

## Divorced Me 941

Chapter 941

Diana froze mid-sob.

"You're friends with her, of course, you're siding with her," she said, voice filled with grievance.

Herman finally spoke up, "I heard what you said too. This restaurant has good surveillance, and the audio quality is pretty clear. Want to check the footage?"

At his words, Diana's face turned pale.

"You... you're all bullying me!" she cried, tears streaming down her face as she let out a shout and ran off, wiping her face as she went, like she'd been wronged in the worst possible way. Tiana watched her go in disgust. "She's the one who bumped into someone and spilled champagne all over them, and now she's the one crying?"

Maria's cold eyes followed Diana's retreating figure before shifting to Sidney. "It seems you two are quite close. Are you going to cover her compensation too?"

Sidney's dark gaze locked onto Maria's, and after a moment, he nodded. "Fine."

Maria's lips curved into a smile, but the coldness in her eyes only deepened.

Suddenly, Sidney leaned in close, whispering something in her ear.

Tiana, seeing this, quickly pushed him away. "Hey, what do you think you're doing? Can't you speak properly? Do you want to get punched for getting so close?" Herman's cold eyes also fixed on Sidney as he instinctively moved to shield Maria behind him.

Sidney ignored the two of them, his gaze still focused on Maria, waiting for her response. Maria's smile widened, her tone laced with contempt, "You think you're worthy?"

With that, she walked past him and headed toward the guest area.

Sidney's expression cracked, a little at a time, as if something inside him shattered along with it. He wasn't worthy...

So, she never liked him, not even once.

From the beginning, she'd just been playing with him.

Sidney lowered his gaze slightly, standing motionless.

Tiana scoffed. "Your girlfriend ran off, aren't you going to chase her?"

With that, she grabbed Herman's arm and hurried after Maria.

"Maria, Maria, are you alright?" Tiana asked as she caught up with her, concerned.

"I'm fine," Maria replied. "I'm just going back to change."

Tiana nodded, relieved. "As long as you're okay. But what did that guy say to you?"

Maria replied, "He wanted my contact information."

"Ugh! Shameless," Tiana spat, clearly disgusted by Sidney's behavior. She couldn't stand men like him. "Let's just keep our distance from people like that in the future. Such a turn-off," Tiana said with disdain. "Mm." Maria nodded, reaching her door.

"You two be out

ahead and have fun. I'll

later. I'll message you

they ready," Maria turned to

with a small smile.

Tiana blinked and grinned. "So, later for horseback riding?"

Maria nodded. "Sure."

"Awesome!" Tiana cheered and dashed off excitedly.

Herman, however, didn't leave immediately. Concerned, he looked at Maria and said, "Save my number."

If anything comes up, call me

Maria leaned casually against the doorframe, smiling. "Alright."

She pulled out her phone, exchanging numbers with him. Herman nodded. "Rest well. I'm just across the hall." "Goodbye," Maria said, closing the door behind her.

Herman lingered for a moment,

staring at the door. His thoughts

drifted to Sidney's familiar, almost intimate behavior with Maria earlier. Did they know each other?

With a slight frown, he turned and headed back to his room.

...

Maria stared at the messages on her phone, her once warm smile gradually fading, replaced by a cold, distant expression.

Chapter 942

Sidney had texted, "She's not my girlfriend."

Maria shut off her phone without replying and went to change her clothes.

"Does it even matter?" she muttered to herself.

He had defended that girl in public, and it had irritated her.

Now, with this half-hearted explanation afterward, it felt completely unnecessary.

"If she's not your girlfriend, then why step in?" she thought.

He even apologized on her behalf, acting like they were close-what was the deal with that? The whole thing left Maria feeling restless and annoyed. She opened a bottle of wine and began drinking straight from it. With an empty stomach and no food to cushion the alcohol, it didn't take long for her to feel a dull ache creeping through her stomach. Sitting on the couch, her gaze drifted into the distance, her thoughts swirling. Looking back, she realized how happy she had been before Sidney entered her life.

She had gone wherever she wanted and done whatever she felt like doing.

When she was in a bad mood, she'd bicker with Brian and the others, sometimes even teasing their boss when she felt daring. Her life had been carefree, with tasks and missions punctuating the easy days. But now...

