

Divorced Me 611

Chapter 611

Aveline opened the file and noticed the contact's last name was Blake, which made her hesitate. She quickly grabbed her phone and dialed the number. The unfamiliar digits gave her a surprising sense of relief.

"Hello?"

But when she heard Desmond's voice on the other end, her mood soured immediately.

"Why is it you?"

Desmond was momentarily taken aback. "Uh... Miss Young? Is there something you need from me?"

He pretended to be surprised, but in reality, Lucas was sitting right next to him, listening in through the speakerphone.

Aveline asked, "I received a commission to design a villa. Did you buy a villa? Are you getting married?"

Desmond hesitated, glancing at Lucas for guidance.

Lucas, maintaining his cold demeanor, gave nothing away, leaving Desmond to fend for himself.

Desmond nervously stammered, "Ah... yes, it's just a coincidence that the project landed with you. What a small world, huh?"

Aveline, not buying the casual tone, asked, "What are your requirements? Let me know, and I'll take notes."

Desmond looked to Lucas again, but still received no help. Internally, Desmond was panicking-how was he supposed to come up with requirements? He couldn't afford a villa, let alone plan a wedding!

Finally, after a brief moment of thought, Desmond suggested, "Uh, Miss Young, how about we discuss this in person? Maybe even do a site visit? It could help inspire your design."

He carefully watched Lucas' reaction and, seeing no objections, sighed in relief. He had made the right call-arranging a meeting with Aveline was the correct move.

Aveline agreed, "Alright. Are you free this afternoon? Send me the location of the villa."

Desmond quickly replied, "Yes, I'm free. I'll send you the address right away. We can discuss everything in person then."

"Okay. See you later," Aveline responded before ending the call.

"Goodbye."

After the call ended, Desmond exhaled a heavy breath, cautiously glancing at Lucas to gauge his reaction. "Mr. Tudor, I have a

meeting this afternoon... Maybe you could go in my place?"

Lucas shot him a cold look. "Are you busier than I am?"

Desmond gave a nervous laugh. "Heh, well, I've been slacking off lately, so I thought I'd be a bit more diligent today."

"Oh," Lucas replied with icy indifference, "I suppose I can help you out this time."

Desmond quickly nodded, "Thank you, Mr. Tudor. I'll get back to work now."

"Mm," Lucas murmured.

As soon as Desmond left the office, the fake smile on his face vanished, replaced by a look of sheer dread. He just wanted to focus on his job and earn his paycheck-was that too much to ask?

In the afternoon, Aveline arrived at the new villa development with her measuring tools in hand. The area was part of Cloudflare City's luxury villa complex, nestled

scenic spot surrounded by

West

mountains and water-a natural

haven in the city.

The prime land had long been acquired by DK Group, who transformed it into this villa complex. With the rising property prices, every inch of this area was worth a fortune. Aveline stood before a vast, barren piece of land, surveying the untouched, expansive plot. The area had yet to be developed, leaving the surrounding landscape in its natural state. Just then, the sound of a car engine drew her attention. She turned to see an expensive Porsche pulling up nearby, her expression cooling slightly as she recognized the vehicle.

Lucas stepped out, wearing dark sunglasses, with his shirt collar casually unbuttoned and no tie, exuding an air of effortless elegance.

"What are you doing here? Where's Desmond?" Aveline asked.

Lucas walked up to her, his gaze hidden behind the tinted lenses. "Why shouldn't I be here? And why should he be?"

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Aveline frowned, stepping back to put some distance between them. "Wasn't he the one planning to design the wedding house?"

Lucas responded coolly, "This is my property."

Aveline paused. Well, that explained it—she had been tricked.

She turned on her heel to leave. "Find another designer. I'm not interested."

But Lucas' deep voice halted her in her tracks. "But you've already signed a contract with me. Have you checked the penalty for breaking it?" Aveline froze for a moment, then turned back to him.

