

Divorced Me 901

Chapter 901

Maria sat on the side, watching him with a faint smile.

Sidney couldn't reveal his true feelings just yet.

He hesitated before saying, "I've already eaten."

Ruth's expression became more complicated upon hearing this. "But there's so much food. It'd be such a waste to throw it away."

Maria chuckled and said, "Ma'am, it's my fault for not considering your health. It really would be a waste to throw the food away, so I'll just take it home with me."

Ruth gave a helpless smile. "Sidney worries too much about me. I'm already this old; what's wrong with eating something good? Frankly, how many more days do I even have left to enjoy it?" Sidney immediately frowned. "Mom, don't say that."

"Alright, alright, I know," Ruth quickly responded, noticing he was about to get upset.

Sidney placed the light dishes on the small table and watched his mother eat.

Maria watched him with interest, her gaze circling around Sidney as if she was amused by something.

"Ma'am, it's getting late. I'll head home for now. I'll come visit you again soon," Maria said after Ruth finished eating.

Ruth nodded, then turned to Sidney. "Sidney, see Miss Maria out."

"Alright." Sidney picked up the trash bag, silently following Maria out of the hospital room.

He threw the bag into the trash can, not sparing Maria a glance, and turned to head back to the room.

"Sidney," Maria called after him.

Sidney didn't stop walking.

Maria's voice was slow and unhurried as she said, "I had a long chat with your mother today. She kept asking why you resigned, especially since you left such a good position. Tell me, how should I answer her?" Hearing this, Sidney abruptly turned around and strode toward her, a cold glint appearing in his eyes as he stared at Maria's calm, smiling face.

"Maria, what exactly are you trying to do?"

Maria raised her eyebrow and said, "My intentions have always been clear-come back and work for me again."

"Absolutely not!" Sidney immediately

refused, lowering his voice. "Don't you find this disgusting? You've manipulated me to serve your own ends, and now that your boss

doesn't need anything from you, why are you still after me?" After a pause, he let out a cold

laugh. "What's the matter? Afraid I'll

go see Aveline? Is this Lucas' plan? 用

To have you stick to me for life?

that's the case, he must really be

insecure. Maybe I should go find

Aveline after all."

In Sidney's mind, Maria's constant pestering had to be because of Lucas' orders or perhaps, it wasn't just orders.

He had seen the way she talked to Lucas on the phone before, casual and intimate, almost too close for comfort.

Ha!

Did Lucas even know what twisted thoughts she harbored?

Maria looked at Sidney's angered

face, his sharp features clouded with

fury. She casually brushed off a wrinkle from his clothes and said "You're overthinking it. I just enjoy playing games, and you... you're quite fun."

The cruel and shameless words flowed effortlessly from her lips, yet she didn't seem the least bit concerned about how he would take them.

In fact, she watched Sidney with amusement, clearly anticipating his reaction.

"What a sicko!" Sidney cursed under his breath, grabbing her wrist tightly. His voice was icy as he warned, "Don't ever bother my mom again, or you'll regret it."

Chapter 902

"Oh?" Maria's face showed a faint smirk as she looked at Sidney's cold expression. With a curious tone, she asked, "How exactly do you plan to make me regret it?"

Sidney tightened his grip on her wrist, his eyes locking onto hers as he said, "You care a lot about Lucas, don't you?"

"What do you mean by that?" Maria looked at him with genuine curiosity.

She really wanted to know-what else could he do?

But instead of answering, Sidney loosened his hold on her wrist.

Without further explanation, he simply said, "Take care. I won't be seeing you out."

With that, he turned and headed back to the hospital room.

Maria watched his retreating figure, the interest in her eyes deepening.

What did he mean by that?

...

Back in the hospital room, Ruth glanced at Sidney's expression and suddenly asked, "So, tell me, why did you quit your job?"