She no longer felt like herself. It was as though she had lost her way.

"Can love really have that much power?" she whispered.

A knock on the door interrupted her thoughts.

"Who is it?"

Puzzled, Maria got up and walked over to open the door.

Herman stood there, and behind him, a server was pushing a cart.

"I noticed you hadn't eaten anything, so I had them bring you some food. You should eat something before resting," Herman said as soon as he saw her.

Maria leaned against the doorframe, her eyes meeting Herman's warm gaze. His face was handsome, and there was a calm, caring expression that made him seem like sunlight gently spilling over her, comforting and warm. "You didn't eat either, did you?" Maria asked.

Herman smiled and replied, "I'm fine. Not that hungry."

Maria, however, tilted her head slightly and said, "Eat with me."

Maria stepped aside, allowing the server to wheel the cart into the room. Herman raised an eyebrow slightly, watching as she walked back inside without any further formalities.

He followed her in and quietly closed the door behind him.

Not far off, Sidney watched the scene unfold, his hands clenched tightly at his sides.

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Inside the room, the server arranged the dishes and quietly left.

Herman noticed the bottle of wine on the coffee table and asked, "Drinking now? Won't that make you feel worse?"

Maria replied casually, "I felt like drinking, so I did. Want some?"

She pulled out another glass, her lips curving into a smile as she asked.

Herman studied her smile, feeling as though it was just a facade. He was eager to understand the real Maria beneath it all. Nodding, he said, "Sure."

They both sat down, each holding a glass of wine.

Maria lifted hers with a playful smile. "Thanks for bringing me food. This drink is for you."

Herman chuckled softly and clinked glasses with her.

Maria tilted her head back and downed her glass in one go, leaving Herman momentarily stunned. "Take it easy. Eat something first, or your stomach will hurt," Herman said gently.

Maria rested her chin on her hand, looking at him with a thoughtful expression. Suddenly, she asked, "You know your sister is trying to set us up, right?"

Her directness left no room for pretense, catching Herman off guard.

Before he could respond, Maria continued, "She wants me to be her sister-in-law."

Herman's eyes locked onto hers. "And do you want that?"

Maria didn't answer directly. Instead, she asked, "What do you think love is?"

Herman paused, thinking for a moment before replying, "I've never been in love before. But the way I understand it... love is feeling your heart race when you see someone, missing them when they're not around, and when you're together, wanting to give them everything good in the world, just to see them happy every day."

Chapter 943

Maria stared into Herman's eyes, noticing the sincerity and warmth in them. There wasn't a hint of deceit. She smiled and said, "Whoever you fall in love with is going to be very lucky."

Herman smiled back and clinked his glass with hers. "I think that's the least anyone deserves. Every person is an individual, free in their own right. Love shouldn't be something that traps or binds you. It should make both people better, not something that drags them into endless suffering."

"Well said!" Maria clapped her hands, downing another glass of wine.

Herman watched her, his brows knitting slowly.

After a pause, he asked, "That man earlier... you know him, don't you?"

Maria nodded, "Yes. He used to be a designer in my studio. Now, he's my business partner."

She drank a bit too quickly, and the alcohol hit her fast, a rosy blush creeping onto her cheeks.

"At first, the way things started between us wasn't great. It was full of calculations and ulterior motives. I thought once everything ended, our relationship would too. But to my surprise... I ended up liking him," Maria said as if opening up for the first time. Herman listened, but deep down, he knew she didn't see him as anything significant. That was why she felt comfortable talking so openly about her past. If she truly cared, she wouldn't bring it up so easily.

Maria smiled, though there was a tinge of bitterness. "It wasn't pure from the beginning, so even when I realized I liked him, everything started to feel ugly."

"That's not right," Herman said quietly. "Even if it began with motives or some kind of manipulation, the feelings were real. You can criticize what happened or regret the things that were done, but you can't deny the emotions."

"Hmm?" Maria looked at him, surprised by how he viewed it all.

She hadn't expected him to approach it from that perspective.

Maria asked directly, "So, do you think a relationship like that is worth starting?"

Herman paused, considering her question. "That depends on you. If you want to develop it, then be honest and lay everything out. Don't keep it bottled up, and then figure out how to move forward from there."

