

Divorced Me 571

Chapter 571

"Oh?" Aveline raised an eyebrow and gave Rina a half-smile before turning to Lucas. "Do I really have no right to tell you what to do?"

"You do. Absolutely," Lucas replied with a warm smile, not sparing even a glance at Rina.

Rina's expression grew even darker. "Lucas..."

But Lucas waved her off, calmly saying, "Go have fun. Don't interrupt me while I'm spending time with my wife."

Rina's anger surged, her resentment toward Aveline reaching its peak. This detestable woman dared to cling to Lucas-how could she even think she was worthy of being by his side? She vowed to teach Aveline a lesson as soon as she got the chance.

With a cold huff, Rina stood up and left.

Finally, some peace.

Aveline tried to pull her hand away, but Lucas showed no intention of letting go. She looked at him and said, "I can't eat properly if you keep holding my hand."

In response, Lucas picked up a grape and held it to her lips, murmuring, "No problem, I'll feed you."

Aveline stared at him with a look of disdain, refusing to take the grape.

Instead, she glanced over at Maria, who had joined the group playing dice. They were engaged in a drinking game where the loser had to drink.

Maria seemed to be handling herself well, so Aveline relaxed, leaning back in her seat and pulling out her phone to play with. As for her left hand, if Lucas wanted to hold it, he could go ahead-it wasn't interfering with anything.

Her expression remained cool and indifferent, but Lucas didn't mind. His gaze stayed fixed on her hand as if it were the most fascinating thing in the world.

"Lucas, what's going on? Come join us," Aaron said, approaching with a teasing grin as he noticed their

intertwined hands.

Lucas didn't hesitate to decline. "No thanks, I'm spending time with my wife."

Aaron's eyes narrowed with interest, and he let out a teasing sound. "Calling her your wife-does she even agree with that?"

Lucas responded calmly, "Whether she agrees or not, she's still my wife."

"Unbelievable," Aaron muttered with a smirk before getting up and walking away.

Just then, a commotion at the entrance caught their attention. After a brief stir, Russell and Jennifer entered the room.

"Jennifer!" Rina immediately went over and affectionately linked arms with Jennifer, her eyes also sparkling as she looked at Russell.

While everyone in their circle believed she was infatuated with Aaron, her true feelings were for Russell. It

wasn't just the gift he brought that excited her-having him at her birthday party was more than enough to

make her ecstatic.

Jennifer handed Rina a beautifully crafted box. "Happy birthday, Rina."

"Thank you, I love it!" Rina accepted the gift eagerly, then looked at Russell with anticipation.

Russell, with his usual lazy and mischievous demeanor, raised an eyebrow as he noticed her expectant look. "Jennifer, why didn't you tell me today was Miss Johnson's birthday?" Jennifer looked momentarily startled.

Rina felt a twinge of disappointment but quickly responded, "It's not too late now, Russ. I'm really happy you could make it."

Russell gave her a faint smile. "Your birthday gift will be here soon."

"Thank you, Russ!" Rina's excitement was palpable.

She led Jennifer to sit down nearby, her gaze never straying far from Russell. "Russ, join us in the game!"

But Russell declined, "I'll sit this one out. You all go ahead."

With that, he turned and started walking directly toward Aveline.

Chapter 572

Rina kept a close eye on Russell's movements. When she saw him walk straight over to Aveline and start chatting and laughing with her, her expression immediately darkened. "Jennifer, since when did Russ get so close to that woman?" Rina asked, turning to Jennifer beside her.

Jennifer glanced at Aveline, then shook her head. "I'm not sure. Who is she?"

Having been abroad for some time, Jennifer didn't know who Aveline was.

Rina shot Aveline a venomous glare and muttered, "She's just a manipulative slut who goes around seducing men."

Hearing this, Jennifer's brow furrowed. "If that's the case, I'll have a talk with my brother about keeping his distance from her."

Rina nodded eagerly. "Yes, please do. Russ deserves better than some gold digger who's just using her charms to get close to him."

Meanwhile, Russell approached, noticing the close interaction between Lucas and Aveline. His eyes darkened slightly, but he maintained a smile as he greeted her. "You're here too." Aveline smiled back. "Yes, I came with my boss."

She nodded toward Maria's direction.

Russell glanced over, pausing briefly before saying, "If you get bored, you can take a walk outside. The garden here is quite nice."

