

Divorced Me 871

Chapter 871

Aveline looked at him, unsure, and hesitated before speaking. "Maybe... we should do a paternity test?"

"No, no need for that. You are my daughter, just look-look how much you resemble your mother!" Wilfried shook his head immediately, quickly walking over to a photo, and pointing at the woman in the picture. Aveline walked over and looked at the woman in the photo. The face was unfamiliar to her, but she could see the clear resemblance. Especially in the eyes-soft, gentle, and serene, just like hers. Pressing her lips together, Aveline turned to Wilfried. "Let's do the test anyway. I don't want any issues later."

Gavin then spoke up. "Dad, let's do it. Once it's done, we won't have to worry about this again."

Gernard said nothing, his gaze complicated as he looked at Aveline. He couldn't even face her properly. He had spent so much time trying to convince her to divorce Lucas, all to help Juliet. He felt like a complete fool.

Aveline turned to Gavin, who said, "Hello, I'm Gavin. You should... call me brother."

Aveline's lips moved, and she softly called, "Brother."

For the first time in years, a smile appeared on Gavin's usually stern face. "Hmm."

It was a strange feeling. Juliet had called him "brother" for over a decade, but it had never meant anything.

In fact, deep down, he had always been annoyed by her.

But now, hearing Aveline call him "brother" felt different.

For the first time, he actually liked it.

Perhaps that's the power of real family ties.

They would follow through with the procedure, even though the Cooper family was already convinced Aveline was truly one of them.

The paternity test results would take three days, and during that time, Aveline stayed with the Cooper family.

Wilfried treated her with great care, always checking on her, making sure she was comfortable, and asking about all her preferences. He even had a room specially designed just for her, based on her tastes. Gavin also bought her many of her favorite things.

Gernard, still silent, hadn't dared to say much, but he showed his sincerity in small, quiet ways.

Lucas, on the other hand, felt like an outsider, unable to truly fit in. The men of the Cooper family certainly weren't keen on letting him in, too afraid he might take Aveline away.

Lucas could only sigh in resignation.

However, one person had been watching everything unfold quietly.

On the day the test results came in, Judith packed her belongings and headed straight to the airport.

There was no way she could stay in the house any longer. If Wilfried ever discovered what she had done, she'd end up like Juliet—ruined. But just as she arrived at the airport, she was stopped.

Desmond stood there, smiling. "Mrs. Cooper, where are you headed? Does Mr. Cooper know you're leaving?"

Judith frowned. "Who are you? Where I go is none of your business. Now move!"

She tried to push past Desmond, but he extended an arm, blocking her. "I'm afraid you can't leave just yet, Mrs. Cooper."

Before Judith could argue further, Desmond and his men forced her back into the car and returned her to the Cooper estate.

The paternity test results had arrived, confirming that Aveline was indeed Wilfried's daughter.

Even though everyone had all t

expected this result, seeing the confirmation of their biological relationship in writing brought waves of emotion.

Wilfried, feeling overwhelmed, began to cry openly.

His daughter! He had finally found his real daughter!

"Mr. Tudor, she's been brought back," Desmond's voice suddenly broke through the moment.

Chapter 872

As Desmond waved his hand, Judith was shoved into the room. Everyone in the living room turned to look at her.

Her face shifted from pale to flushed in seconds, clearly unsettled.

Wilfried eyed her, his tone cold. "Where were you planning to go?"

Beside her was a suitcase.

Judith remained silent, her expression growing more and more uncomfortable.

Desmond stepped forward and said, "Mr. Cooper, we've uncovered some information about the orphanage, detailing how Juliet took your daughter's place. You should take a look."

He handed over a file, placing it in front of Wilfried.

As Wilfried read through it, he learned for the first time that Judith had been the one who found out about Arthur Town Orphanage all those years ago. She had known from the start that Aveline was his real daughter, but she had conspired with Hilda, allowing Juliet to take Aveline's place.

"Smack!"

Wilfried slammed the file shut, his face dark with fury as he glared at Judith. "You knew all along? Why did you do this?"

Judith looked back at him, her voice bitter. "I've been by your side all these years, without a child of my own. And you? You've spent all this time thinking only about your daughter. Did you ever consider my feelings?"

