

## Divorced Me 971

### Chapter 971

"Drink a little-it'll help," Sidney said softly, holding the water bottle closer to her.

Maria looked at the water being offered, then took it from his hand, sipping it slowly. As she drank, Sidney's eyes never left her, studying her quietly.

Neither of them spoke for the rest of the drive.

When the car finally came to a stop, the driver announced, "We're here."

Sidney turned to her. "I'll walk you up."

Maria didn't object, and they stepped out into the cool night. The breeze was crisp, refreshing after the warmth of the villa, and they walked in silence. Maria moved at a leisurely pace ahead, while Sidney followed closely behind, his gaze fixed on her, growing more intense with each step.

Suddenly, Maria stopped.

Sidney halted too, watching her carefully, waiting for her next move.

She turned to face him, a playful smile on her lips, her hands resting casually behind her back. "After going to Selenia's wedding today, I realized... maybe marriage isn't so bad after all." Sidney's heart began to race.

Maria stepped closer, shortening the distance between them. Her voice was soft but clear. "Sidney, I've played around for a long time, and I've thought about what you said before. Maybe it's time for us to..." Sidney's breath caught, his entire body tensing as a mix of excitement and anxiety coursed through him. His palms were sweating, his mind racing.

What was she going to say? Would she accept his feelings? Or would she turn him down?

"How about getting married?" Maria's voice floated through the air, almost casual in its delivery.

Sidney blinked, stunned. "What?"

Maria chuckled, her smile widening. "I'm saying we could get married, you know, love each other after. What do you think?"

Sidney stared at her, his mind momentarily blank. It took him a moment to process what she'd said before he responded, his voice almost disbelieving. "Are you... serious?"

Maria blinked back at him, her tone teasing but steady. "Do I look like I'm joking?"

Sidney was overwhelmed, his thoughts spinning as he tried to keep his composure. "Maria, you've had some drinks tonight. I'll remember everything you've said; but how about this-if you still feel the same tomorrow morning, we'll go register our marriage, How does that sound?"

Maria smiled and nodded. "Alright."

Then, she reached for his hand, her touch sending a shockwave through him as she said softly, "Take me home."

Still reeling from the earlier conversation, Sidney followed her like he was on autopilot, his mind stuck on one word: marriage. Not dating-she was ready to jump straight to the finish line. His heartbeat pounded in his chest, erratic, out of sync.

Once they reached her place, Sidney found himself standing in her living room, still dazed. He watched as she bent over to slip off her shoes, her back

to him. His gaze traced the graceful curve of her waist down to her hips, catching the gentle arc as she moved.

Without thinking, Sidney's hand reached out, gripping her waist.

"Hmm?" Maria paused, slowly standing up straight, her head turning just slightly as she glanced at him over her shoulder. "What are you doing?"

Sidney didn't answer immediately.

Instead, he pulled her closer, pressing her against him, the warmth between them undeniable.

His breath was hot against her ear as he whispered, "Maria, I'm scared this is just a dream."

Then, softly, he kissed her.

Maria trembled, melting into his arms as his tender kiss deepened. There was something so careful, so focused in the way he kissed her, like she was the only thing that mattered.

It was impossible for her to resist

such gentle intensity. She turned,

meeting his lips fully as they fell into an embrace. Sidney lifted her effortlessly, setting her on the entryway cabinet, his hands steady as he positioned himself between her legs, the heat between them growing.

Suddenly, Maria hesitated, her body tensing slightly from the unfamiliar closeness-it had been so long since she'd let anyone this near.

Sensing her discomfort, Sidney surprised her by kneeling in front of her, lowering himself to her level with a slow, deliberate movement.

Chapter 972

Maria's entire body trembled, overwhelmed by the unfamiliar yet intoxicating sensations coursing through her.

Her hands gripped the edge of the cabinet tightly, her toes curling involuntarily as Sidney's breath, hot and teasing, grazed her most sensitive spots. The stimulation was almost unbearable, pushing her to the edge. Outside, the wind picked up, causing the sheer curtains on the balcony to flutter in the breeze. The soft moonlight, once filtering gently through the window, was now obscured by drifting clouds, casting the room into a dim haze. A tear escaped the corner of Maria's eye, her breathing rapid and uneven, her body quivering under Sidney's touch.