Lucas continued, "If you break the contract and refuse to design my house or fail to design one that satisfies me-the penalty is 20 million." Aveline stared at him. "Why don't you just rob a bank?"

Lucas smirked. "Why would I? 20 million is nothing to me. Don't tell me you can't afford it?"

Aveline fought the urge to slap him. For him, 20 million might be pocket change, but for her, it was an impossible sum. She had her savings for the future-no way could she give that up to him! Realizing she had no choice, Aveline swallowed her frustration and walked back over, pulling out her pen and notebook. "What style do you want? What kind of design are you looking for?"

Lucas casually strolled further into the empty plot, hands in his pockets, as if he were taking a leisurely walk through his own private garden.

Aveline followed him, but after a while, he still hadn't said a word.

Feeling irritated, she asked coldly, "Did you lose your voice?"

Lucas turned to look at her. "I'm your client now, your god. Is this how you treat your clients?"

Aveline rolled her eyes. "Alright, client, god-what kind of villa style do you want?"

Even through his sunglasses, she could feel the coldness in his gaze.

Aveline fought the urge to roll her eyes and said, "Lucas, since we've signed the contract, let's just focus on getting this project done. That way, you get the villa you want, and I get paid-a win-win."

But Lucas replied, "I want it to be a wedding house."

Aveline began taking notes, pen in hand.

"The garden needs a courtyard, a pool, and a stream with a bridge none of that can be left out. But it can't look like any other place; the villa shouldn't have any foreign designs," Lucas added.

Aveline noted everything down meticulously.

As she concentrated, Lucas moved closer to her and suddenly asked, "Do you have any ideas?"

His sudden proximity startled

Aveline, causing her to take a step back. She frowned and said, "If you

want to talk, just talk-why do you

need to stand so close?"

If Judy found out, she'd be in deep trouble! The last thing she wanted was to get mixed up in his mess. It was all too much hassle.

She continued, "Lucas, you shouldn't be asking me. You should ask the future lady of this wedding house what she wants."

Lucas' lips tightened slightly. "Aveline, are you heartless?"

Aveline responded calmly, "I am not."

Lucas gave a soft, derisive laugh. "No, you don't. If you did, you wouldn't be so indifferent about me getting engaged."

Aveline found it laughable. "Why should I care about your engagement? Lucas, we're divorced."

The sunlight poured over them, casting a stark contrast against the wide, open space. Despite the openness, the atmosphere between them grew tense and stifling.

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"But you once said you loved me."

Lucas' gaze was unwavering as if he wouldn't rest until he got an answer.

Aveline sighed helplessly and asked, "Do you have any other requests?"

She was referring to his ideas for the design.

Lucas remained silent.

Seeing that he had nothing more to add, Aveline said, "If there's nothing else, I'll start taking measurements."

She needed to verify the dimensions against the plans to ensure everything was accurate before she could begin drafting the blueprints.

Pulling out her measuring tools, she got to work. The plot of land was enormous, and she spent the entire afternoon measuring just half of it. She'd have to return the next morning to finish the job. Wiping the sweat from her forehead, she recorded the data and prepared to leave.

The Porsche was still parked at the entrance. Lucas was sitting inside, having spent the entire afternoon there while she worked. Aveline couldn't help but think he must be incredibly bored. Since he hadn't left yet, she approached the car and asked, "Lucas, could you give me a ride?"

Lucas had taken off his sunglasses, holding a cigarette between his fingers. He glanced at her, his expression unreadable.

After a long afternoon of work, Aveline was covered in dust, but her eyes were still bright.

He replied, "Two hundred dollars for the ride."

"Oh, never mind then," Aveline said, turning away. There was a bus stop nearby, and she could easily take the bus home. Lucas didn't stop her. He simply watched her through the rearview mirror, his gaze growing even more inscrutable.

...

When Aveline returned home, she was utterly exhausted.

Selena, noticing how tired she looked, said, "I'll order takeout. After you eat, you should get some rest."

"Alright," Aveline agreed. "I'll take a shower first."