She let out a mirthless laugh. "If you couldn't forget your late wife, why did you marry me? You never should've brought me into this!"

Wilfried's face hardened, but a part of him hesitated, remembering how Judith had lived in the Cooper family for years, enduring so much. He felt a moment of sympathy. But she had done something wrong and unforgivable.

In a low voice, he said, "We'll get a divorce. I'll give you a substantial settlement, and you can go wherever you want. I won't hold you accountable for what happened."

Judith gave a bitter laugh. "That suits me just fine."

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The Cooper family formally announced Aveline's identity and threw a grand banquet, inviting the elite families of Larbor City.

Aveline appeared in a custom-made gown, elegant and stunning, walking alongside Wilfried. All eyes were drawn to her in awe.

She glanced at Wilfried, noticing the wrinkles etched into his face, and suddenly, a wave of warmth washed over her. Her father hadn't let her down.

"Dad," she whispered softly, calling out to him.

Wilfried froze for a moment.

In all the time Aveline had been back, she hadn't once called him "Dad."

Now, hearing her say it, his eyes reddened with emotion.

"Yes!" he nodded eagerly, looking her with foving eyes. "Aveline, everything you've missed, I will make up to you. You will be the happiest girl in the world!"

Aveline nodded in acknowledgment, then turned her gaze toward the guests.

In the corner, Lucas watched the scene unfold, a faint smile tugging at the corners of his lips. She was back with the Cooper family now, surrounded by people who would love her.

That was all that mattered.

Just then, his phone rang.

Glancing at the screen, he saw it was the hospital back in Cloudflare City.

"Hello?"

"Mr. Tudor, Mr. Frederick's condition has worsened. You need to come back immediately!"

Lucas's expression turned cold as he silently ended the call. He looked over at Aveline, who was glowing in the crowd, before downing his drink in one swift motion and leaving the banquet without a word.

The event carried on until late into the night.

Afterward, Aveline pulled out her phone and sent Lucas a message, but he didn't respond right away. "Hmm? What's going on? Where is he?" she thought.

Just then, Selena sidled up to her, grinning mischievously. "Miss Cooper, how about you sponsor me for life?"

Aveline chuckled. "I won't need to. There's already someone who wants to take care of you forever."

Selena's cheeks flushed, but she said, "Looks like I bet right this time."

Aaron had found out what his family had done to her and had a huge argument with them.

Afterward, he'd pulled her straight to register their marriage.

Now, she was a married woman!

Chapter 873

When the Fletcher family learned the news, they were furious!

However, Aaron was the only heir to the family, and they couldn't simply disown him. So, they had no choice but to accept Selena.

Now, the Fletchers were in the midst of preparing for the wedding.

Aaron oversaw every detail, making sure any flaw, no matter how small, was corrected. His attention and affection toward Selena only grew stronger with each passing day.

Aveline, trying to ignore the unmistakable joy on Selena's face, asked, "Have you seen Lucas?"

Selena shook her head. "No, I haven't. Isn't he around? Come to think of it, he's been pretty low-key lately. Your dad, Gavin, and Gernard are always hovering around you, and poor Lucas can't even get a word in." The thought of Lucas being constantly pushed aside brought a laugh from Selena.

Aveline smiled too. "He's probably busy with his own matters. I'm sure he'll come find me once he's done."

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Meanwhile, back in Cloudflare City.

In a private hospital under the Tudor family's ownership, Frederick was in critical condition.

Lucas arrived just in time to ask what had happened.

A nurse explained, "A young man visited earlier. After seeing him, Mr. Tudor became very agitated."

Lucas frowned. "A young man? Did you see his face?"

The nurse nodded. "The security cameras should have caught it. I'll pull the footage."

Lucas glanced at his father, who was convulsing on the hospital bed, frail and skeletal. It was clear he didn't have much time left.

The footage was retrieved quickly, and as Lucas watched, his expression turned colder by the second.

It was him.

Leo.

He wasn't dead after all.

Lucas immediately dispatched a team to locate him, and it didn't take long before they found him.

Leo had just left a nursing home after visiting Barbara.