Maria narrowed her eyes slightly, gazing at him. "You've never been in a relationship? I find that hard to believe. You seem to know a lot."

Herman smiled and replied, "I really

haven't. But we witnessed it-my

parents are the best example. They've already written the playbook, so Tiana and I don't need to overthink it. We just follow their

lead."

At his words, Maria's eyes lit up with interest. "Now you've made me want to meet your parents."

"You're welcome at my house anytime," Herman offered.

"Alright, cheers," Maria said as she clinked her glass with his again. "Thanks for talking to me about all this. You've helped me see things a lot more clearly."

"You're welcome," Herman replied.

"You're Tiana's friend, so that makes

you... my friend too. If you ever feel stuck or need someone to talk to, I'd be happy to be your sounding board."

Maria smiled, then finished the last of her drink.

Soon after, she had clearly drunk too much, slumping onto the table, her head heavy with alcohol. The food on the table remained mostly untouched, and Herman frowned slightly, worried. She was bound to feel uncomfortable, but in her state, she probably couldn't eat anything.

"I'll help you get to bed," Herman said gently.

Maria lazily raised a hand as if to wave him off, but then it dropped just as quickly.

"Excuse me," Herman murmured softly before lifting her up and guiding her towards the bed.

Her body felt limp, leaning heavily against him. Once Herman laid her down on the bed and started to stand, he suddenly felt her arm wrap around his neck, pulling him down unexpectedly.

Chapter 944

Maria's eyes were half-lidded, her cheeks flushed as she gazed at him through the haze of alcohol.

"You... you're really good-looking," she murmured, her words slurred.

She was definitely drunk.

Herman gently grasped her wrist, removing her hand from where it lingered.

"Thanks, you're not too bad yourself," he replied with a small smile.

When he stood and put some distance between them, Maria blinked and asked, "Why are you getting up?"

"You should rest," Herman said softly. "If you need anything, call me. I'm heading out."

Taking advantage of someone in this state wasn't his style. He wouldn't do something like that-especially when Maria clearly didn't have feelings for him.

He tucked the blanket around her, adjusted the air conditioning to a comfortable level, and quietly left the room.

As the door clicked shut, the room fell into silence. Maria stared blankly at the ceiling for a moment before slowly closing her eyes.

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When Herman stepped out of the room, he spotted someone standing not far off-it was the same man who had confronted Maria earlier.

Herman cast him a brief glance before looking away.

Sidney, however, kept his gaze locked on him, his mind swirling with questions.

What had they been doing in there for so long? What did they talk about?

And most importantly...

Why hadn't she responded to his messages?

His thoughts were a chaotic mess, spinning out of control. He felt like he was losing his grip on reality. He hadn't cared much for Maria in the beginning, so why was he so agitated now?

The memory of that brief, heart-racing connection they once had flashed in his mind, and he pressed his lips tightly together in frustration.

Just then, his phone rang, breaking through the whirlwind of emotions. He glanced at the screen- it was Diana calling.

"Hello?" he answered, his voice colder than usual.

"Sidney, where are you? I can't find you," Diana's voice came through, hesitant.

"Where did you run off to?" Sidney asked, his tone still distant.

There was a pause on the other end before Diana quietly asked, "Is that woman still in the restaurant?"

Sidney's voice hardened. "Miss White, this whole situation started because of your mistake. Don't you think you should go back and apologize to her?"

"What do you mean?" Diana's voice sharpened instantly. "You're telling me to apologize to her? Didn't you hear what she said? She insulted me

and tried to extort me! Why should I apologize? I already did, but she

wouldn't let it go!"

Diana was spiraling into unreasonable complaints, her tone becoming more and more accusatory.

Sidney frowned, his patience wearing thin. "If that's how you see it, then there's nothing I can do. I can't change your mind. I have other things to take care of, so I'm hanging up now." Without waiting for her reply, he ended the call.

"Hello? Hello!" Diana stared at her phone, her expression turning even darker. What was going on? Why was Sidney suddenly treating her like this? Could it be that he was interested in that other woman? The thought sent a surge of anger through her as she tightly gripped her phone, her face contorting in frustration.