Not wanting to worry his mother, Sidney didn't explain the complicated matters and instead came up with a quick excuse. "I want to focus on my studies. The work at the studio was too intense, and I couldn't concentrate." Ruth gave him a skeptical look. "Is that really the reason?"

Sidney countered, "What else would it be? What do you think happened?"

Ruth couldn't figure it out, but she still felt suspicious.

However, seeing Sidney's reluctance, she chose not to press further and instead asked, "Why haven't we seen Miss Young lately? What has she been up to?"

"She found her family and has settled in Larbor City now," Sidney replied.

"Really? That's wonderful," Ruth said, breaking into a warm smile.

She genuinely liked Aveline, and the news that Aveline had found her family made her truly happy.

With a slight sigh, Ruth added, "Miss Young is such a good girl. It's just a pity that things didn't work out between the two of you. I blame my own poor health for holding you back. If it weren't for me, you could have..." "Mom," Sidney interrupted her. "Stop overthinking. I'm still young, there's no rush."

Ruth knew he didn't like hearing such things, so she didn't continue the conversation.

In the following days, Sidney split his

time between sending out resumes and working part-time at various restaurants and coffee houses. He couldn't afford to be idle-his mother's medical bills were

constant expense that needed to be covered.

One evening, while working at the coffee house, he heard the door chime.

Looking up, he saw Maria strolling in.

"One Americano," she said, smiling as she stood at the counter, her eyes gleaming with amusement as she looked at him. Sidney responded curtly, "Please scan the code."

Maria pulled out her phone, quickly

the code, and then

backing leisurely as h

prepared the coffee. the coffee.

love

"You're a fast learner. But why won't you come back to work for me?". Maria asked, genuinely puzzled as she observed his efficient movements.

Sidney didn't bother replying, staying silent.

Maria didn't seem to mind.

After watching for a while, her Americano was ready.

Sidney handed it to her, his gaze cold and indifferent.

Maria took the cup and, in the process, lightly grazed his hand.

Sidney's brow immediately furrowed, and he quickly pulled his hand away.

Maria laughed at his reaction. "You're a grown man, what's wrong with a little touch? Why so shy?"

Sidney ignored her, continuing with his tasks.

Maria took a sip of the coffee, then suddenly said, "I'm pregnant."

Clatter!

The item Sidney was holding slipped from his hand. He looked up at her in shock, disbelief written all over his face. "Are you serious?"

Maria blinked innocently. "Why would I lie about something like this?"

She took another sip of her drink and then asked, "So, are you going to take responsibility?"

Chapter 903

Sidney gave her a deep look before turning around and heading into the back. Moments later, he returned, his work uniform removed, and without a word, he took hold of Maria's hand, leading

her out of the coffee house. Maria glanced at his fingers, her gaze shifting to his face as she asked curiously, "Where are you taking me?"

"We're going to the hospital," Sidney replied.

He didn't believe a word she said, so he wanted to take her to get a proper check-up. If she was truly pregnant, then they could discuss what to do about the baby.

Maria's smile deepened.

Suddenly, she pulled her hand away, still smiling as she said, "Of course I was lying. I'm not pregnant."

Sidney's expression darkened instantly. He stepped forward, grabbing her shoulders, his voice cold as he asked, "Do you think it's fun to mess with me like this?"

The slight pain from his grip didn't seem to bother Maria at all.

She didn't even flinch as she held her coffee, saying calmly, "Yes, it's fun."

A wave of anger surged inside Sidney, his eyes burning with fury.

"Maria, do you have no shame? I don't like you at all! You clinging to me like this only makes me see how pathetic you are!"

His words were harsh, the fire in his chest growing hotter, crashing through him with no way to release it.

Maria's smile faded a little, though she didn't appear upset. The curve of her lips held a mocking edge. "Sidney, I'm playing with you. No matter how badly you insult me, I won't get mad. And until I've had my fun, you're not getting away." Her words were like a dark enchantment, her twisted amusement openly declared, showing no sign of shame.

