He's my friend."

Lucas sneered. "A friend with an agenda? Do you even know why he's getting close to you?"

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