"Go ahead."

After her shower, Aveline came out drying her hair with a towel. The sky had already darkened.

Just then, her phone rang. Glancing at the screen, she saw it was the same number Desmond had used earlier.

She pressed her lips together and answered, "Hello?"

On the other end of the line, Lucas' voice came through. "I've got some new ideas. Come over."

Aveline replied, "Just tell me over the phone."

Lucas insisted, "It'll be more effective if we talk in person. Come over now."

And with that, he hung up.

Aveline rolled her eyes, suddenly understanding how Selena must have felt before. No doubt about it-Lucas and Aaron were best buddies, both of them equally infuriating.

When she stepped out of the bedroom, Selena called her over. "Come on, dinner's ready."

Aveline sighed. "You go ahead. I need to step out for a bit."

Selena looked puzzled. "Where are you going?"

Aveline replied wearily, "Downstairs."

Selena shook her head in exasperation. "What does that nuisance want with you now? He just won't let up, will he?" Aveline sighed. "I wish I knew."

When she reached downstairs, she

rang the doorbell. It wasn't long before the door opened to reveal Lucas, wearing a bathrobe, looking more relaxed and casual than usual.

Aveline got straight to the point. "What's the idea? Let's hear it." She even had her notebook and pen ready to jot down any notes. Lucas turned and started walking inside. "Come in and I'll tell you."

Aveline hesitated, preferring to stay at the door. "Just say it-I can hear you from here."

But Lucas walked out to the balcony and began speaking in a low voice, making it impossible for her to hear a single word. Aveline sighed in frustration. There was no avoiding it. She stepped inside, her expression flat. "What exactly are your ideas?"

Seeing her comply, Lucas couldn't help but smile slightly. He the computer. "I found

reghtly. He pointed to

"I found some. a look."

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Aveline shifted her gaze from Lucas to the laptop on the table. She decided to sit down and began scrolling through the reference images, carefully studying each one.

The images showcased the evolution of modern domestic villa architecture, with many designs incorporating foreign elements that Lucas clearly disliked. As a result, he wanted something more distinct and personalized.

Engrossed in her task, Aveline didn't notice when Lucas moved behind her. Suddenly, he leaned down, placing his hands on the table and effectively trapping her in his embrace.

"I think this one looks good," he murmured, his gaze fixed on the screen.

Aveline stiffened, turning her head slightly to avoid his proximity. "If you have something to say, just say it. Why do you need to be so close?"

Lucas tilted his head to look at her, his eyes dark and unreadable, with a flicker of something she couldn't quite identify.

"I'm just making sure you can hear me," he replied in a low voice.

Aveline rolled her eyes and refocused on the screen. "If you prefer something more traditional, you could go for a classic English garden style-it's really elegant." Lucas asked, "Do you like the garden style?"

Aveline nodded. "Yes, I do. With rock formations and flowing water, it creates a peaceful environment where you can enjoy different views without even leaving home."

Lucas stared at her intently. "Then let's design it that way."

Aveline's hand tightened slightly on the mouse, and she asked, "Aren't you going to ask the future lady of the house for her opinion?"

Did Judy even like garden-style designs? What if she didn't? Aveline thought it would be a hassle to redesign the plans if that were the case. It would be better to get everyone's input now rather than having to start over later.

Lucas straightened up, putting some distance between them, though his gaze remained on her. "It's my house, and I make the decisions."

Aveline relaxed slightly, nodding. "Alright, I understand."

She stood up and asked, "Is there anything else?"

Lucas replied, "Nothing for now."

Aveline nodded. "Alright, I'll head out then. If you come up with any new ideas, just let me know."

Her tone was calm and professional as if she were genuinely treating him as just another client. The dynamic between them felt strangely new, a different experience from anything they'd had before.

As Lucas watched her walk away, his gaze darkened. Suddenly, he

said, might have new ideaset

time, so keep your phone

any

A sense of unease washed over Aveline, a premonition that the days ahead might be far from peaceful.