Sidney's anger only intensified.

Playing? She was just playing?

What was wrong with this woman?

Sidney let go of her, stepping back, then rubbed his hands forcefully against his pants, as if trying to rid himself of something filthy.

"You're insane."

With that, he turned and walked away, deciding he needed to tell Aveline about this.

Maria was clearly a lunatic-Aveline had to stay far away from her!

"Sidney," Maria called after him, her

voice calm but with a hint of

warning, "I'd

advise you not to tell

Aveline about what's going on between us. She's pregnant now and needs to stay calm for the baby's sake. If you tell her, she'll inevitably get involved, and if something happens to the baby because of our mess, Lucas will be furious. Things will only get more complicated then."

Sidney's steps halted.

His hands, hanging at his sides, clenched into fists.

Suppressing his emotions, he asked, "What will it take for you to leave me alone?"

Maria replied with a smirk, "Simple Come to the studio and

working for me like before." Content s to

She wanted him to be a beast of burden during the day and a wild stallion at night.

Sidney

with his back to her,

his eon hidden, and a

BS hidden, and after a

moment, he said, "I'll think about it."

With that, he strode away.

Maria watched his retreating figure, the smile on her lips growing wider.

So quick to compromise?

How delightful.

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The next day, Maria was waiting at the studio for Sidney's response.

To her surprise, it wasn't him who contacted her but Lucas.

"Hello, boss, what's up?" she asked casually.

Lucas' tone was cold as he demanded, "What did you do?"

Chapter 904

"Ah?" Maria was momentarily stunned. "What did I do?"

A sudden feeling of unease crept into her.

Why was Lucas suddenly interrogating her?

She quickly ran through her recent actions in her mind. She'd been playing it safe, behaving like a model employee completely well-behaved. So why was Lucas asking this?

Wait...

The only thing she'd been involved in lately was messing with Sidney.

Could it be... he had gone to Lucas to complain?

Maria narrowed her eyes, remaining silent for a moment.

Lucas' tone grew even colder. "Maria, cut it out. If I hear any more rumors, you're heading straight to the Delta, and you won't be coming back!"

With that, Lucas hung up the phone.

A chill ran down Maria's spine. Lucas was angry-really angry.

And that meant serious consequences.

The Delta... a hell on earth.

She thought of Brian, who was already there, living a life worse than death.

But why was Lucas so furious all of a sudden?

What exactly had Sidney told him?

Maria held her phone tightly, deep in thought for a while before dialing Desmond's number.

"Hello, Maria," Desmond quickly answered, his tone light and cheerful.

"Desmond, tell me honestly-what's going on with the boss?"

"Uh?" Desmond was confused, not understanding what she was getting at. "Maria, what exactly do you want to know?"

"Our boss called me earlier, chewed me out, and warned me to behave or he'd send me to join Brian. But I haven't done anything recently! So why is he suddenly so angry?" Maria explained, frustration creeping into her voice. Desmond was just as baffled. "I have no idea either."

Maria frowned. "I thought you might know something."

Desmond replied, "Well, you've got the wrong idea. I'm handling the business here in Cloudflare City, while tucas is in Larbor City. Even if something happened near him, I wouldn't know right away.

"So, who would know immediately?" Maria asked.

"That'd be Braden. He's Mr. Tudor's personal assistant now. Maybe you should ask him?"

"Alright, I'll give him a call."

Maria hung up and dialed Braden, but even he didn't know what was going on.

Now, it was a complete mystery.

Maria stroked her chin, deep in thought. What had Sidney told Lucas?

Maybe it was better to ask him directly.

After tracking Sidney's location, she set off to find him.

Sidney, meanwhile, had received a private order from a wealthy socialite. The client was a cute and pretty woman with large, doe-fike eyes that shimmered when she looked at him.

"Hello, I'm Fawn Powell. It's a pleasure to meet you!" she said, extending her hand with a bright smile.