In the dim evening light, Lucas watched as the tall figure emerged. After over a decade apart, both had changed so much.

Lucas could still remember how Leo used to protect him.

Extinguishing the cigarette in his hand, Lucas walked forward.

The two men stood face to face, staring at each other in silence.

Leo suddenly let out a soft laugh. "Lucas, aren't you going to greet your brother?"

Lucas' gaze darkened as he looked at him. "You've been in Cloudflare City for a while. What have you been planning?"

Leo raised his eyebrows, a faint smile playing on his lips. "I just wanted to see what the Tudor family looks like without me." "And now?" Lucas asked, his voice cold.

Leo nodded. "Yeah, I've seen it. Turns out, the family's just fine without me.. You've become exactly who you wanted to be. I did a lot of things wanted to see you suffer. I watched, but in the end, it wasn't as satisfying as I thought it'd be."

He turned his head, looking down the empty street. "Lucas, I haven't

been at peace all these years. kept

thinking... if only it had been you who burned to death that day."

Lucas let out a low, bitter laugh. So much for all the brotherly care, all the supposed protection. The truth behind that kidnapping, only they knew beo's hatred was something Lucas had come to understand long ago.

"So, what now? What's your plan?" Lucas asked.

Without a word, Leo pulled out a gun and pointed it at Lucas' chest. "I'm going to kill you. Then, no one will be happy."

Before Lucas could respond, Leo pulled the trigger.

The gunshot echoed through the street, and those nearby screamed in shock.

"Mr. Tudor!" Desmond shouted in panic.

The bodyguards rushed forward, quickly restraining Leo to prevent him from escaping. But Leo made no attempt to run.

He simply stared at Lucas as he collapsed, a strange smile of relief crossing his face.

"Lu... I should've died that day," Leo muttered.

Chapter 874

For several days, Aveline had heard nothing from Lucas, and an unsettling feeling began to grow inside her. "Knock knock!"

The sound of knocking pulled her attention away from her phone, and she looked toward the door.

"Come in."

The door opened, and Gernard stepped inside, a soft smile on his face.

In his hand, he carried a delicate box.

"Ave, I saw this while I was on a business trip to Shenton, and I thought it would suit you perfectly. Try it on and see if you like it."

He placed the box in front of her, his eyes filled with anticipation.

It had been a month since Aveline returned to the Cooper family, and they had all been doing their best to make up for lost time, showering her with love and attention. Whatever she liked, they gave her. And seeing her smile brought immense satisfaction to the three men of the Cooper family.

Gernard, in particular, was weighed down by guilt. After everything he had done, especially in the beginning, he could barely face her. He had tried to avoid her at all costs.

It was Gavin who finally noticed something was off and asked what had happened.

But how could Gernard confess?

If he admitted to all the times he had urged Aveline to divorce Lucas, both Gavin and Wilfried would have surely teamed up against him—and it wouldn't have been pretty.

So, he kept his mouth shut and focused on making it up to Aveline in any way he could.

Aveline looked at his nervous, expectant expression and smiled gently. "You don't need to do this, Brother. I never blamed you for anything."

Gernard, seeing her serene and graceful smile, suddenly recalled how different Juliet had been—spoiled and self-centered.

Both of them were so different.

There was something so calming about Aveline's demeanor, a quiet confidence that made everyone feel at ease. When she called him "brother" in that soft, warm voice, it melted his heart.

"I know," Gernard said, meeting her eyes. "But I let Juliet get away with too much. I didn't realize the things she was doing. If only I had seen it sooner..."

"Brother," Aveline interrupted softly.

Aveline looked at Gernard intently, her voice serious. "You were so close with Juliet. Now that I've come back and she's in prison, are you upset?"

Gernard was quick to respond, "No, I'm not..."

"You don't have to say something just to make me feel better," Aveline interrupted. "I want to hear the truth. I could tell by everything you did for her that you genuinely cared about her. And now, with her in prison..."

Aveline's gaze remained fixed on

him, stubbornly seeking an honest answer. She didn't want any unresolved feelings lingering between them. If Gernard truly had any resentment, she preferred to deal with it head-on rather than allow it to fester and disrupt the peace she had only recently found.