"Got it," she replied flatly, with no emotion.

Just as she reached the door and was about to close it behind her, she hesitated. Turning back, she asked, "Lucas, since you're planning to get married, can you stop interfering in my life?"

Lucas let out a quiet, amused scoff. "I thought you'd never ask."

Aveline continued, "You're like a constant threat looming over me. Of course I need to ask."

And she needed to pick the right moment to do it—preferably when he was in a good mood. But that was no easy task.

Lucas sank into the couch, his voice indifferent as he replied, "No."

Aveline frowned. "If you keep this up, your future wife will come after me."

"And what if she does?" Lucas raised an eyebrow, a smirk playing on his lips. "Once she's my wife, she can do as she pleases."

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Aveline's expression darkened instantly. "So, your happiness is built on my suffering?"

Lucas replied calmly, "If you're feeling hurt, you can always come to me for protection."

Aveline let out a bitter laugh. "Protection? As your mistress?"

Lucas didn't respond, simply watching her with that faint, mocking smile.

The thought was nothing short of insulting to Aveline. Give up the role of his wife to become his mistress? Not a chance.

She turned and stormed out, slamming the door behind her.

"Bang!"

Lucas closed his eyes for a moment, the smirk fading from his face. He walked over to the liquor cabinet, poured himself a drink, and slowly sipped it. His gaze fixed on the dark night outside, though his eyes were even darker.

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When Aveline returned home, Selena immediately asked, "Did he give you a hard time?"

Aveline shook her head. "No, just his usual nonsense."

Selena burst out laughing. "That's a pretty accurate description."

After washing her hands, Aveline sat down beside Selena, grabbing a piece of fried chicken. "Mmm... food never lets me down."

Selena handed her a beer. "Here you go, babe. Beer won't let you down either. After this, you'll sleep like a baby."

"Sounds good."

Aveline didn't refuse. Life had been tough lately, and she needed something to take the edge off.

After one beer, Aveline was already feeling tipsy. Her tolerance for alcohol was low, but at least she was home, where it didn't matter if she got a little drunk.

She cuddled a pillow, lying peacefully on the couch, watching Selena move around the room.

"Selena..." Aveline's voice was soft, almost playful, with a hint of a pout. "Why aren't you coming over here?"

Selena smiled. "I'm coming, I'm coming. Let's go to the bedroom and chat."

Selena finished tidying up and then came over to help Aveline to the bedroom. Aveline obediently followed, and once inside, she immediately lay down on the bed.

Selena couldn't help but chuckle at

how much Aveline resembled a well-behaved child. "Ave, you really shouldn't drink outside. If someone saw you like this, they might ust carry you off."

Aveline nodded earnestly. "Mm, I know. No drinking outside."

Selena couldn't resist pinching her cheek before lying down next to her. "Goodnight, Ave."

"Goodnight, Selena."

At three in the morning, Aveline was rudely awakened by her phone ringing She frowned deeply,

grabbed the phone without checking who was calling, and answered it with irritation. "Who is it?"

Her voice, though, was soft and groggy, laced with the kind of drowsiness that tugged at the heart.

Lucas' deep voice came through the line. "Aveline, come over. I've got a new idea."

Aveline, now fully irritated, snapped, "Just because you say so doesn't mean I'll come! Who do you think you are?"

"Hmm?" Lucas sounded surprised. "Aveline, do you know who I am?"

Aveline mumbled, "I don't care who you are, but calling me in the middle of the night makes you a bad person!"

Lucas chuckled. "Have you been drinking?"

Aveline, stubbornly, "I have not!"

Sleepiness washed over her like a tide, and she didn't want to keep talking I'm tired... don't bother me,' she muttered, and before she knew it, she had fallen asleep, forgetting to hang up the phone.

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"Ave-Aveline?" Lucas called out, but there was no response from the other end. Only the sound of steady breathing reached his ears.