Sidney shook her hand politely. "Miss Powell, nice to meet you. Do you have any specific requirements for this villa?"

He pulled out a voice recorder and a notebook, ready to take notes. Fawn blinked at his professional demeanor, momentarily distracted. She glanced at the empty lot and said, "I haven't really decided yet."

Sidney nodded, pulling out his phone. "Alright. Let's exchange contac

information. You can ox

know your preferences as they come to you."

"Sounds good."

Fawn nodded enthusiastically, scanning the QR code to add him on WhatsApp.

After that, she added, "I do have a general idea, though. I'm thinking of a Western style villa." Sidney nodded and jotted it down.

At that moment, his phone rang. Glancing at the screen, he saw it was Maria calling.

Chapter 905

Sidney paused for a moment before answering the call. "Hello?"

"Turn around," came Maria's lazy voice from the other end of the line.

Sidney followed her instruction and turned his head, spotting a car parked nearby.

Maria was in the driver's seat, waving at him to come over.

Fawn, noticing his gaze shift, looked in the same direction and asked curiously, "Who's that?"

Sidney hung up the phone and turned to Fawn.

After a brief pause, he said, "Miss Powell, I might need your help with something. It might be a little awkward, so if you're uncomfortable, you don't have to." Fawn blinked her wide eyes, still confused. "What do you need help with? Tell me first."

...

Maria sat in the car, watching as Sidney continued chatting with the girl.

Her brow slowly furrowed.

"What's going on here? Isn't that girl his client?" she thought.

What could they be talking about that was taking so long?

Just as Maria was about to lose her patience, Sidney finally made his way over, with Fawn following closely behind, her large, inquisitive eyes locked on Maria.

Maria rolled down the window and looked at Sidney. "Get in the car. I have something to talk to you about."

"What do you need to talk to him about? He's busy right now," Fawn interrupted before Sidney could respond.

"This is Miss Powell, my client. I'm in the middle of something. If it's urgent, you should just say it now," Sidney said calmly, glancing at his watch.

Maria smirked, her tone playful. "Are you sure you want me to say it right now?"

Sidney remained calm, nodding. "I'm busy, so make it quick."

With a sly grin, Maria said, "You left your underwear at my place. When do you plan on coming by to pick it up?"

Sidney's previously calm expression shattered in an instant. He couldn't believe Maria would stoop to such shamelessness!

Fawn gasped, quickly covering her mouth as her eyes darted between Maria and Sidney. Her wide eyes were now filled with curiosity and excitement.

What a scandalous revelation! This was too thrilling to be true!

Sidney clenched his teeth and replied, "I don't need them. Just throw them away."

"Alright then." Maria nodded, turning to Fawn. "Sorry for the scene. Do you mind if I talk to him for a moment?"

To Maria's surprise, Fawn suddenly chuckled and shook her head. "I do mind. I've got a lot of ideas I need to discuss with him right now." Maria's smile froze for a moment.

She hadn't expected such a bold response from the young woman.

Most girls would've stepped aside by now, but not Fawn.

Sidney furrowed his brow and gave Maria a quick glance. "I have things to do. If you're not going to say anything important, I'm leaving." Without waiting for a reply, he turned and walked away.

"Sidney!"

For the first time, Maria's composed expression disappeared.

She quickly got out of the car and caught up to him, grabbing his arm and pulling him aside. Her cold eyes

locked on him. "What did

Lucas?"

tell

Sidney shook off her hand and said, "You should ask him yourself. I'm not telling you anything."

"So, it was you!" Maria's frustration

boiled over, the calmness she

usually held deep inside completely

shattere

She couldn't figure out

what Sidney had said to Lucas

When had he become this hard to

read?

Everything seemed to be slipping out of her control.

"Hey, Sidney! If you don't come back soon, I won't need you anymore!" Fawn called out impatiently.

Sidney didn't hesitate, turning on his heel and walking away without a second thought.