Gernard met her eyes, his expression deepening. "I am upset."

Aveline felt her breath hitch. Was she about to lose her newly reunited brother over this?

The thought of losing him hurt more than she cared to admit, but there wasn't anything she could do to change the past.

Gernard continued, "What upsets me

is that the sister I raised and spoiled turned out to be so malicious. When she was younger, I could make excuses for her immaturity, but as she grew up, she didn't change. She was so terrified of her secret being exposed that she even tried to hurt you. That's what hurts the most."

His face reflected a deep sorrow, his gaze drifting to the window as memories of the past flooded his mind.

Aveline watched him in silence, her emotions swirling. After a moment, she spoke, her tone calm but firm. "If you feel that my return caused you to lose her, you don't have to force yourself to be kind to me. We can go back to being strangers."

Chapter 875

"No, Aveline, you're overthinking this," Gernard said urgently, his gaze sincere. "You probably don't know this, but every time I saw you before, I felt this strange sense of connection, like I

wanted to be closer to you. At the time, I just thought it was odd, but looking back His voice softened as he continued, "When I found out you were my sister, I was genuinely happy. Don't say things like that again-it'll really upset me."

now, I think that was the bond of family-it's just that I didn't realize it."

Aveline smiled at him. "That's why I wanted to clear the air. It avoids so many misunderstandings."

"You're right." Gernard nodded in agreement, then glanced at the elegant box in front of her. "Now, go ahead and open it."

"Okay." Aveline nodded and opened the box, revealing a beautiful gemstone bracelet, its stones clear and radiant.

Her eyes lit up as she exclaimed, "I love this bracelet!"

Gernard's face broke into a smile. "I'm glad you like it."

"There's something I've been meaning to tell you," he said, his expression suddenly more serious.

"Oh?" Aveline, still admiring the bracelet, looked up at him in curiosity. "What is it?"

"It's about the time you were kidnapped. Do you know who was behind it?" Gernard asked, his eyes watching her carefully.

Aveline shook her head. "I have no idea."

Gernard sighed. "It was Russell."

"What? That's impossible!" Aveline's face paled as she instinctively denied it.

How could it have been Russell?

Why would he do something like that?

But then, as her thoughts spiraled, she remembered how her vision had been taken away during her captivity. It suddenly clicked-her captor must have known her, which explained why they kept her blinded. And now, hearing Gernard say it was Russell... it started to make sense.

Her face turned even paler.

She had never once suspected him. How could it have been him?

Gernard, seeing the shock on her face, said gently, "I knew it would be hard for you to accept, which is why I've kept it from you for so long. But this is your life, and you deserve to know. After thinking it over, I decided it was time to tell you. No matter what you choose to do, I'll support you."

Aveline's voice was distant as she muttered, "I need some time to process this."

"Take your time to think it through. If you need anything, you know where to find me," Gernard said as he stood up, offering her a reassuring look before quietly leaving the room.

The room was large, beautifully decorated, and comfortably warm, with the subtle signs of the approaching New Year visible in every corner.

But despite the cozy surroundings, Aveline felt an icy chill deep within her soul, a coldness she couldn't shake. Wrapping her arms around herself, she tried to fight it off.

Her mind wandered to all the moments she had shared with Russell-the memories flooding back. They had been through so much together, and he had helped her more than once...

In her heart, Russell had been more than just a good friend. He had felt like family, someone she could trust completely.

But now... all that trust had been shattered.

How could he have done something like this?

Aveline closed her eyes as if trying to block out the painful realization. Perhaps, deep down, the signs had been there all along. She just hadn't wanted to see them.

She later shared what she had learned with Selena, who, to Aveline's surprise, didn't seem shocked at all.

"What's with that look?" Aveline asked, clearly puzzled by Selena's lack of reaction.

Selena gave a small, knowing smile. "It's not all that surprising, really. I've long suspected his feelings for you. What surprises me isn't that he did it, but

that he went this far. Didn't he think that if the truth ever came out, he'd lose you completely—even as a friend?"

Chapter 876

"I don't know," Aveline said softly, her voice filled with confusion.

She had no idea why Russell had done something like that.

Selena watched her closely and asked, "Now that you know, what are you going to do?"