He chuckled softly, then put the phone on speaker, letting it stay connected. As he listened to her gentle breathing, the chaos in his mind gradually eased. If she were beside him right now, he thought, he might feel even more at peace.

The next morning, Aveline opened her eyes and instinctively reached for her phone to check her messages. To her surprise, the phone had shut off on its own.

Huh? What happened? Why did it turn off?

Confused, Aveline plugged it in to charge and waited for it to power back on. When it did, a flood of messages appeared, and she realized she had been on the phone with Lucas for four hours the previous night from 3 a.m. until 7 a.m.!

Aveline stared at her phone in bewilderment.

A phone call? How was it possible she had no memory of it?

Just then, there was a knock on the door.

Selena poked her head in and, seeing that Aveline was awake, said, "Hey, I bought breakfast. Come and eat."

"Oh, okay," Aveline replied, still in a daze as she ran a hand through her hair and got up to wash.

When she came out, she asked, "Did I act weird last night? Like, did I do anything strange?"

Selena shook her head. "Nope, you were really well-behaved. You went to bed and fell asleep almost immediately."

Was that so? Then how had she ended up talking to Lucas for so long? The worst part was, she couldn't remember a single thing she'd said.

Seeing her puzzled expression, Selena asked, "What's up?"

Aveline shook her head, trying to brush off her confusion. "Nothing."

After finishing her breakfast of fresh milk and pancakes, Aveline headed out for work. As she stepped into the elevator, she encountered Lucas. He was dressed in a sleek silver-gray suit, looking handsome and slightly wicked, exuding a cool, aristocratic aura.

Aveline glanced at him with suspicion but didn't voice her thoughts.

Noticing her gaze, Lucas looked over at her. "Aveline, do you remember what you said last night?"

Aveline froze for a moment. So, she really had said things she shouldn't have?

"I was drunk," she replied. "I don't remember."

Lucas' lips curled into a sly, mischievous smile. "It's alright. I remember. I can help you recall."

"No need," Aveline quickly refused. If she'd forgotten, there was no point in dredging it up.

Lucas gave her a long, intense look. "You said you love me, that you miss me."

"That's impossible," Aveline denied his claim almost instantly.

There was no way she would have said something like that.

But Lucas responded, "You also said you were drunk and forgot everything. So how do you know you didn't say it?"

Aveline replied calmly, "Because I don't like you. I don't love you."

Her tone was steady as if she were stating a simple fact.

However, Lucas' expression darkened, though only for a

moment before he looked a fel

recording."

Aveline's composed demeanor cracked. "What did you say?"

He had a recording? Did she really say

words to him? But homet

sild that be possible? She è him anymore. Contents

Just then, the elevator doors opened, and Lucas stepped out.

Aveline quickly followed him. "Where's the recording? I want to hear it."

She couldn't believe it without proof.

Lucas gave her a cool glance. "And why should I let you hear it? What if you try to destroy the evidence?"

"_"

Aveline opened her mouth to argue but Lucas had already gotten into his car and driven off, leaving her standing there, completely bewildered.

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Though she couldn't shake the thought that she might have said something like that, Aveline refused to believe it without hearing the recording.

Wait a minute...

If Lucas wanted to stop her, he could easily do it. So why would he worry about her deleting the recording? If he wouldn't let her listen, maybe he was bluffing. Convinced she was onto something, Aveline rolled her eyes in exasperation and left the complex.

She returned to the villa site, but this time she brought some help with her.

Sidney looked around at the vast area and said, "You should've called me yesterday."

Aveline replied, "I didn't realize it was this big. Let's get started."

"Got it."

With two people working, the task went much faster. By noon, they had finished all the measurements.

After double-checking the data to make sure everything was correct, Aveline said, "Let's go. Lunch is on me."

Sidney walked beside her. "Are you cooking?"

Aveline paused, caught off guard.

Sidney scratched his head, a bit embarrassed. "Your cooking was really good last time, but we can skip it today. You must be exhausted." Aveline smiled. "Yeah, I am. Maybe in a few days."