A sudden, unfamiliar pain struck Maria's heart. The feeling left her standing frozen, unable to process it.

Chapter 906

As Sidney's figure grew smaller in the distance, the ache in Maria's chest deepened. She felt a bit dazed.

How could this be happening?

Why did watching him walk away hurt so much?

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

From the very beginning, her intentions toward him had never been pure.

She wasn't supposed to develop feelings for him.

Yet, the memory of his cold, disdainful eyes and his indifferent attitude tore at her heart.

Maria turned around, tilting her head back slightly and closing her eyes as she tried to regain her composure.

Once she'd steadied herself, she got back into her car.

If it wasn't meant to be, it was time to cut her losses.

After all, she'd only intended to play around from the start. If Sidney wasn't going to cooperate, then there was no point in continuing.

...

Fawn, who had been watching the scene unfold, noticed when Maria drove off. "She's gone."

Sidney looked at her with gratitude. "Thank you, Miss Powell."

Fawn chuckled. "No problem! I even got to hear some juicy gossip. If I'm not mistaken, wasn't that your boss?"

"Former boss," Sidney corrected.

Fawn's eyes sparkled with curiosity, and the look she gave him said more than words could. Sidney knew exactly what she was thinking but chose to ignore it.

"Miss Powell, I'll be going now. Feel free to send me any ideas you have."

"Will do," Fawn replied with a grin, watching him walk away.

She touched her chin thoughtfully, the intrigue in her eyes growing stronger.

"There's definitely a story here..." Fawn thought.

She loved these kinds of complex, thrilling relationships. It made her want to dig deeper into the mystery.

In the following weeks, Sidney's life remained calm. Fawn would occasionally message him with her ideas, and he would continuously revise the blueprints, discussing the details with her.

A month later, the designs were finalized, and Sidney began coordinating with the construction team to start the project.

His mother's condition had

stabilized, so he transferred her

from the Skyler Group hospital to a regular one. Just as the transfer paperwork was completed, his phone rang. Seeing Aveline's name on the screen, he answered with a smile.

"Hey, Aveline."

"Why did you transfer your mom? Wasn't the hospital good enough?" she asked.

Sidney sighed softly. "You always find out so quickly. Mom's doing much better now. She doesn't need to stay in such an expensive place anymore. It's a great hospital, but she's been really bored there, all alone in her room. She said she wanted a roommate."

Aveline chuckled. "If that's the case, then it's fine. Send my regards to her. I haven't been able to visit lately, but once the baby's born, I'll definitely come see her." "I will," Sidney promised.

Aveline then asked, "I heard you quit your job. Why?"

Sidney's eyes shifted slightly. "I just needed a change of pace, to challenge myself and see what I'm really capable of. At my old job, I had

a lot of support from you all. After a while, I felt... a bit lost."

Aveline sighed. "It wasn't that much help. Most of your success came from your own hard work. But I understand-changing environments can be good for growth." "Yeah, that's what I'm hoping for," Sidney replied.

A male voice came from Aveline's end of the line, and she quickly said, "I won't disturb you further. I'll call you again."

"Alright, talk later," Sidney said.

As he hung up, he recognized the voice-it was Lucas.

They were happy together now.

It seemed like... he never had a chance, not even a little.

Chapter 907

That night, when Sidney returned to his small apartment, he planned to review the blueprints again.

However, his phone suddenly rang.

Glancing at the screen, he saw it was Fawn calling.

"Hello, Miss Powell. Is everything alright?"

Fawn's voice was slurred, clearly drunk.

"Sidney... Sidney, come get me. I can't go home... I can't get home..." she sobbed, her words barely coherent.

It was obvious she had been drinking.

Sidney's brow furrowed. "Miss Fawn, where are you right now?"

She mumbled the name of a bar, and without hesitation, Sidney grabbed his keys and headed out to find her.