Aveline closed her eyes for a moment. "What can I do? He's helped me so many times before. Even though he's done this and I now understand his feelings, I can't do anything about it."

Selena gently patted her shoulder, letting out a sigh. "Then maybe it's best to do nothing... Pretend like you never knew him."

Aveline didn't respond, but the pain in her eyes was unmistakable. Her face had turned pale, and the weight of the situation clearly burdened her.

Selena, feeling a deep sympathy for her friend, wasn't sure what else to say.

"I don't really understand," Selena continued. "If he liked you, why didn't he just confess and compete fairly? Instead, he married Rina. I have no idea what he's thinking."

Aveline suddenly recalled something Aaron had once told her-Russell had married Rina to solidify his control over the Skyler family...

"Forget it. Let's not think about it anymore," Aveline said, her voice weary. "Like you said, let's just act as if we never knew him."

Selena nodded and didn't press further.

...

Back in Cloudflare City, Lucas had been in surgery for hours. He finally emerged, but the bullet had been dangerously close to his heart. Though the surgery was successful, he was still not out of danger and needed to be monitored in the ICU. Desmond stood by, his expression heavy with concern, as he looked at Aaron and asked, "Mr. Fletcher, should we inform Mrs. Tudor?"

Aaron's face was tense as he stared at the ICU doors. "Yes, we need to tell her. She should know about Lucas's condition."

Desmond nodded and pulled out his phone to call Aveline.

At the same moment, Aveline received an anonymous email. The message contained a detailed list of Lucas's subordinates and their territories. Aveline frowned, unsure why someone would send her such information, but then she saw a familiar name.

Maria.

And under Maria's name were Brian, Baron, and Braden...

Aveline's brows furrowed as she scrolled through Maria's personal details.

It was the same Maria she knew.

She couldn't believe it-Maria had been working for Lucas all along.

And she had been in Aveline's life for so long, even becoming her boss.

Aveline had trusted her, considered her a friend...

But it was all a lie.

Maria was working for Lucas. Her presence in Aveline's life had been nothing but a deception. It wasn't hard to figure out why Lucas had placed her there she was meant to spy on her.

Aveline closed her eyes, her face paling as the realization sank in. His promise echoed in her mind, the one where he swore he'd never deceive her again. She could still picture the warmth in his eyes, the sincerity in his voice... and she had believed

him.

But now?

He had hidden such a huge lie from her.

Why hadn't he told her? Did he intend to keep Maria around to monitor her forever?

A wave of pain spread through her chest, and her hand instinctively rested on her stomach. Though still flat, she knew there was a new life growing inside her.

Her voice was dry as she whispered to herself, "Baby, your daddy lied to mommy again. Do you think I should forgive him?"

Of course, the tiny life within her offered no answer, and the room fell into an eerie silence.

Just then, her phone rang. She glanced at the screen-Desmond was calling.

Without hesitation, Aveline ended the call and powered off her phone.

He had left without a word, disappearing for days without any explanation, and now he had Desmond calling on his behalf? What was he trying to say?

She didn't want to hear it.

She didn't want to see him.

...

Desmond stared at the disconnected call, confused.

Aaron glanced over. "What happened?"

"Mrs. Tudor didn't answer my call," Desmond replied, bewildered.

Come to think of it, he couldn't recall having done anything to upset Aveline.

The only person who might have done something was Lucas himself.

Desmond sighed, his face crestfallen. "Mr. Tudor, what have you done to upset Mrs. Tudor again? Now I'm the one facing her wrath..."

Chapter 877

Aveline quickly sent her resignation email to Maria.

But before she could even close her laptop, Maria's call came through.

"Aveline, I heard you've found your biological family. Are you planning to stay in Larbor City for good?" Maria's tone remained casual as if they were still close friends.

Aveline's voice, however, was cold and distant. "Yes, I'm not leaving."

Her family was here, and she had no intention of going anywhere else.

Maria sighed, sounding regretful. "Ah... you're so talented, and I really like having you on my team. It would've been great if you stayed."

Aveline's next question came out sharper. "Is that really what you feel, or is it just part of the assignment Lucas gave you?"