"Sure."

They headed back into the city and found a small pasta shop for lunch. It was the middle of the day, and the place was bustling with people. Aveline was starving, and when the pasta arrived, she didn't bother with formalities and dug in.

Sidney watched her and asked, "Aveline, has he been bothering you lately?"

"Mmm, no." Aveline shook her head. "How about you? How's your mom doing?"

Sidney replied, "She's doing well at the hospital, no worries there. But she keeps mentioning you."

Aveline smiled. "Once I get through this busy period, I'll go visit your mom."

Sidney grinned. "She'd be thrilled to see you."

Just then, his phone rang. Glancing at the screen, he saw it was a call from the nurse. His expression immediately tensed—nurses usually didn't call unless something was wrong.

He answered quickly, "Hello, Ms. Dolly. What's the matter?"

Dolly's voice was urgent. "Sidney, you need to get back here right away! Some woman showed up out of nowhere and is trying to kick your mother out of the hospital. She even brought bodyguards, and they look really intimidating!"

Sidney's brow furrowed. "Alright, I'm on my way. Don't let them touch my mom."

Aveline wiped her mouth with a napkin and asked, "What's happening?"

Sidney explained the situation, and Aveline's face immediately mirrored his concern.

A woman? Who else besides Lucas would go after Sidney like this?

Setting her utensils down, Aveline said, "I'm coming with you."

Sidney tried to protest, "It's okay, I can handle it."

But Aveline insisted, "I can call Russell if things get out of hand. He might be able to help."

Seeing no other option, Sidney nodded. "Alright."

The two of them hurried to the hospital. As soon as they stepped out of the elevator, they could hear a commotion.

"Throw all their stuff out! How dare they stay here when they can't even pay the medical bills? Have they no shame?"

The voice was disturbingly familiar, dripping with malice.

Aveline turned to see none other than Rina standing in the hallway.

Why was it her?

People from the other rooms had

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Rina's position was undeniable-she was the spoiled princess of the Johnson family, with strong ties to Russell that made her untouchable. The doctors and nurses knew better than to challenge her. The nurse was doing her best to intervene. "What are you doing? This is a hospital! You can't just throw people out!"

"Get her out of here!" Rina ordered harshly.

"Stop!" Sidney rushed forward, blocking the doorway to his mother's room. He glared at Rina, demanding, "Who are you? What right do you have to kick us out?"

Rina gave him a dismissive once-over and sneered, "I looked into your background. You can't even afford the hospital bills, yet you think you can stay here? Where do you get the nerve? Do you think the hospital is a charity?"

Sidney's expression darkened, but he stood tall, his voice cold as he said, "That's none of your business! The hospital agreed to let us stay."

Rina crossed her arms and glanced at the doctor beside her. "Oh, really? He can't pay his bills, and the hospital agreed? Does Mr. Skyler Sr. know about this?"

It was a blatant threat.

One of the doctors stammered, "Miss Johnson, w-we'll take care of it..."

Rina turned back to Sidney, her tone dripping with cruelty. "If you're that poor, maybe you should stop seeking treatment and just die. The sooner you die, the sooner you can be reincarnated into a better life."

"Smack!"

Her words were abruptly cut off by the sound of a sharp slap.

Rina clutched her face in disbelief, while everyone around them stood in stunned silence.

Aveline lowered her hand, her voice icy. "Miss Johnson, you're supposed to be a refined lady. Is this how you behave?"

"You wretched woman, how dare you slap me!"

Rina was livid.

No one had ever treated her like this before. From a young age, everyone had treated her with the utmost respect-no one had dared to even raise their voice at her, let alone strike her.

"Grab her! I want her face torn apart!" Rina screamed, commanding her bodyguards.

The bodyguards immediately moved to seize Aveline.

But just then, Mason and Jason stepped forward, flanking Aveline on either side, ready to protect her.

Rina's expression darkened further. "Aren't you Russell's bodyguards? What are you doing here?"