Aveline felt out of place in this crowd, unable to connect with the lively atmosphere around her.

"I'll head home when I'm tired," she replied.

Russell nodded. "Alright. By the way, I haven't had a chance to discuss that matter with you yet. Is now a good time?"

Aveline blinked, then realized he was likely referring to the situation with Bobby. She quickly pulled her hand free from Lucas' grip, stood up, and said, "Sure, let's talk outside." Russell nodded, and they both headed to the balcony.

The balcony was quiet, a stark contrast to the noisy party inside.

Lucas' face had already darkened, his gaze fixed on his now-empty hand. Just moments ago, she had held his hand on purpose, but now she had eagerly let go for another man.

Ha!

Did she think she could discard him after using him? She really knew how to play the game!

Out on the balcony, Russell's expression grew more serious. "You should prepare yourself-Bobby may not hold out much longer."

Aveline's heart jumped into her throat. "What... do you mean?"

Russell pulled out his phone, finding a picture, and showed it to her. "I had someone take this. He's in bad shape."

When Aveline saw the photo, she immediately covered her mouth, her eyes filled with disbelief.

In the picture, Bobby lay on the floor, emaciated and covered in wounds, both fresh and old. His eyes stared blankly ahead as if he had already given up on life.

How could this have happened?

Russell explained, "He's refused to admit anything, so Lucas' men have been torturing him relentlessly." Aveline's breath hitched. "After all this time, he still hasn't confessed? Hasn't anyone suspected anything?"

Russell spoke softly, "What if he has suspected something-or worse, what if he's known the truth all along?"

"What?"

Aveline was stunned again.

Russell found another photo and handed it to her. "Take a look at this. Doesn't the figure in the background look exactly like Bobby?"

Aveline looked at the photo, and for a split second, she thought she was seeing Bobby, healthy and untouched.

Chapter 573

"Who is he...?" Aveline's voice trembled slightly.

Russell responded, "Yes, he's one of the Tudors' bodyguards. He bears a striking resemblance to Bobby. With a hat and mask, it's nearly impossible to tell whether he's Bobby or someone else." Aveline's voice quivered, "So, is this bodyguard still at the Tudor residence?"

"Yes." Russell nodded, sharing all the information he had uncovered.

Aveline closed her eyes for a moment, feeling the scales within her tipping toward the possibility that Lucas knew about this all along. If he did know, why hadn't he said anything? What was he planning? Russell put his phone away and looked at her pale face.

"Aveline, you should be careful with him. No one can truly understand Lucas' intentions. If he's willing to torment Bobby, knowing he's innocent, what makes you think he won't do the same to you? What if you end up like Bobby?"

Hearing this, Aveline's heart sank.

Yes, she could end up just like Bobby.

Even though they were divorced, Lucas still hadn't let her go. This twisted relationship had drained her, both mentally and physically, and she didn't know how much longer she could endure it.

Aveline looked at Russell's sharp yet gentle features and suddenly asked, "Russ, can you help me get away?"

Russell's gaze deepened. "Where do you want to go?"

Aveline opened her mouth to speak, but before she could, a soft scoffing sound interrupted them.

She froze, her face turning pale as she turned to see Lucas standing not far away. How much of their

conversation had he overheard?

Even though there was some distance between them and the noise around them was loud, the feeling of being caught made Aveline's heart race with guilt.

Russell immediately stepped in front of her, frowning as he looked at Lucas. "Mr. Tudor, do you have a habit of eavesdropping on others?"

Lucas raised an eyebrow, holding a cigarette between his fingers. "This is a public place. What makes you think you can be here, but I can't?"

He walked over, standing eye-to-eye with Russell, but with an air even colder and more intimidating. His gaze held a dismissive edge as he said, "What's this? Trying to seduce my wife and become the other

man?"

Russell responded in a low voice, "You're divorced."

"Is that so?" Lucas chuckled lightly. "Divorced or not, I can remarry her anytime I want. You know as well as I do that it's something I can do effortlessly."

Russell frowned. "And what does that make Aveline? Do you truly love her?"

"Love?" Lucas echoed as if the word were some kind of joke. "What does that even mean? As long as she stays by my side, that's all that matters."

Russell realized there was no reasoning with Lucas. He was right-once Lucas made up his mind, no one could change it.