The bar was packed and lively, with music blasting and people filling every corner. Sidney maneuvered through the crowd until he spotted Fawn slumped in a booth, thoroughly drunk.

A man had leaned over her, his hand reaching for her thigh.

Sidney stepped in immediately, blocking the man's hand.

His voice was cold. "Who are you?"

The man was taken aback, quickly withdrawing his hand. "Whoa, I just saw she was wasted and thought I'd wake her up. Who are you?"

"I'm her friend. Back off," Sidney said firmly.

The man stood up and left without a word. Sidney turned his attention to Fawn, gently lifting her from the seat. He tapped her cheek lightly. "Miss Powell? Can you hear me?" But she didn't respond.

Staying in the bar at her current state was far too dangerous. Sidney had no choice but to get her out of there.

Supporting her, he led her outside. The cool night air hit them, and Fawn suddenly doubled over, vomiting onto the sidewalk.

Sidney grimaced but waited until she was finished.

"Feeling any better, Miss Powell?" he asked, trying to gauge her level of awareness.

Fawn blearily lifted her head, recognizing him.

She immediately wrapped her arms around his neck, clinging to him.

"Sidney... it's you. Take me home. My parents... they don't want me anymore. They're trying to marry me off to some old man. I don't want to marry an old man!" she cried her voice trembling.

Sidney wasn't interested in getting involved in her family drama. "Miss Powell, how about I take you to a hotel instead?"

"No... home. Take me home," she mumbled, her forehead resting against his neck as she drifted back into confusion.

Seeing

he

bring her to his

Soothe option, and knowing decided to take her placenet

nearby hotel for the night.

On the roadside, inside her car, Maria watched the two figures leaving together, her expression unreadable.

After waiting for a moment, she picked up her phone and dialed Sidney's number.

At that time, Sidney had just helped Fawn into the hotel room, placing her gently on the bed. As he straightened up, his phone rang. Seeing Maria's name on the screen, he frowned. It had been a month since they last spoke, and he had assumed she'd lost interest in him.

Why was she calling now?

Despite his confusion, he answered.

"Hello?"

"I'm drunk. Come pick me up," Maria's voice was smooth, but there was a hint of something behind it.

Sidney glanced at Fawn, still passed out on the bed.

"Sorry, it's late, and it's not convenient," he replied flatly.

He had no desire to get involved with Maria anymore.

Maria chuckled softly, her tone amused. "Inconvenient? Is it because you're with another woman right now?"

Sidney's frown deepened. "Are you following me?"

"You give yourself too much credit," Maria replied casually. "I just happened to see you. Thought I'd have a little fun." Sidney sighed. "Lame."

He ended the call without another word.

When he looked down, he noticed Fawn had somehow woken up and was staring at him, wide-eyed, without blinking.

Chapter 908

Sidney spoke up, "Miss Powell, since you're awake now, I'll head out."

Fawn suddenly said, "Let's get married."

"What?" Sidney froze, staring at her in disbelief.

Fawn had sat up, her hands braced behind her, her cheeks flushed, but her eyes were filled with sincerity.

"I'm not joking. I'm serious. Everything I said before is true-my parents want to marry me off for business. The guy's an old man, and his son's older than me. I don't want to marry him, but my parents won't listen. They'll do whatever they can to force me into this. I need to find a way out of this mess."

She laughed bitterly as she spoke, her voice full of self-mockery. "I thought I could live a carefree life, that I was the princess in my parents' eyes. But it turns out, I'm just a tool. The moment the family ran into trouble, their first thought was to use me to trade for their benefit."

As the alcohol fueled her emotions, Fawn's large eyes filled with tears, and soon they began streaming down her cheeks.

She wiped her face with a trembling hand and continued, "Sidney, I know your former boss has been harassing you. If we had a fake marriage, I could avoid this arranged one, and you could use it as a reason to get her off your back. It's a win-win situation. What do you think?"

Sidney was left speechless for a long moment.