Mason replied, "Miss Johnson, we're now working as Miss Young's bodyguards."

Rina was on the verge of losing it. Russell had actually assigned his personal bodyguards to protect Aveline! This wretched woman-how dare she!

"Why are you all just standing there? Grab her!" she shouted at her remaining guards.

The bodyguards moved toward Aveline, but none of them were a match for Mason and Jason. Within moments, most of them were incapacitated, lying on the floor of the hospital corridor.

The commotion in the hallway was intense.

Aveline turned to one of the nurses and asked, "Where do I pay the bill?"

The nurse, clearly nervous, replied, "I... I can take it here."

Aveline walked over, paid the hospital fees, and then addressed the room. "Now, do any of you have a reason to kick them out?"

The doctors and nurses remained

silent, unwilling to get involved in the

mess unfolding before them. They

were small players in this

high-stakes confrontation, and all they could do was wait for it to end.

Aveline then faced Rina. "Miss Johnson, I hope today's events teach you a lesson. Your status doesn't give you the right to do whatever you please. Even if you' were the most powerful person in the world, when you deserve a beating, someone will deliver it."

"You... you wretched woman!" Rina glared at her furiously. "You just wait-I won't let you get away with this!"

Aveline raised an eyebrow. "With so many witnesses here today, if anything happens to me in the near future, you'll be the prime suspect."

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Rina narrowed her eyes. "Are you threatening me?"

Aveline shook her head. "Isn't it you, Miss Johnson, who does the threatening?"

Rina let out a cold laugh. "Do you really think this will make me afraid of you?"

She stepped closer to Aveline, her eyes filled with open disdain. "Taking you down would be as easy as squashing a bug. So go ahead, wait for your end, you wretch."

With that, she turned and marched off, her bodyguards trailing behind her in a show of force.

The other patients and their families in the hospital continued to peek out from their rooms, watching the spectacle unfold.

"Mom, Mom!" Sidney's urgent voice suddenly broke through the tension.

Aveline's expression shifted, and she rushed over, only to find Sidney's mother unconscious in the hospital room.

"Doctor! Doctor!"

Sidney's mother was rushed into the emergency room.

Sidney stood by the door, his posture slumped, his face noticeably paler than before.

Aveline stayed beside him, offering comfort. "She'll be alright."

Sidney's voice was rough and dry as he said, "Aveline, you've helped me again. Thank you."

Aveline replied, "We're friends, no need for thanks."

Sidney looked at her, something unspoken flickering in his eyes. "Aveline, I—"

But Aveline cut him off, "Just remember, you'll need to work hard to pay back the hospital fees."

Sidney managed a small smile, the dark cloud over his heart lifting slightly. "I will. I promise."

Aveline smiled back. "So don't worry too much. Everything's taken care of now. Just focus on helping your mom recover and keep working hard."

"I will." Sidney nodded, his gaze lingering on her with newfound depth.

Aveline looked away and took a seat on a nearby chair.

Ruth's health problems stemmed mainly from her heart condition, and she had just experienced a severe heart attack that nearly claimed her life. It took the doctors three hours to stabilize her.

When she was finally back in her hospital room, she had regained consciousness, but her face was pale, and she looked incredibly weak. She reached out a trembling hand, trying to grasp Aveline's.

Aveline immediately stepped forward. "Ma'am, it's alright now. Just focus on resting and getting better."

Ruth's eyes were filled with gratitude. "Aveline, thank you..."

Aveline gave her a gentle smile. "Ma'am, there's no need to thank me. I'm Sidney's friend; this is what I should do."

Sidney added, "Mom, you should rest now. It's getting late. I'll walk Aveline out."

"Okay, be careful." Ruth nodded, reluctantly letting go of Aveline's hand.

Once they were out of the room, Aveline turned to Sidney. "You don't need to see me off. Stay here and take care of your mom. I've got other things to handle."

Sidney looked at her intently and, without warning, pulled her into a hug.