"Mr. Tudor," Russell said, "don't you want her to stay by your side willingly?"

Lucas tilted his head, looking at Aveline who was now standing behind Russell. "Aren't you willing?" Aveline pressed her lips together, remaining silent, but her feelings were clear.

Lucas, however, seemed unfazed. "If she wants to go somewhere else, she'll need my permission first." With that, he shoved Russell aside and stepped closer to Aveline, who looked at him with a

wary gaze. He let out a low chuckle, then suddenly moved forward, trapping Aveline against the balcony railing.

Startled, Aveline instinctively grabbed onto his shirt. "What are you doing?"

Chapter 574

Russell's expression darkened as he witnessed the scene. He immediately stepped forward, intending to pull Aveline back to safety.

Without turning around, Lucas coldly said, "You'd better stay out of our marital affairs. If my grip slips and she falls, you'll be going down with her."

Russell froze, his hand suspended in midair. His gaze bore into Lucas, a whirlwind of emotions passing through him, but in the end, he withdrew his hand. Aveline, terrified of falling, clung tightly to Lucas' shirt. She glanced down and saw the drop from the ninth floor. A fall from this height would surely be fatal. "Lucas, are you insane?" Aveline forced herself to speak, her voice trembling with fear.

Lucas watched the fear play out on her face, feeling an unsettling sense of satisfaction as she held onto him like a lifeline.

"I've been insane for a long time. You know that, don't you?" Lucas's lips curled into a faint smile, his voice low and menacing, like a devil whispering in her ear.

As he leaned in closer, her body tilted further over the edge, causing her to panic and instinctively wrap her arms around his neck.

Her voice shook even more as she pleaded, "Put me down, Lucas! If you want to lose control, find someone else—I don't want to die!"

Instead of releasing her, Lucas pushed her even closer to the edge. "But what if, when I lose control, you're the first person I come looking for?"

"You-!" Aveline's face went even paler. Seeing the dark, unreadable look in his eyes, she bit her lip and softened her tone. "Lucas, whatever you want, we can talk about it. Just put me down, okay?" Lucas raised an eyebrow. "Will you do everything I say?"

Anger flashed briefly in Aveline's eyes-he was threatening her! But with her life on the line, she had no choice but to comply. She closed her eyes and nodded. "Yes, I'll do whatever you say." For now, she would have to give in. Whether she followed through was a matter for later.

Lucas stared at her intently. "Aveline, you said it. You can't go back on your word."

Aveline remained silent.

Lucas finally set her down, and the moment her feet touched the ground, Aveline shoved him away and, with a swift motion, slapped him across the face.

Just as she was about to slap him, Lucas caught her wrist, a cold smirk curling at his lips. "So, you're going back on your word?"

With a slight tug, he pulled her back toward him, making it seem like he was about to lift her onto the Yailing again.

This time, Aveline caught on quickly. She dropped to the ground, clutching the railing with a death grip,

refusing to budge no matter how hard Lucas tried to pull her up.

Gritting her teeth, she dared him, "If you're so brave, toss me over with the railing!"

Lucas crouched down, gripping her face firmly and forcing her to meet his gaze. His voice was low and menacing, "Aveline, do you think wouldn't dare?" His eyes were filled with a dangerous intensity, like a predator about to strike, and a chilling aura surrounded him as if he was teetering on the edge of fury. Aveline stayed silent. She knew better than to provoke him further-Lucas was capable of anything.

She turned her head away, breaking eye contact.

Lucas, his tone slow and deliberate, said, "You promised to listen to me. I warned you not to get too close to him. Why didn't you listen, hmm?"

Russell was nowhere in sight now, and the lively energy of the party inside didn't reach the balcony, which had become steeped in cold tension.

Chapter 575

Aveline found it laughable.

And indeed, she let out a sarcastic laugh, looking at Lucas with clear eyes full of distrust. "You say he has ulterior motives, then tell me what exactly are his intentions?"

If he was going to accuse someone, at least present some evidence, right? If Lucas had thrown proof in her face from the beginning, she might have believed him. But all he had done was warn her to stay away from Russell, repeatedly insisting that his intentions were impure.

Yet, from what she had seen and felt, Russell had only ever helped and protected her. Nothing he did had ever harmed her. In fact, he had even saved her life! How could she believe that someone like him had a hidden agenda?