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Maria slept for three hours, but when she woke up, a sharp pain

stabbed through her stomach, making her feel like she was on the verge of collapse. Curled up on the bed, she clutched her abdomen, her

face pale. She felt too weak to even get up.

Gritting her teeth, she reached for her phone, her vision blurry as she fumbled to dial a number. Without thinking much, she pressed a contact and brought the phone to her ear. "Hello? Where are you? Can you come and get me?" she whispered, her voice faint and laced with pain.

"What's wrong?" A familiar voice cut through the haze in her mind, bringing her a moment of clarity. She glanced at the screen, realizing she had accidentally called Sidney.

"My stomach hurts. Come to my room and take me to the hospital," she muttered before immediately hanging up.

In this state, she wasn't about to be picky about who she called for help. Whoever was available would do.

Moments later, a knock sounded at her door.

Maria was startled.

So fast?

It hadn't even been two minutes!

Chapter 945

Maria forced herself to stand and open the door. Sidney was already there, his eyes narrowing in concern when he saw her pale face and the way she was hunched over in pain. "What happened?" he asked as he stepped forward to steady her.

Maria leaned into him, her voice weak. "My stomach... it hurts a lot. Take me to the hospital."

"Alright," Sidney said, his tone serious. He helped her sit down in a chair, quickly grabbing her phone and bag before lifting her into his arms and hurrying out of the room.

As they reached the hallway, Tiana happened to return and immediately blocked their way. "Hey, where are you taking her?"

"Move," Sidney said, his face dark with urgency.

Tiana looked at Maria, noticing how pale and sickly she seemed. She was clearly in bad shape.

Without further argument, Tiana stepped aside but followed closely, her voice filled with concern. "Maria, do you still know what's happening? Do you know who's carrying you?" "Yes," Maria whispered softly.

Hearing that, Tiana breathed a small sigh of relief, but a flicker of confusion crossed her mind. Wasn't this man someone else's boyfriend? How could Maria trust him so easily? There was definitely something going on.

Tiana made up her mind to let her brother know right away-she couldn't let someone else take advantage of the situation.

She quickly sent Herman a message, urging him to come as soon as possible.

Sidney carried Maria swiftly to the parking lot and placed her gently in the passenger seat. Without missing a beat, Tiana jumped into the backseat. Sidney didn't seem to mind; his focus was entirely on Maria's condition. Maria's well-being was the priority right now.

Once inside the car, Tiana fired off another text to Herman, her worry etched on her face as she glanced at Maria.

"Hang in there, Maria. We're almost there," she said softly, hoping to comfort her friend.

Maria was drenched in cold sweat, her lips drained of any color, and she

looked seriously unwell. Sidney Sp

through the streets, frequently glancing at her as her complexion grew increasingly pale, his own expression tightening with worry.

Finally, they reached the hospital, and he rushed her straight into the emergency room.

Maria was quickly wheeled into surgery, and Tiana, watching Sidney's tense demeanor, couldn't help but ask, "What exactly is your relationship with Maria?" Sidney replied curtly, "Her business partner."

"Oh, I see." Tiana nodded. She had heard about Maria's studio taking on a new partner, but she hadn't met him until now.

"Was that girl earlier your girlfriend?" Tiana asked again, thinking back to the earlier incident.

Sidney shook his head. "No."

Tiana blinked in surprise. "She wasn't your girlfriend, but you defended her like that?"

Sidney fell silent, his eyes fixed on the doors of the operating room, refusing to relax even for a moment.

"What happened?" Herman's voice broke through the tension as he arrived, immediately turning to Tiana for answers.

"Maria didn't look good at all," Tiana explained, her voice tinged with concern. "They rushed her into surgery, but we still don't know the full details." Herman's face tightened with worry, his gaze briefly landing on Sidney before quickly shifting away. There was an unmistakable tension in the air. Sidney shot Herman a cold look, his eyes narrowing as if preparing for a confrontation. He wasn't willing to let his guard down for a second.

Thankfully, it wasn't long before the doctors emerged with better news. Maria's condition had stabilized-it was acute stomach perforation, and they had acted just in time to

prevent any major complications.

Inside the hospital room, Maria felt relief as the pain in her stomach eased. Her body relaxed slightly as she saw the concerned faces

gathered around her bed. She

managed a weak smile and said, "Sorry for worrying you all.