After what felt like an eternity, her body finally surrendered, collapsing in his arms. Sidney stood and wrapped her in a protective embrace, his strong arms carrying her toward the bathroom.

"Did that feel good?" he whispered against her ear, his voice low and breathless, the heat of his words brushing against her skin.

Maria's chest heaved as she tried to steady her breath, her eyes meeting his with a mixture of lingering desire and curiosity. A teasing smile tugged at her lips as she murmured, "Sidney, where did you learn that?"

He chuckled softly, brushing a strand of hair from her face. "I just wanted to make you feel good, to make you happy," he said, avoiding the question with a playful smile.

Maria looped her arms around his neck, her voice soft as she teased, "Not bad... you deserve a reward."

Sidney's lips curved into a smirk, and he guided her into the shower. The bathroom filled with steam, the warm water cascading over them, creating a cocoon of heat and intimacy.

Her back pressed against the cool tiles, the contrast sending a sharp twinge of discomfort through her. She clung to him, her breath hitching as she managed to whisper, "Let's... go to the bed."

Sidney's grip tightened on her, his movements deliberate and unrelenting. After a few intense moments, he finally lifted her into his arms and carried her to the bedroom, where they fell into each other once again, losing themselves in a night of passion.

As dawn began to creep over the horizon, Maria's eyes finally fluttered shut, exhaustion overtaking her. Just before slipping into sleep, a fleeting thought crossed her mind, "A man who's been holding back for so long is indeed a force to be reckoned with." Sidney, on the other hand, lay awake, his eyes fixed on the woman nestled in his arms. Satisfaction and contentment filled him as he watched her sleep, already counting the hours until morning, eager for what the day would bring.

Maria slowly woke up, stretching her sore muscles and letting out a soft,

involuntary sigh at the lingering

tenderness in her body. The bedroom door opened almost immediately, and Sidney stepped inside, his eyes lighting up as they met hers.

"You're awake. Hungry?" he asked, his voice gentle but alert.

Maria turned her head to look at him. He was freshly dressed in a crisp white shirt and black pants, his short hair neatly styled, and there was an unmistakable energy about him bright-eyed, brimming with anticipation. She couldn't help but smile at the sight.

"Did he even sleep at all?" she wondered, amused by how perfectly put together he was.

Clearly, he had been up for hours, waiting.

With a lazy roll to her side, Maria propped herself up and beckoned him closer with a playful curl of her finger.

Sidney didn't hesitate, moving

toward her and leaning down, his

presence warm and steady. She

reached up and brushed her lips

against the corner of his mouth, her

tone teasing as she whispered,

"Sidney, you've changed... You

almost feel like a stranger."

He stared back at her, his eyes unwavering, the softness of morning still in her features-sleepy, yet alluring like a cat basking in the sun.

"I've just realized what I truly want," he said quietly, his voice steady.

Her fingers trailed down to his chest, her curiosity piqued. "Oh? And what's that?"

Sidney took her hand, pressing her palm firmly against his chest where his heartbeat pounded beneath. The strong, rhythmic thud reverberated through her skin, grounding them both in the moment. "My heart belongs to you," he said, his gaze holding hers, unguarded, full of feeling.

The intensity in his eyes made her heart skip a beat.

Something deep within her stirred, a raw emotion she hadn't fully acknowledged until now, swelling inside her as his words hung in the air between them.

Silence enveloped them, save for the sound of his heartbeat beneath her hand.

Chapter 973

"I'm starving," Maria said as she pulled her hand away, breaking the tension that had built between them.

Sidney nodded, his voice calm. "I've already made breakfast. Wash up, and it'll be ready."

"Alright," she responded, tossing the covers aside and sliding out of bed.

Her pale skin was adorned with faint traces of last night-bruises from his grip, tender marks where his lips had lingered. The sight told the story of their passion, but Maria didn't seem to mind. She moved with ease, disappearing into the bathroom without a second thought.

Sidney's eyes followed her every movement, heat rising again in his chest. He clenched his jaw, forcing himself to stay composed as the door shut behind her.