Lucas' brow furrowed, and the coldness around him intensified.

Aveline let go of the railing and stood up, exhaling a shaky breath. "Lucas, whether or not he has ulterior motives, have you been honest with me?"

Lucas slowly rose, his gaze dark and unreadable as he looked at her calm expression.

Aveline pressed on, "Tell me, did Bobby really steal from your brother?"

Lucas shot back, "Who told you that?"

He paused, realizing that Russell must have mentioned this when he pulled Aveline aside earlier. "So, he told you Bobby is innocent?"

Aveline clenched her fists, struggling to keep her emotions in check. Images of Bobby's wounded, lifeless form flashed through her mind. "Isn't he?"

Lucas let out a low laugh. "You've seen so much evidence, yet you still believe he's innocent? I admire your conviction. But, Aveline, you need to bring me evidence to prove his innocence, to

convince me." Aveline closed her eyes briefly, then turned away. "I'll find the evidence, but in the meantime, I hope you won't let Bobby die."

With that, she left the balcony and headed straight for the door of the private room.

Lucas narrowed his sharp eyes, processing her words. It seemed she knew about Bobby's current condition.

Had Russell told her?

Ha!

It seemed Russell's reach had already extended into the Tudor estate. The real question was whether he had swayed just the regular staff or someone more important.

Leaving the private room, Aveline sent a message to Maria, letting her know she was heading home.

Maria didn't respond immediately, likely still caught up in the party.

Aveline pocketed her phone and made her way toward the elevator. But as she passed by another private

room, the door suddenly swung open, and a man grabbed her from behind, covering her mouth and dragging her inside.

"Mmmph!"

Aveline panicked, struggling and clawing at the man, but he forcefully dragged her into the room and slammed the door shut, shoving her away.

"Damn it, you little wench!" the man cursed, shaking his hand where she had scratched him, the marks clearly visible.

Aveline was thrown against the wall, a sharp pain shooting through her shoulder. But there was no time to focus on it—she immediately turned to run for the door. Another man, however, grabbed her and tossed her onto the sofa.

It was only then that Aveline realized there were five or six men in the room.

Her eyes filled with terror, and her face went pale.

"Who... who are you?" she stammered.

Chapter 576

One of the men stepped forward with a lecherous grin. "We're here to show you a good time."

The others burst into laughter and began closing in on Aveline.

A wave of nausea hit her as her face grew even paler. Desperately trying to stay calm, she said, "Who sent you? How much were you paid? I'll double it if you let me go!"

The men hesitated, exchanging glances. One of them asked, "You really have that much money?"

There's a chance! Aveline quickly nodded. "I do. Name your price, and I'll pay it!"

She pulled out her phone. "I can transfer the money to you right now!"

Her fingers moved swiftly over the screen, but before she could dial, one of the men snatched the phone from her hand. He glanced at the screen and sneered. "You think we're that easy to fool?" With that, he smashed her phone on the ground, then stripped off his shirt, revealing a body covered in tattoos.

"We don't want your money—we want you. Don't fight it. Please us, and we'll let you go quickly. Otherwise..." He pulled out a knife, its blade gleaming as he waved it in front of her. Aveline shrank back, her mind racing in a frantic panic. What could she do to save herself? Who had sent these men after her?

"Alright, boys, get her!"

At the tattooed man's command, the others began stripping off their clothes and lunged at her.

Aveline screamed, trying to evade them, but the sofa offered little room to escape. In an instant, they had her pinned down, grabbing her arms and legs as they tore at her clothes. "Please, don't touch me!" Aveline cried out in despair, tears streaming down her face. "I'll give you anything you want, just don't touch me, please!"

The more Aveline cried, the more excited the men became. Their hands were already on her legs.

"No, no! Please, help!"

In the neighboring room, Lucas had just finished his cigarette on the balcony and was heading back inside.

Aaron intercepted him. "Why are you leaving so early? You haven't even had any fun yet."

Lucas replied coolly, "You guys have fun. I have something to take care of."

Aaron clicked his tongue, "Oh, come on. Don't tell me it's because of Aveline? I've got to say, man, you're something else. When she didn't want to divorce, you couldn't be bothered with her, but now that she's distant, you're all over her. What kind of game are you playing?"

Lucas's eyes narrowed, giving Aaron a cold stare. "If you're that bored, how about I bring up that arranged marriage with your family?"