"What..." Maria was momentarily stunned, lost for words.

After a brief pause, her tone shifted, becoming more cautious. "You know?"

Aveline let out a bitter, silent laugh. "How long were you planning to keep it from me?"

Feeling guilty, Maria said quietly, "I'm sorry... it was all Mr. Tudor's idea. But his intentions were good, he wanted me to protect you-"

"He wasn't protecting me. He was monitoring me," Aveline interrupted, her voice cold. "I know the truth now. I'm not going to make a scene or fight over it. But please, don't pretend to be my friend anymore. That makes me feel like a fool." Maria fell silent, clearly shaken.

After a moment, she responded, "I understand. I won't disturb you again."

When the call ended, Aveline's emotions were in turmoil.

The friend she had trusted had been watching her all along. How could she accept that so easily?

She sat out on the balcony, gazing at the view outside, but all she felt was an overwhelming sense of loneliness.

There was only a week left until New Year's Eve.

The Cooper family had already decorated the house with festive cheer. This year's celebrations would be grander than ever, thanks to Aveline's return. Even distant relatives from the extended family were invited to gather.

Aveline was almost two months pregnant now, though her stomach remained flat. But her condition hadn't been good. She was pale,

tired and her energy was drained.

frequently nauseous and

Her fragile state quickly drew the concern of the Cooper family.

Wilfried looked at Aveline with deep concern. "Aveline, are you feeling unwell?"

Curled up on a single-seater with a pillow hugged close, Aveline stared blankly at him for a moment before responding, "Oh... I'm not feeling great. I'm pregnant." "What?!"

The three men in the room were stunned.

Gernard clenched his teeth. "Is it Lucas'?"

Gavin frowned deeply. "Didn't you two get divorced? When did this happen?"

Wilfried's expression darkened as well, but he remained focused on Aveline. "Aveline, what are you planning to do?"

Aveline's voice was firm as she replied, "This is my child."

She made her stance clear with one sentence.

This was her baby, and it had nothing to do with anyone else.

Wilfried nodded. "Alright, if it's your

added.

child, then it's a Cooper child. Tomorrow, I'll arrange for a full

medical checkup. We'll make sure you're well taken care of, and you won't feel this uncomfortable anymore."

Gavin and Gernard exchanged a glance.

Gavin spoke first. "Sis, don't carry this burden alone. If you face any challenges, come to me. I'm here for you, no matter what."

Gernard quickly added, "Me too. If there's anyone you don't want to see, just let me know. I'll make sure they don't get anywhere near you!"

Chapter 878

Looking at her brothers, Aveline felt a warmth spreading in her heart. This must be what having a family feels like. She cherished it, this sense of belonging.

Yet, every time she lay awake at night, her thoughts drifted back to Lucas.

He had disappeared without a word, and his lies, his silence it all haunted her. What did it all mean? He had left without a trace, and now, there was no news, nothing. Had everything he said before meant nothing?

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Three days before the New Year.

Selena barged into the Cooper household, dragging her suitcase behind her. The moment she walked in, she dropped onto the sofa with an angry huff, arms crossed, clearly upset.

The housekeeper informed Aveline, who came down from upstairs. Seeing Selena in such a state, Aveline couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong? What happened?"

Selena wasted no time venting her frustration. "I want to divorce Aaron!"

"What?" Aveline blinked, taken aback. "Why?"

Selena grabbed the glass of juice handed to her by the housekeeper, took a big gulp, and then said, "He never told me he has a crush! Now that she's back in the country, he didn't even tell me! If I hadn't caught them having dinner together, I'd still be in the dark!" "Wait, what?" Aveline was still processing. "Are you sure it's his crush?"

Selena nodded vigorously. "Absolutely!"

Aveline frowned. "But... did you find out what was going on? Why were they having dinner? Was it just a casual meet-up between friends, or was there something more?"

"I know exactly how this goes!"

Selena huffed. "The crush comes

back, determined to reclaim her lost romance and starts popping up everywhere around me and Aaron. I bet she still has feelings for him, but Aaron probably just sees her as a friend, clueless about her real intentions.