Moments later, her voice called out, "Can you grab me a dress?"

Sidney let out a breath, heading to her walk-in closet. As he stood in front of the endless rows of clothes, he paused. There were so many choices-elegant dresses, casual outfits.

For a brief moment, he was lost in indecision.

Finally, he chose a simple, comfortable-looking dress that he thought she'd like wearing around the house. He approached the bathroom door, giving it a soft knock before the door opened just enough for her hand to slip out.

He handed her the dress, and she pulled it inside.

A second later, he heard a small chuckle.

"What's wrong? Did I grab the wrong one?" Sidney asked, his brow furrowed slightly.

Maria's voice drifted out, light and teasing, "No, it's fine."

Sidney shrugged off the moment and headed back toward the kitchen, unaware of the amused smile on her face behind the door.

After about thirty minutes, Maria emerged from the bedroom, wearing the dress Sidney had picked out for her. As she stepped into the room, the silky fabric of the dress shimmered subtly with her movements, the delicate straps resting on her shoulders, accentuating her smooth, graceful figure.

Sidney, hearing her approach, glanced up and froze for a moment. The way the dress moved with her, catching the light, left him momentarily speechless.

Maria waved a hand in front of his face, breaking his trance. "What are you staring at?"

He blinked, snapping out of it. "Nothing... just-nothing."

"Let's eat," she said, sitting down as he pulled out a chair for her.

Maria couldn't help but find his

sudden awkwardness amusing. He wasn't usually like this-so...

flustered. It was almost end velet

After they ate, Sidney cleared the table and tidied up the kitchen. He returned to her side, his eyes lingering on her as she scrolled through her phone, replying to a few messages. en

The air felt heavier with each passing second, tension building between them.

Sidney, visibly restless, finally spoke up. "Maria... about what you said last night... did you mean it?"

Maria glanced up from her phone, blinking as if confused. "What did I say last night?"

Sidney's heart sank instantly, his expression faltering.

He hadn't expected that.

The hope that had been building in him seemed to crumble in an instant His posture slouched slightly, and the disappointment was written all over his face, like a lost puppy left out in the rain.

Maria was taken aback by the intensity of his reaction.

She hadn't expected him to take it this seriously.

"Hey, are you about to cry or something?" she teased lightly, her eyes narrowing playfully.

Sidney shut his eyes for a moment, regaining his composure before responding. "You said you'd marry me. I remember."



A slow smile spread across Maria's face. "I thought you'd pretend none of that happened."

"I wouldn't," Sidney said firmly, his gaze unwavering. "I'm not letting any opportunity slip away."

Chapter 974

Since she had mentioned marriage, Sidney was determined to ask again.

If she refused, he wouldn't press further.

Maria quietly observed him, then asked, "Sidney, are you really sure? I'm pretty unpredictable. One day, I might just get bored of you, and then we'll have to get divorced."

His eyes were full of sincerity as he responded, "I've thought it through. I want to marry you. I'll do everything I can to make our marriage work and never let you feel tired of me. I want us to go the distance together." There was no denying the stir in her heart, especially when he was looking at her like that-like she was his entire world.

Without thinking, Maria leaned in and kissed the corner of his lips. "You're so sweet."

Sidney's hand found the back of her neck, deepening the kiss. When they finally pulled away, both of their breaths were a little uneven.

"Maria, marry me?"

"Okay," she replied without hesitation this time.

The moment she said yes, she could practically see fireworks bursting in his eyes, bright and full of joy. It made her heart feel lighter too.

With her decision made, Maria didn't second-guess it. She changed into something casual but refined-a crisp white blouse and applied soft, natural makeup. Together, they headed straight to City Hall to get married.

As they waited in line, Sidney kept holding her hand, his grip a little too tight, and she could feel how clammy his palms were from nerves.

She chuckled and said, "Why are you so nervous?"

Sidney glanced at her. "I'm about to become a married man. Of course, I'm nervous."

"Good. You've got the right mindset," she teased.

When it was finally their turn, the moment they received the marriage certificates, Maria didn't even have a chance to look at hers before Sidney snatched it away.

She raised an eyebrow. "What are you doing?"

"I'm locking them in a safe," Sidney said, grinning. "So, you can't take yours back."