At that, Aaron immediately shut his mouth and turned away, shouting, "Alright, everyone, let's keep the party going!"

Lucas left the room and headed for the elevator, but as he passed by the neighboring suite, he heard something faint.

In a place like this, strange noises were nothing unusual, so he didn't think much of it and continued to the elevator, intent on catching Aveline before she left the building.

Meanwhile, Aveline's cries grew more desperate, but just then, the door to the suite suddenly burst open.

"What the hell are you doing?" a voice demanded.

Chapter 577

Sasha stood frozen in the doorway, her face pale. "Are you all insane? This is a crime!"

The men were visibly annoyed by her interruption, and one of them started toward her, intending to drag her inside as well. "Perfect timing, you little witch! Come join the fun!"

"Ah!" Sasha screamed, drawing the attention of people in the hallway.

Just then, Maria happened to come out of the nearby room. Hearing the commotion, she asked, "What's going on?"

Sasha spotted her and immediately rushed over, grabbing her hand. "Hurry, Aveline's inside, they're—"

What?

Maria's expression changed instantly, and she bolted into the room, where she saw Aveline pinned down by several men.

"You bastards dare to touch someone of mine?" Maria cursed under her breath, swiftly and efficiently taking down the men holding Aveline.

"Hurry, call Lucas!" Maria ordered, turning to Sasha with a stern look. "This needs to be handled quietly!"

"I-I understand..." Sasha stammered, nodding as she shakily pulled out her phone to find Lucas' number.

Maria rushed to Aveline's side, lifting her up. Seeing the tear stains on her face, Maria's heart filled with guilt. "I'm so sorry, I shouldn't have let you go off on your own."

But Aveline just stared blankly ahead, her body trembling uncontrollably.

Maria held her close, adjusting her clothes to cover her up properly.

Lucas arrived shortly after. The men were still sprawled on the floor, groaning from the beating Maria had given them, unable to move.

Sasha quickly entered the room and shut the door behind her, wanting to ensure the situation didn't leak out and damage Aveline's reputation.

"I..... I was just passing by when I heard someone yelling for help," Sasha explained, her voice shaking. "I came in to check and found her like this."

Lucas yanked at his tie, his chiseled face darkening with a fierce, vengeful expression. He stormed over to the men on the floor and began to beat them relentlessly, his blows landing with brutal force.

His assault was even more vicious than Maria's. At first, the men could still scream in pain, but as time went on, their voices faded until they barely had any breath left.

Maria spoke up, "Mr. Tudor, don't kill them all. We need to find out who sent them."

Lucas, his eyes blazing red with rage, hesitated for a moment before delivering another punch, though slightly less forcefully.

His entire demeanor radiated violent fury. With cold, murderous intent in his eyes, he stepped on one man's groin, eliciting a scream so agonized that the man nearly convulsed from the pain.

"Who sent you?" Lucas demanded coldly.

"I'll talk... I'll talk..." The man's face contorted with pain. "It was... it was Miss Winter. She paid us and threatened our families. She said if we ruined Aveline, she'd get us and our families out of the country..."

Sasha covered her mouth in shock. "How could it be her?"

Lucas didn't ease up; instead, he pressed down harder with his foot, causing the man to howl in pain before passing out from the agony.

Turning away from the unconscious men, Lucas, still brimming with rage, approached Aveline. Seeing the tears streaked across her face, his heart felt as if it had been shattered into pieces, leaving him in unbearable pain.

He gently draped his coat over her shoulders and whispered, "Aveline, I'll make sure you get your revenge."

Aveline's eyelashes trembled, and suddenly, she let out a bitter laugh. As she laughed, more tears began to fall.

Chapter 578

Sasha was startled by Aveline's sudden outburst. "What's wrong with you?"

Maria held Aveline close, feeling the intense emotions radiating from her. It pained Maria deeply—no girl could remain calm after experiencing something so traumatic. "Aveline, it's over now. You're safe," Maria murmured softly, trying to offer some comfort.

But Aveline suddenly shoved Lucas away, her eyes still brimming with tears, but now burning with fury. "You're going to avenge me? Don't you find that laughable?" Lucas' brow furrowed, his expression darkening. The violent energy that had surrounded him moments ago seemed to dissipate, leaving him unable to respond. Aveline trembled as she spoke, her voice filled with bitterness. "Last time, Sophia and Barbara teamed up against me. They tricked me into going to the hospital, drugged me, and locked me in a container by the sea. The water kept rising, and I almost drowned! And what did you do? When Sophia tried to kill me, what did you do? What did you do?"