Aveline was startled and instinctively tried to pull away. "What are you-"

"Aveline, thank you," Sidney said, holding her tightly for a moment before releasing her and heading back into the room.

Aveline stood there, her hand still awkwardly suspended in mid-air, feeling a bit shaken.

Just then, her phone rang. She glanced at the screen and saw it was Russell calling.

"Hello, Russ."

Russell's voice was filled with concern. "I just heard about what happened at the hospital. Are you okay? Did you get hurt?"

As Aveline walked towards the elevator, she replied, "I'm fine. In fact, I even slapped Rina."

"You slapped Rina?" Russell was

clearly taken aback, then said in a low tone, "You're in trouble now

She's incredibly arrogant'

let this go easily."

Chapter 620

Aveline paused, her finger hovering over the elevator button as she asked, "So what should I do?"

Russell thought for a moment before suggesting, "Maybe I should assign a few more bodyguards to you?"

Aveline couldn't help but imagine the scene of being escorted by a whole squad of bodyguards every time she went out, and she let out a small, exasperated laugh.

"It's not something I want, but this young lady showed up at the hospital out of nowhere, causing trouble and trying to evict my colleague's mother. They don't even know each other, so why would she do this?"

Russell replied, "Then you need to think about who might be targeting your colleague, even to the point of using someone else to do the dirty work."

As Aveline stepped into the elevator, her expression turned cold. Who else could it be? The only person who had been consistently targeting Sidney was Lucas.

Since Ruth was at the Skyler family's hospital, Lucas couldn't act directly, so he resorted to using others to do his bidding. Now that she had clashed with Rina, Rina would certainly make Sidney's life even harder.

A deep sense of frustration washed over Aveline.

Russell spoke up again, "I'll have some people stationed at the hospital to protect them. Don't worry."

Aveline managed a small smile and said, "Russ, you've helped me so much already. I don't even know how to repay you."

"That's easy." Russell chuckled. "Just marry me."

Aveline fell silent, gripping her phone a little tighter before replying, "If it weren't for Lucas, I might seriously consider it."

Russell was such a good man-how could anyone not be tempted? But after loving Lucas, she couldn't bring herself to dive into another relationship so easily. Love had become too painful. Russell sighed. "I guess I was too late."

Aveline said, "Russ, I've got another call coming in. I'll talk to you later."

"Alright."

After hanging up, Aveline let out a deep breath. She hadn't known how

to respond, so she'd used the excuse of another call to cut the conversation short. Russell's words had caught her completely off guard.

She couldn't ignore the fact that Russell's kindness wasn't without reason. How could someone be so good to another person without expecting anything in return? But she felt like she could

him.

As the elevator doors opened, Aveline composed herself and stepped out. With the measurements done, her next task was to start drafting the design.

Once she immersed herself in work

she became so absorbed that she

lost

lookok of time. When she finally

looked up, the office was pitch dark, and everyone else had already left.

She checked the time-it was ten o'clock at night.

Aveline sighed, realizing she had unintentionally stayed late. She packed up her things, shut down her computer, and headed out.

The hallway was eerily quiet, shadows lurking in the corners. As she approached the elevator, the lights flickered on, but an inexplicable chill ran down her spine.

She pulled out her phone and sent a message to Mason and Jason. They replied almost immediately, saying they were on their way up.

The elevator doors opened, and Aveline stepped inside, pressing the button to close the doors. But, just like last time, the doors wouldn't shut.

She didn't dare step out and quickly texted Mason, who confirmed they were close. Aveline kept her eyes fixed on the elevator entrance, waiting for them to arrive.

But then, a tall man wearing a hat and mask suddenly entered the elevator, reaching over to press the button to close the doors.

Aveline's heart pounded in her chest. There was something unsettlingly off about this man.

She instinctively pressed the button to open the doors, ready to make a quick escape. But just as she was about to step out, she hesitated.

Was there really no one else outside?

Her body tensed, every hair on her skin standing on end, as cold sweat beaded on her forehead.