Chapter 946

Tiana sighed. "Of course we're worried! What happened? How did you end up with a stomach perforation all of a sudden?" "It's nothing, I just had a bit too much to drink," Maria explained, her voice light but tired.

"That's my fault," Herman interjected, his face filled with concern as he looked at Maria. "I should've made sure you ate something." Tiana's eyes widened as she turned to her brother. "Wait, you were with her when she was drinking?"

"Yeah," Herman admitted.

Tiana immediately gave him a light punch on the arm. "Why didn't you stop her? Drinking on an empty stomach is dangerous!"

"It's my fault," Herman said quietly.

"Stop arguing, I'm fine now," Maria said, waving her hand weakly. "I'll be more careful next time."

Tiana crossed her arms. "I don't care. It's my brother's responsibility to take care of you until you're fully recovered. If not, I'll tell Mom and Dad that he's been mistreating girls!" Maria was taken aback. "That's really not necessary..."

Tiana shook her head. "It's settled."

She turned to Herman. "Don't you think that's the right thing to do?"

Herman nodded. "It's only fair."

Maria sighed in resignation.

Fine then.

Sidney, who had been silent all this time, finally spoke up.

"I'll take care of her," he said, his tone steady, though his eyes still held a wary look toward Herman.

Tiana quickly interjected, "That won't be necessary. My brother's got it covered. You have the studio to manage, so you can't handle both."

Sidney's gaze shifted to Maria,

silently waiting for her response. She

had called him when she was in

pain didn't that mean she trusted him, that she wanted him around?

But Maria, feeling the tension in the room, quietly said, "Let's go with Tiana's plan."

Sidney's expression froze, disbelief flashing in his eyes. He hadn't expected that response, and the disappointment in his gaze was hard to miss.

Tiana turned to Sidney and said, "Alright, there's nothing more for you to do here. You should head back-someone has to manage the studio." With that, she practically ushered Sidney out of the room. As the hospital door closed in front of him, his expression darkened visibly.

Sidney stood in the hallway, thinking about Maria's cold, indifferent attitude. What was she playing at?

She called him first, yet now refused his help. It didn't make any sense.

Frustrated, Sidney chose not to dwell on it further and left without a word.

Back inside the room, Tiana gave her brother a series of exaggerated winks before turning to Maria. "Get some rest, okay? My brother's here, so if you need anything, just det him know."

Maria smiled weakly. "Thanks."

With that, Tiana exited, leaving just Maria and Herman alone in the room.

Feeling exhausted, Maria turned to Herman. "Mr. Evans, you should go too. I really don't need anyone watching over me."

But Herman shook his head. "No, I'm staying. If I leave, Tiana won't let me live it down. Don't worry, I'll be here, but I won't disturb you. Just rest."

He moved over to the couch, sat down, and pulled out his phone, clearly intent on staying.

Maria, too tired to argue, soon drifted off to sleep.

When she woke again, it was late at night. The room was dark, the quiet almost eerie. She blinked a few times, letting out a soft breath.

"You're awake?" Herman's voice broke the silence, his tone low. He turned on the light, illuminating the room gently.

Maria squinted at the sudden brightness. "You've been here the whole time?"

"Yeah," Herman replied calmly. "I said I'd take care of you, so I'm staying. What do you need?"

Chapter 947

Maria blinked a few times, then said, "I'm feeling a bit thirsty."

Herman shook his head gently. "You can't drink water right now. How about this-I'll use a cotton swab to moisten your lips. It'll help a little, alright?"

Maria was silent for a moment before asking, "When can I drink water?"

"In 24 hours," Herman replied.

Immediately, Maria's expression turned despairing, and she closed her eyes, looking defeated.

"I'm really thirsty..."

Herman didn't say anything more but turned and busied himself.

Moments later, Maria felt something cool and moist on her lips.

Startled, she opened her eyes to find Herman sitting at the bedside, holding a cup of water in one hand and a cotton swab in the other, carefully moisturizing her lips.

His expression was focused, his eyes resting solely on her lips, without any other intention. The room was brightly lit, casting clear lines across his handsome features. His calm, attentive gaze made Maria pause for a moment.