Such a crazy idea-how did she even come up with it?

After a pause, he finally asked, "A fake marriage?"

Fawn nodded. "Yes, we can draw up an agreement. The marriage could last for a year or three years, whatever works for us. It'll be fake. Once the time is up, we'll divorce, no strings attached. I'll also compensate you. What do you think?"

Sidney couldn't help but feel both amused and baffled.

Something about this felt... off.

Seeing his silence, Fawn added, "You don't have to answer me right away. Take your time and think it over.. Just let me know when you've made up your mind. Of course, I'm hoping you'll agree."

She gave him a sad smile. "I really don't want to marry an old man."

She could accept an arranged

marriage, but what she couldn't bear was her parents disregarding her entirely, sending her off with no thought for her well-being. How was she any different from a commodity?

Sidney looked at her for a moment before saying, "You should rest now."

With that, he turned and left.

As Sidney left the hotel and walked toward the roadside, a voice suddenly called out.

"Hey!"

He turned to see Maria approaching, her arms crossed, a faint smirk playing on her lips. She gave him a once-over, raising an eyebrow. "That was quick."

Her words carried an unmistakable double meaning.

Sidney's expression turned cold, his gaze indifferent as he looked at her. "What do you want?"

Maria stepped closer, her eyes fixed on him. "Sidney, why do you hate me so much?"

Sidney replied flatly, "Don't you find yourself a little unbearable?"

"Not at all Maria said with a grin, flipping her hair back with a playful gesture. "I'm beautiful, I have a great

juste

body, and I'm filthy rich. I like myself

Sidney remained silent. As much as he didn't want to admit it, she had every reason to be confident. She had all the qualities to be proud of.

Chapter 909

"What kind of deal did Miss Powell offer you?" Maria asked leisurely.

Sidney froze, surprise flashing in his eyes as he looked at her.

"Don't look so shocked," Maria said, flipping her hair with a casual grin. "I've got some connections in Cloudflare City now. The circle isn't that big. I hear things when something stirs." Though his initial surprise faded, Sidney's expression remained cold. "That's none of your business."

"Oh?" Maria raised an eyebrow, her gaze drifting from his face to admire her freshly manicured nails. "She wants a fake marriage to avoid an arranged one, right?"

Sidney's face grew even colder. The idea that his private matters were so easily known left a bitter taste in his mouth.

"Sidney, are you really going to agree? You already don't know what to do with me. How do you think you'll handle the Powell family?"

She took a step closer, reaching up to touch his face.

Sidney quickly pulled away from her hand, his voice even frostier. "I told you, this has nothing to do with you."

Maria smiled, her lips curling mischievously. "Just a friendly reminder-don't meddle in Powell family affairs. You're not equipped to deal with them."

With that, she suddenly stood on her toes and planted a quick kiss on his lips, the smirk on her face widening as she walked away, leaving Sidney standing there with furrowed brows. He turned to watch her retreating figure, his gaze lowering as he stood still, lost in thought.

Later that night, Maria arrived home and received a phone call.

"Still awake at this hour?" she asked as she kicked off her shoes. Aveline's voice came through the line. "I know about what happened."

"Oh... are you here to settle the score? You've got the wrong person if you're looking to blame me. You should go after Lucas. It was his idea, Maria said, her eyes flashing with amusement.

"You're quick to sell him out," Aveline remarked dryly.

Maria chuckled. "He's exactly the type you sell out in moments like these."

Aveline sighed. "I'm not here to start a fight. I actually wanted to apologize. You went through so much because of me."

Today, Aveline found out that Lucas

had sent Maria to seduce Sidney hoping to keep him away from her. The sheer absurdity of it left her speechless.

Who would do something like that?

Then again, she thought, Lucas had never exactly been the most rational person.

"He's never done anything remotely human!" Aveline fumed. "He's not stepping foot in the master bedroom tonight!"

After kicking Lucas out, she mulled things over and decided to call Maria.