"And you know how it goes-men don't even realize they're being pulled in! Then she starts stirring things up, manipulating everything, and I'm stuck in a reactive position while Aaron unknowingly sides with her Cue the drama, and in the end, it all blows up in our faces!"

She spread her hands wide, wearing an expression that said she had it all figured out.

Aveline couldn't help but laugh, shaking her head in disbelief. "Do you think you might be overthinking this a little?"

Selena blinked at her. "Wait... Aveline, are you defending him?"

Aveline quickly shook her head. "No, no, that's not what I mean. I'm just saying, try to stay calm and get all the facts first. Don't let your imagination run wild before you know what's really going

on." Selena leaned back into the couch, crossing her arms. "Whatever, I'm staying here for the holidays. I'm not going back!"

Aveline nodded, smiling. "That's fine with me. You being here will make everything livelier."

Selena's gaze drifted to Aveline's belly. "How are you feeling?"

"I went to the hospital, and the doctor gave me a dietary plan to help with the nausea and fatigue. After a few days, I'm feeling a bit better," Aveline replied.

"That's good to hear." Selena nodded in approval.

"Although... it is strange," Selena

said, shifting her tone. "The Tudor

Group has been unusually quiet lately. All the online scandals seem to have died down, but Lucas hasn't made any public appearances in ages. It's like he vanished. Has he contacted you at all?"

Aveline shook her head. "No, but Desmond has."

With that, she shared with Selena the truth about Maria being one of Lucas' people.

Chapter 879

"What?!" Selena's face immediately lit up with shock after hearing Aveline's words.

Maria, of all people, had been working for Lucas this whole time.

"Wait a second..." She raised her hand, a look of realization dawning on her face as she pieced things together. "Maria, Brian, Baron, Braden... it was all right there!" Aveline was speechless.

Selena turned toward her, her expression incredulous. "With all those similarities, you never suspected anything? Not even a little?"

Aveline shook her head honestly. "No, I didn't."

Selena let out a long sigh.

What could she even say? Lucas had practically laid the answer right in front of her, yet Aveline hadn't connected the dots. Was it because she trusted Maria too much? Or had she never really been that concerned with Lucas' actions? Maybe it was a bit of both.

Selena looked at her and asked, "So, are you mad at Lucas right now?"

Aveline replied, "Shouldn't I be?"

Selena scratched her chin thoughtfully. "You should be. But you know, Maria being close to you means she could easily reach you if something happened. And when things got dangerous, it was Lucas who had Maria find you. If you think about it, it's hard to judge whether what he did was wrong or right."

Aveline fell silent.

Selena eyed her carefully. "So, Ave, what's really bothering you? Is it that Lucas disappeared without a word, with no explanation?"

Aveline pressed her lips together. "I don't care."

With that, she stood up and headed toward the stairs.

"Hey!" Selena quickly followed, concerned. "How about I ask Aaron to find out what's going on?"

"No!" Aveline turned to face her. "Don't ask, and don't have Aaron ask either. I don't want to see him right now, and I don't want to know anything."

"Alright, alright! I won't ask, I won't say anything. Let's talk about something else!" Selena said quickly, noting Aveline's emotional state.

Since getting pregnant, Aveline's emotions had become unpredictable. One minute she could be happy, and the next she might be on the verge of tears.

So now, everyone around Aveline was mindful of her emotions.

That evening, when Wilfried, Gavin, and Gernard returned home and saw Selena, they were delighted.

Selena's straightforward and lively personality had always made her likable, and they enjoyed having her around.

Gavin's eyes fell briefly on the ring,

on her finger, his expression calm as he asked, "You're spending the New Year here? Aren't you afraid Aaron

will come looking for you?"

"If he comes, do I have to go back with him? This is my family home!" Selena lifted her chin defiantly.

Wilfried laughed heartily. "Exactly,

this is your home too. Selena, you and Aveline have been such good friends, supporting each other for so many years. How about this-let me officially make you my goddaughter. I'll treat you just like I treat Aveline!"

Selena's eyes lit up immediately. "Really? I can?"

Wilfried waved a hand grandly. "Of course! From now on, you'll be the elder lady of the Cooper family!"

Since Selena was a year older than Aveline, being the elder lady made perfect sense.