"Hmm? Why?" Maria asked, puzzled. She hadn't even looked yet!

Sidney responded, "To avoid the possibility of divorce."

Maria: was rather helpless! Was he being serious?

Did he not know that a divorce didn't require a marriage certificate?

However, seeing how nervous and cautious he was, she decided not to mention it. After all, today was her wedding day, and she didn't want to think about anything gloomy

She reached out her hand and said, "Give me the marriage certificate, I want to take a picture and post it."

Hearing this, Sidney's eyes lit up slightly, though he hesitated a

slight sure? Do you really

announce it?" Content belonet

"Are you

Maria said, "I already got the certificate, if I don't show it off, who would know I got married?"

That was just her bold and carefree personality-whatever she wanted to do, she had to do it.

Sidney took out the marriage

certificate but didn't hand it to her

he

instead, he s only

walked off to the side.

Maria was taken aback, "Where are you going?"

Sidney simply said, "Wait for me a moment."

He turned a corner, and Maria didn't follow. Since he told her to wait, she figured she'd just wait for a while.

In less than ten minutes, he returned, holding a bouquet of roses.

"For you, happy wedding day."

His eyes gazed at her, filled with a gentle smile.

Maria looked at him in surprise. "You too."

He actually went to buy flowers!

## Chapter 975

Maria accepted the bouquet and took a sniff, the delicate fragrance lingering at the tip of her nose. Only then did Sidney pull out the marriage certificate, handing it to her. "Doesn't it look better with the flowers? More ceremonial?"

Hearing this, a deeper smile spread across Maria's lips. "You sure know a lot, huh?"

Sidney replied, "I pay attention to you. I know you love taking pictures. If it were just the certificate, you'd find it too plain."

Maria laughed and took the marriage certificate, adjusting the angle with the bouquet before starting to snap pictures.

It didn't take long before she was done. Handing the certificate back to Sidney, she got into the car without hesitation.

Sidney carefully put the marriage certificate away, then got in the car and asked, "How about we grab a bite to celebrate?" Maria, still looking at her phone while selecting photos, said, "We just ate. I'm not hungry yet. Let's go take wedding photos." Sidney chuckled at that. "Alright."

By the time they arrived at the bridal shop, Maria had finally chosen three photos to post on Instagram, and as expected, Sidney was the first to like them. A flurry of likes followed right after. Tiana commented, "What?!"

A moment later, she followed up, "Wait, what?!"

Herman responded, "Congrats!"

Aveline chimed in, "Congrats!"

Selena added, "Throwing confetti! Congrats, congrats!"

Desmond commented, "Maria, you're my only female friend, but wow, that was fast!"

Baron asked, "When are you treating us to dinner?"

Braden simply liked the post without saying anything.

Not only did her Instagram feed explode with likes, but messages also kept flooding in. The first call came from Tiana.

As Maria walked into the bridal shop, she answered, "Hello?"

Tiana's voice was sharp. "Oh my

gosh!

Was that your account get hacked?

really you who posted the

marriage certificate? Did you seriously get married?"

Maria quietly moved the phone a bit further from her ear and waited for her friend to calm down before replying, "Nope, no hack. You saw it right. It

It was me. I got married today."

Tiana was too shocked for words.

After taking several deep breaths, she finally asked, "Who's your husband? And why didn't you post his face?"

Maria said, "You've met him, my business partner, Sidney."

Tiana exclaimed, "I knew it was him!"

Hearing this, Maria raised an eyebrow. "Why do you say that?"

Tiana sighed dramatically. "Because the way he looks at you-it's not proper!"

Then, with another sigh, she added, "I always thought you'd end up as my sister-in-law, Maria. To be honest, I'm still not over it. I've been trying to set you up with my brother."

Maria smiled faintly. "Well, you can give up on that now. I'm already married."

Tiana sighed again. "I guess that's that. How about dinner tonight? We can celebrate your marriage."

"Sure," Maria agreed without hesitation.

After hanging up, just as she was about to put her phone back in her bag, another call came in.

Seeing the caller ID, she was a bit surprised but quickly answered, "Hello, boss."

Lucas' deep, smooth voice came through, "So sudden-are you pregnant?" Maria was speechless.