It was a strange feeling, unfamiliar yet oddly intriguing. She found herself momentarily wanting to explore it further.

But she quickly stopped herself from going down that road. She was already entangled with Sidney-getting involved with another man would make her feel like a player.

"I'm feeling much better now," Maria quickly said.

Herman nodded, tossing the cotton swab away. "You should try to get some more sleep. It'll be morning soon."

"What time is it now?" Maria asked, still feeling curious.

"It's three in the morning," Herman replied.

Maria gazed at him for a while, then said, "Why don't you hire a nurse for me? That way, it won't interfere with your own schedule, and you can still fulfill the task Tiana gave you." Herman shook his head slightly. "I just got back to the country, and work hasn't fully started yet. I'm not in a rush."

After a brief pause, he looked at her more seriously and added, "You don't have to push me away or resist me so quickly. Maria, I want you to take the time to get to know me." His words were gentle, but the meaning was clear.

Maria immediately understood what he was trying to say.

She looked at him calmly and replied, "With you saying that, it feels like I really can't refuse, can I?"

Herman gave a soft smile. "Then don't refuse. Just accept it as it is."

Maria responded with a quiet "Thank you" and closed her eyes.

Herman didn't say anything further. Instead, he turned off the light and returned to the small sofa. With his tall frame, the sofa was clearly too cramped for him, making sleep uncomfortable. But he didn't mind, as it allowed him to stay alert to any care of

Sound Maria made and alert

her promptly.

...

The next morning, Tiana arrived early, bringing breakfast made by their family's chef. Unfortunately, Maria wasn't allowed to eat any of it.

"Poor thing, you can only watch us eat," Tiana said with mock sympathy, giving Maria a playful look.

Maria replied, "Or maybe there's another option-you two could eat outside so I won't have to watch at all?"

Tiana laughed. "You're right, it's too cruel to eat in front of you. Alright, we'll head out."

She then turned to Herman. "Come on, let's grab some food."

Herman shook his head. "You go ahead first, I'll stay here a bit longer."

Tiana thought for a moment, then said, "How about you go now, and I'll stay with Maria for a while?"

Herman nodded. "That works."

He stood up and left the room.

Tiana turned back to Maria with a smile. "Do you need to use the restroom?"

Maria chuckled. "You really think of everything. Help me up."

As Tiana helped her out of bed, she

grinned. "Of course! As your best

this."

friend, I'm pretty much crelin

Chapter 948

"Alright, alright, best friend, I'll give you a certificate of excellence!" Maria laughed.

Tiana grinned cheekily, "Forget the certificate-just be my sister-in-law."

Maria gave her a sideways glance. "If I become your sister-in-law, your carefree days will be over."

"Why?" Tiana blinked her wide eyes in confusion.

"Because I'd team up with your mom and start arranging blind dates for you," Maria teased.

"No, please!" Tiana groaned dramatically, "I'm still young! I don't want a boyfriend yet don't be so cruel!"

Maria chuckled. "Then you better stop meddling in my love life."

Tiana paused, then said, "Wait a minute. Does that mean you don't like my brother?"

Her eyes gleamed as she added, "Do you like that pretty boy?"

"Huh?" Maria was caught off guard.

"You know, your business partner. He totally looks like a pretty boy-no real talent, just a bad attitude. You know what they call guys like him? A 'social climber!' And let me tell you, social climbers are not to be trusted.

"Their ego is through the roof, and they care way too much about appearances. If you help them climb the ladder, they'll see you as an obstacle rather than someone who supports them. The moment they get the chance, they'll kick you to the curb." Tiana's tone was serious, almost like she was giving a heartfelt warning.

Maria was stunned for a moment but then burst into laughter. "That sounds terrifying! Maybe I really should think this through."

Could Sidney be an ungrateful social climber?

Maria wasn't sure, but one thing was certain-he definitely fit the "pretty boy" description.

Meanwhile, Tiana was thinking to herself, "Brother, I've done all I can. The rest is up to you!"

...

Elsewhere, Diana had been trying to reach Sidney, but he had turned her down several times, making it clear he didn't want to continue their connection.

But that wasn't going to work for her.

Sidney was her potential golden ticket, and she had no intention of letting him slip away!