Hearing Aveline's frustration, Maria settled into her sofa and said, "You don't need to feel bad. Honestly, I was kind of enjoying it." Aveline was a bit confused. To Maria, this was just an assignment-how could she have enjoyed it?

Maria continued, "Aveline, I think I might have fallen for Sidney."

Aveline instinctively held her breath.

"But..." Maria sighed softly. "I approached him with ulterior motives from the start. Now, he doesn't want anything to do with me. He probably... even hates me."

Her voice carried a hint of sadness as she finished speaking.

Given the complicated dynamic between her and Aveline, Maria should probably feel some resentment toward her-but she didn't.

Something about Aveline's gentle, soothing voice made Maria want to open up, almost without thinking.

Chapter 910

Aveline was surprised-she hadn't expected Maria to actually fall for Sidney.

If that was the case, things were about to get complicated.

Sidney knew Maria's true intentions from the start, which meant he was likely guarded and resentful toward her. If Maria hadn't developed feelings, it wouldn't be a big deal, but now that she had... What was she going to do?

After a moment of contemplation, Aveline asked, "What do you plan to do next?"

Maria sighed. "I'm not sure. I've been wondering if I should try to be with him. But it feels like such a long and difficult path ahead, and I don't know if I have the endurance to see it through." Maria was someone who hated complications.

That was why, unlike Brian and the others who practiced martial arts, she had only pursued her expertise in computers. Learning to fight seemed like too much hassle. Pursuing Sidney, with all the challenges it entailed, felt equally daunting. What was she supposed to do?

Aveline's voice softened. "Maybe you need to ask yourself if you truly love him-enough to spend a lifetime with him. If that desire isn't strong enough, maybe... it's better to let it go. After all, your initial connection wasn't exactly pure, and that will always be a barrier between you."

Even if they managed to get together, old wounds would inevitably resurface during arguments. What then?

People in love know exactly where to strike when they want to hurt each other most.

When that time came, it would likely leave both of them bleeding and broken.

Maria's eyes clouded with uncertainty. "Yeah, I'll give it some serious thought." After hanging up, she sat on the sofa for a long time, her mind adrift.

The room was shrouded in darkness, and an inexplicable chill crept over her.

The next day, Maria arrived at the studio with dark circles under her eyes. Her assistant, John Brown, handed her the last month's financial reports and other data, but she barely glanced at them, lacking her usual energy. She suddenly found everything a bit dull.

Maybe she needed a break-a chance to clear her mind, get away from thoughts of Sidney.

The studio, after all, had originally been set up for Aveline.

Now that Aveline and Lucas had

found their happiness, the studio didn't seem necessary anymore. Maria had never really enjoyed the business side of things-dealing with clients, drinking at social events-it was all a hassle.

After reviewing the documents, she began making arrangements to transfer ownership of the studio.

Just then, her phone rang. It was an unfamiliar number.

Raising an eyebrow, she answered, "Hello?"

"Miss Maria, this is Fawn Powell. Could we meet?"

Maria was surprised that Fawn would call her.

"Sure. Where?"

"I'll send you the address. Come over when you can."

"No problem."

After hanging up, Maria set off, curious as to why Fawn had reached out.

In a beautifully serene café, soft piano music filled the air while the rich aroma of coffee hung in the atmosphere. Maria walked in and spotted Fawn sitting by the window.

"Miss Powell," Maria greeted with a smile, taking a seat across from her.

Fawn looked at Maria for a moment before blurting out, "Why are you trying to stop us?"

"Oh?" Maria leaned back in her chair, adopting a relaxed, casual posture. "What do you mean, Miss Powell? I'm not sure I follow."

Fawn's urgency was clear. "What did

you say to Sidney? Why did he

refuse my proposal? He was hesitating before-he was going to agree. You must have said something. Miss Maria, I've looked into your past with him. He doesn't even like you. Can you please stop interfering in his life?"