Selena's eyes sparkled as she turned to Aveline, about to say something when Gavin suddenly interrupted, "Dad, there's something I need to discuss with you. Let's talk in the study."

Wilfried's expression shifted slightly. "What is it?"

The two headed upstairs together.

Selena, a little impatient, called after them, "What could be so urgent? Can't we finalize my status as the elder lady first?"

Gernard glanced between Gavin and Wilfried before saying, "Honestly, the way things are now, formalizing it is just a gesture. You're already family."

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Selena looked at Gernard, her face scrunching up playfully. "Gernard, what's that supposed to mean? Are you saying you don't want an adorable, lively, beautiful sister like me?" She cupped her face with both hands, batting her eyes dramatically. Gernard gave a faint smile. "I don't mind, but someone else might."

"Huh?" Selena blinked, her eyes shifting toward Aveline.

Aveline shrugged, clearly staying out of it. That left only one person-Gavin.

Pouting slightly, Selena made up her mind. She would need to have a little chat with Gavin. Why wouldn't he want her in the family?

Wilfried and Gavin finally emerged from the study almost two hours later.

Waiting for them at the foot of the stairs, arms crossed, was Selena.

"Mr. Wilfried, it's getting late. You should head to bed," Selena said with a polite smile as she looked at Wilfried.

Wilfried chuckled, nodding in agreement. "Good idea. You all should get some rest too."

With that, he headed to his room, leaving Selena to focus her attention on Gavin.

"Mr. Cooper, do you have a moment for a chat?" she asked, fixing her gaze on him.

Gavin, adjusting his sleeve as he descended the stairs, carried himself with his usual cold, dignified air. Tall, handsome, and commanding, his presence exuded quiet authority as he regarded her with an indifferent glance. "What do you want to talk about?" Selena didn't hold back. "Do you have something against me?"

Gavin's response was short. "No."

He walked past her, heading toward the mini bar to pour himself a glass of water. Selena followed him, undeterred.

"So, what's your opinion of me?" she pressed.

Gavin glanced at her, his tone unbothered. "No opinion."

Selena was perplexed, biting her lip in frustration. She couldn't just come out and demand what she really wanted, so instead, she asked, "Then why...?"

Gavin cut her off, his voice cool. "If you've got something to say, say it directly."

Selena's eyes narrowed. "Mr. Wilfried wants to take me in as his goddaughter. Why did you object?"

Gavin took a sip of his water, his Adam's apple bobbing slightly before he responded. "The Cooper family already has a daughter. We don't need another." Well, that shut her up.

Selena glared at Gavin, muttering, "You definitely have something against me."

With that, she spun on her heel and stormed off.

Gavin watched her retreating figure, his gaze lingering on the diamond ring that sparkled on her finger. There was something about it that irritated him, though he wasn't quite sure why. He took another sip of water before turning away, leaving the matter behind.

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The housekeeper led him into the living room, where Selena had already instructed Aveline, "I don't want to see him right now. You handle it!"

The day before New Year's Eve, Aaron arrived.

Without another word, she darted

upstairs, frantically looking for a place to hide. Hearing footsteps from downstairs, she glanced

around and spotted an open door. Without thinking, she rushed inside.

Only after she had closed the door behind her did she realize it was Gavin's room. Selena froze, standing by the doorway, torn between staying put and making a run for it.

Downstairs, Aaron entered the living room, his expression immediately shifting when he saw Aveline sitting calmly on the sofa. His smile didn't quite reach his eyes. "It seems becoming the heiress of the Cooper family has been treating you well."

His words carried a subtle edge of mockery, the tension already rising.

Aveline met his gaze, her tone cool. "What brings you here?"

"I know she's here. Tell her to come down and see me," Aaron replied, his voice sharp with impatience.

Aveline's stare remained unwavering. "Why are you looking for her?"

"She's my wife. Tomorrow's New Year's Eve. I'm here to take her home for the holiday," Aaron said flatly.

Aveline's voice stayed calm but firm. "This is her home, too."

"She's married now," Aaron pointed out.

Aveline's eyes narrowed, her tone growing colder. "So what? Just because she's married to you, she's not allowed to come home for the holidays?"