Sidney had great potential, and Diana was certain he would make a name for himself in Cloudflare City

If she could secure him now, here

future would be set-she was confident in her judgment. No matter what, she wasn't going to let him go.

Over the past few days, Diana had been discreetly following Sidney. She discovered that after work, he would first visit his mother in the hospital, staying for about an hour before heading to another hospital, where he stood outside a specific room for a long time, not entering.

Curious, Diana wondered who he was visiting.

The way he looked through the window gave her a sinking feeling-it was as if he were gazing at someone he deeply loved.

Realizing this, jealousy consumed her.

One day, while Sidney was still at work, Diana went to the hospital early and positioned herself by the window of the room he had been watching.

What she saw shocked her-it was the same woman who had demanded fifteen thousand dollars from her that day!

That woman was Maria!

"That wench!" Diana thought, furious. "So, she's been seducing Sidney all along!"

It suddenly made sense to Diana. Maybe the reason Maria had been so insistent about the compensation that day was because she wanted to catch Sidney's attention on purpose. What a scheming woman!

Diana's anger boiled over as she glared at Maria through the window. There was no way she was going to let her off the hook so easily.

Turning away, Diana left, her mind whirling with plans to ensure Maria would never get near Sidney again. He belonged to her-no one else!

...

After a week of rest, Maria's health had significantly improved, and she was ready to be discharged from the hospital. However, Herman insisted she stay another week, just to be

sure she had fully re

He was clearly concerned about her well-being.

Maria sighed in exasperation-there was no convincing him otherwise.

Chapter 949

Maria had been cooped up in the hospital for a week, and today she finally had the chance to stretch her legs with a walk around the artificial lake. Her body felt stiff from lying down for so long, and the cool breeze against her skin was a welcome relief from the heat. Herman walked beside her and asked, "Are you thirsty?"

"A little," Maria replied.

"Wait here, I'll grab some water," he said, turning to leave.

"Okay." Maria smiled, watching him walk away before turning her attention back to the lake. The hospital grounds, usually weighed down by an oppressive atmosphere, seemed lighter with people around, many of whom were also enjoying the fresh air. "Ha, what a two-faced woman," a snide voice suddenly interrupted her peace.

Maria turned to see Diana standing a short distance away, glaring at her with hostility.

"Are you talking about yourself?" Maria asked, blinking innocently. "That's quite an interesting self-reflection."

"I'm talking about you!" Diana snapped, storming closer. "You already have a boyfriend, so why are you trying to seduce Sidney? Does he even know you're stringing along two men at once?"

Maria watched her for a moment, amused by her self-righteous attitude.

"And who exactly do you think you are?" she asked coolly.

Diana's face darkened. "Did you just insult me?"

Maria's lips curved into a smirk. "Oh, I'm just getting started. If you say one more word, I won't hesitate to slap you. Want to test that theory?"

Her relaxed but bold demeanor, combined with the cold gleam in her eyes, made Diana falter for a moment.

Trying to steady herself, Diana said, "I came here to warn you stay away from Sidney. He's mine."

Maria raised an eyebrow. "Oh, well, since you're so adamant about it, now I'm even more inclined to go after him." "You...!" Diana was stunned, not expecting such a shameless response. "Are you serious? I told you, he's mine!" Smack!

Without a second thought, Maria slapped Diana across the face, not bothering to hold back.

"Did you think my warning was just background noise?" Maria said calmly, watching Diana's shocked expression.

She noticed she felt a little out of breath from the effort-clearly, her body still hadn't fully recovered from lying in bed for so long.

Diana's face twisted with fury as she raised her hand, ready to strike back. "How dare you slap me, you bitch! I'll tear your face apart!"

But before Diana could land the

blow, her wrist was grabbed and forcefully pushed aside, causing her to stumble. She nearly fell but caught herself, looking up to see Sidney standing next to Maria, his eyes cold and indifferent as they rested on her.

"You..." Diana stammered, panic flickering across her face. "When did you get here?"

"I heard everything," Sidney said, his voice icy. "And tell me, when exactly did I become yours?"

He asked bluntly, not sparing her even a shred of dignity.

Diana's face turned pale, then

flushed, as she bit her lip. "But you

were always so kind to me before.