She wiped at her face, trying to clear away the tears, but they only kept coming, her voice quivering with anger. "You ignored it. Fine, I handled it myself. She wanted to destroy me, so I set out to ruin everything she cared about!

"She wanted a place in the Winter family, so I sabotaged her projects, making her family lose faith in her. She wanted to marry you, so I stayed by your side to spite her. We agreed on all of this beforehand!" By the end, she was nearly screaming, tears streaming down her face. "But what did you do, Lucas? Russell locked her in a container to make her suffer the same way I did,

but Brian rescued her. Just when her project was about to collapse, you suddenly invested in her company and saved her! Lucas, tell me, what are you trying to do?"

As Aveline's tearful accusations rang out, the darkness on Lucas's face vanished, replaced by a look of stunned confusion.

"I didn't send Brian to rescue her, nor did I invest in her company," Lucas insisted, his voice tense. "Aveline, could it be that Russell lied to you? I've told you before-his intentions aren't pure. Now he's feeding you lies, trying to drive a wedge between us."

"Hah, hahahaha!" Aveline's laughter was bitter and full of sarcasm. "Lucas, do you really think our relationship needs someone else to sabotage it?"

Her expression was full of self-mockery. "Why? Whether it's love or hate, why do I have to endure this from you? Everything that's happened to me is because of you, Lucas. Can't you just let me go? I'm begging you, please, just let me go!"

As she spoke, Aveline broke free from Maria's arms and dropped to her knees in front of Lucas, her face twisted in pain. "I'll kneel, I'll bow to you—just let me go!"

Her eyes were filled with a desperate longing for release.

Lucas' eyes widened in shock.

Instinctively, he grabbed her arms and pulled her up. "Aveline, what are you doing?"

He clenched his jaw, struggling to contain his emotions. "I told you, I didn't do any of those things. Whatever punishment you want for Sophia, I'll help you carry it out!"

But Aveline's entire body trembled with sobs. The trauma of what she had just gone through, combined with everything she had endured before, was pushing her to the brink of a mental breakdown.

Chapter 579

"I want her dead-I want her to suffer a fate worse than death!" Aveline clung to Lucas' arm, her tear-filled eyes blazing with intense hatred.

"Alright," Lucas agreed almost instantly, without a second thought. He then turned to Sasha. "Go bring her here."

Sasha hesitated for a moment, then quickly responded, "Okay."

But as she reached the door, she paused and looked back. "If she sees Aveline like this..."

Lucas realized the issue and looked down at Aveline, who was trembling against him, too exhausted to speak. "I'll have someone take her out. You can watch everything from the surveillance room, okay?" Aveline, having just poured out all her emotions, was too drained to respond. She simply leaned against Lucas, her body still shaking.

Lucas turned to Sasha. "Keep an eye on Sophia. Don't let her leave too soon."

"Got it." Sasha nodded before leaving the room.

Maria stood up, exchanged a glance with Lucas, and then gently said to Aveline, "Let's go home and get you changed, alright?"

Aveline nodded weakly. "Okay."

Maria helped Aveline to her feet. "Mr. Tudor, I'll take her home now."

"Alright," Lucas replied.

As Maria and Aveline left, Lucas sank into the sofa in the private room, lighting a cigarette. Smoke swirled around him as he replayed Aveline's words in his mind. Her voice, full of despair, echoed in his thoughts—she blamed him for all her suffering.

Taking out his phone, Lucas dialed Desmond's number.

"Hello, Mr. Tudor," Desmond answered quickly, a hint of confusion in his voice.

"Have there been any large transfers from the company recently?" Lucas asked coldly.

"I'll check with the finance department," Desmond replied.

"Do it quickly," Lucas demanded, his tone icy.

As he hung up, Lucas took another drag of his cigarette, his mind consumed by the image of Aveline's tear-streaked, hopeless face. She had said that all her pain was because of him. She had asked him to let her go.

He had tried—he had genuinely attempted to let her go, thinking he could return to the way things were before, just as he had once managed to live without her. But he had failed.

He realized that he couldn't be without her. Even if she never smiled at him again, he still wanted her near.