Didn't that mean you were

considering a relationship with me?"

"You misunderstood," Sidney said flatly. "I'm grateful you called for help when my mom choked, but that's it.

I don't have any other feelings for

you."

What?

Diana couldn't believe what she was hearing.

She had completely misread the situation?

"But... but..."

Diana tried to say something more, but Sidney cut her off. "Apologize to her."

Tears welled up in Diana's eyes as she cried, "Didn't you see? She slapped me first! How can you take her side?"

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Sidney replied calmly, "I saw everything. And let's be honest, didn't you deserve that slap?" "Pfft..." Maria, standing beside him, couldn't hold back her laughter, her amusement clear.

Diana's face twisted even more, turning an ugly shade of red. She stared at Sidney for a long moment before finally saying, "I really misjudged you!" With that, she stormed off, clearly furious.

Sidney frowned slightly.

Running off without even an apology? How rude.

Turning back, he found Maria smiling brightly, her eyes curved into happy crescents. She was clearly enjoying the moment.

Sidney pressed his lips together briefly and asked, "How's your health?"

Maria shrugged playfully. "See for yourself I'm doing just fine. I even had the strength to slap someone."

Sidney's eyes flickered. "True... you didn't hold back at all."

A breeze swept by, and for a moment, Sidney fell into a quiet contemplation.

Maria broke the silence, tilting her head slightly as she asked, "You've been around a lot these past few days. Why didn't you just come to see me?"

Sidney looked genuinely surprised. "You knew?"

"I'm not blind," Maria said with a smirk. "I saw you."

Sidney's fingers curled slightly, a subtle sign of nervousness. He stood there in his crisp white shirt, his sharp features accentuated by his short, clean-cut hair. His eyes were focused intensely on her, far too intently. Maria raised an eyebrow, sensing the shift. "What's this about?"

Sidney's voice was low as he asked, "Do you like him?"

"Who?" Maria blinked, momentarily confused.

"Do you like Herman?" Sidney clarified, his gaze unwavering.

Maria hesitated, then responded, "Him? Why are you asking me that?"

Sidney seemed to have made up his mind. He took a deep breath and said, "Maria; at first, I couldn't stand your carefree attitude. I thought you wouldn't take love seriously, and I wanted to distance myself from you.

"I didn't want to get involved, afraid I'd be the one hurt in the end. But lately, I've been thinking... why am so afraid of getting hurt? At the very least, t, the journey would be beautiful, and would have had you in my my life. Maria, I've asked myself honestly,

and I do like you."

He paused, his Adam's apple bobbing as he gathered his courage. Then, he added in a quiet, vulnerable voice, "Could you at least look at me? Even if it's just to fool around... I don't care."

His words were spoken after long, careful thought, but as soon as they left his mouth, Sidney realized just how small and desperate he sounded. He was pleading for her attention. Pleading for her love.

Maria stared at him, utterly shocked.

She could hardly believe what she was hearing. In her mind, Sidney had always been someone with a strong sense of pride, someone who had avoided her advances with disdain from the beginning.

But now, what was he saying? Asking her to look at him? He sounded like a lost puppy, abandoned and looking for affection.

She couldn't help it-she laughed.

Sidney's face immediately tightened, his body stiffening at her reaction.

Why was she laughing?

Was it because she found him pathetic? It was clear now-she didn't care about him at all.

Lowering his gaze, he spoke quietly, "Those are my true feelings, Maria. If you think they're meaningless, then just forget I said anything." With that, he turned to walk away.

"Hey," Maria called out, grabbing his wrist. "Where are you going? Did I say anything?"

Sidney's eyes immediately brightened, full of anticipation as he looked at her, waiting for her response.

Maria hesitated, meeting his hopeful gaze before asking, "So, even if one day I get bored and don't want you anymore, you wouldn't care?"

"I would care," Sidney said earnestly, "but I won't interfere with your choices."

He took a step closer, his voice unwavering. "I like you, Maria. I want to be with you for as long as you'll let me."

Maria's heart raced in her chest, the unfamiliar rush of emotions both exhilarating and strange. She couldn't remember the last time someone's words had this effect on her. "Maria, I brought the water," came Herman's voice as he approached, breaking the moment.