Letting her go? He knew now that he could never do it, not in this lifetime.

About five minutes later, Desmond called back. "Mr. Tudor, there was indeed a ten million dollars transfer. After investigating, I found out that it was arranged by Barbara, who directed the funds to invest in Miss Winter's company."

A cold, dangerous gleam flashed in Lucas's eyes. "Fire everyone involved. Blacklist them across the entire industry."

Desmond was shocked but quickly responded, "Understood!"

This was a serious matter—one that had crossed Lucas' bottom line.

Desmond couldn't help but wonder what had caused Barbara's sudden change in behavior. She had once been so fond of Aveline, but after regaining her clarity, she seemed to have taken a liking to Sophia instead.

It was baffling.

Back at home, Aveline showered and changed into fresh clothes, feeling much calmer.

When she emerged from her room, she found Maria sitting on the sofa, scrolling through her phone. Hearing Aveline's footsteps, Maria looked up and, noticing that she seemed more composed, stood up and asked, "How are you feeling now?"

"I'm okay. Let's go," Aveline replied.

Maria's expression was a mix of concern and doubt. "Are you sure you're up for this?"

Chapter 580

Aveline replied, "If I don't see her punished with my own eyes, I won't be able to rest."

Hearing this, Maria decided not to press further.

The two of them set off again, returning to the Ninth Mansion, but this time they stayed in the car.

Aveline dialed Lucas's number and said, "I'm back."

"Alright, I'll send someone to get you," Lucas' deep, magnetic voice came through the phone.

Aveline didn't say anything more and ended the call.

About five minutes later, someone approached the car, tapped on the window, and respectfully asked, "Are you Miss Young?"

"Yes, that's me," Aveline responded.

The man said, "Miss Young, please follow me. Mr. Tudor is waiting for you."

Aveline got out of the car and followed the bodyguard.

Maria, still in the car, said, "I won't go in with you."

Aveline nodded. "You can head back. I'll handle the rest."

Maria suggested, "Take tomorrow off. Rest at home, don't think about anything. It's all behind you now."

Aveline gave her a small smile. "Okay, I will."

She turned and followed the bodyguard into the elevator.

This time, they headed straight to the guest room section of the Ninth Mansion. As the door swung open, Aveline spotted Lucas on the sofa, with Sophia seated across from him. Sophia's face was lit with excitement, clearly engrossed in an animated conversation with Lucas.

The sound of the door opening startled Sophia. She turned around and, seeing Aveline enter, immediately frowned.

"What are you doing here?"

Earlier, Sophia had been in the private room playing games with Rina and the others when one of Lucas' bodyguards approached her, saying that Lucas wanted to see her.

Overjoyed, she quickly said goodbye to Rina and followed the bodyguard here.

Seeing Lucas in the room had made her palms sweat with excitement. Why had he suddenly asked to see her? Was he finally going to propose to her?

As a whirlwind of thoughts raced through her mind, Sophia sat across from Lucas, her heart pounding with excitement as she gazed at his handsome face, eagerly awaiting his words. But since she had entered the room, he hadn't even glanced at her, let alone spoken a word.

What was going on?

Sophia felt a pang of unease creeping in, and her earlier excitement began to waver.

Then Aveline walked in.

Sophia's mood plummeted instantly. What was this wretched woman doing here again? She couldn't shake the feeling that Aveline was there to steal Lucas's attention.

Her eyes narrowed with suspicion as she watched Aveline approach.

Lucas noticed Aveline and his eyes darkened as he studied her expression, relieved to see that she seemed more composed. He then addressed the bodyguard at the door. "Bring them all in."

"Yes, sir," the bodyguard nodded, pulling out his phone to relay the instructions.

Aveline walked over and sat down beside Lucas, completely ignoring Sophia. After all, there would be plenty of time to deal with her soon enough.

Lucas took her hand in his, asking, "How are you?"

Aveline, with a calm expression, tried to pull her hand away. "I'm fine."

But Lucas didn't let go, tightening his grip until she couldn't break free.

"Don't waste your energy, Aveline. I'm not letting you go," he said, his deep eyes locking onto hers with a double meaning.

Aveline's long lashes fluttered, a wave of bitterness washing over her.

Unable to bear it any longer, Sophia spoke up. "Lucas, why did you call me here? What's going on?"