The carefree expression on her face vanished instantly.

Lucas was the only person in the world who could rattle her like this!

Because he was just that infuriating!

"No, I just felt like getting married," she replied.

Lucas acknowledged, "When are you planning the wedding? I'll approve your time off."

Chapter 976

Maria thought Lucas must have woken up on the wrong side of the bed today. Since when was he so easygoing? Usually, it was a miracle if he didn't work them to the ground, but today, he was offering her a break? This thought crossed her mind, and she voiced it aloud, "Boss, are you feeling alright today?"

Lucas was speechless.

Among his subordinates, only Maria dared speak to him like that, with no regard for formalities. But he couldn't do anything about it-Maria was both highly capable and incredibly loyal.

Lucas glanced at Aveline beside him, holding back his temper as he said, "Do you want the time off or not?"

"Of course I do!" Maria agreed without hesitation. Lucas was showing her some grace today, and she wasn't about to waste the opportunity.

"Just let me know once the date is set," Lucas replied calmly.

"Got it," Maria answered, then quickly ended the call.

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Lucas turned to Aveline and asked, "Is that enough sincerity for you?"

Aveline shook her head. "Not quite."

Lucas looked at her and gently placed his hand on her round belly, asking, "Then what else do you want me to do?"

Aveline replied, "Maria and the others have been by your side for so long. For something as big as a wedding, you should make a gesture-send a gift." So that was what she meant.

Even without her prompting, Lucas had already planned to send a wedding gift.

He leaned closer, kissed the corner of her lips, and said, "Alright, I'll listen to you. We'll send a gift in our name as a couple. She'll remember your kindness." Aveline gave him a little push. "I don't want it to be like that."

"How about this, then?" Lucas's breath grew warmer as he kissed her face, his fingers lifting the hem of her dress.

Aveline's pale cheeks flushed. "What are you doing? It's broad daylight."

Lucas' eyes darkened. "So, what you're saying is, it's fine as long as it's at night?"

Aveline glared at him, annoyed, and got up to walk away. She was pregnant, and he still couldn't behave!

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Sidney watched Maria as she busily answered calls, a smile never leaving his lips.

Maria had taken several more calls, and by the time she realized it, her phone was about to die.

She sighed.

She'd expected her friends to just like or comment on her post, maybe message her on WhatsApp, but she

hadn't imagined they'd all star she

calling her one by one.

She regretted posting that photo a little now.

"Sir, ma'am, these are our latest wedding dress designs. Is there a particular style you like?" the sales assistant asked the moment Maria finally hung up her phone.

Maria opened the catalog and flipped through the beautiful photos for a while before turning to Sidney. "What do you think?"



But when she looked over, she found Sidney had been watching her the whole time, his eyes bright with undisguised joy and excitement.

Maria reached out and pinched his cheek. "Snap out of it!"

Sidney caught her hand and asked, "Which one do you like?"

Maria replied, "I can't decide, that's why I'm asking you."

She flipped through the catalog again and said, "They all feel pretty similar."

Hearing that, the sales assistant eagerly recommended the most

luxurious package they'

subtly sensing that money wouldn't be an issue for them.

Maria's interest was piqued as she looked at the options.

Sidney said, "I'll go with whatever you like."

Maria was speechless.

Why had he become so clingy all of a sudden? It was a bit overwhelming.

In the end, they settled on one design and scheduled the photoshoot. Two hours had already passed.

Chapter 977

As the two of them stepped out of the bridal shop, a warm breeze blew past, carrying with it a hint of stifling heat. Maria squinted slightly, a faint smile lingering on her lips.

"Mary!"

Suddenly, a voice called out from across the street.

Maria's smile instantly vanished, replaced by a coldness in her eyes. On such a perfect day, someone just had to come and spoil it-what bad luck.

"Let's go," she said, not bothering to glance at the person calling her.

Instead, she gripped Sidney's hand and walked toward the car parked nearby.

Sidney sensed her shift in mood and asked, "What's wrong?"

Maria replied, "I'm tired. I just want to go home and rest."

Sidney nodded, opening the car door for her.

He then drove in the direction of her place.

"Mary!" Tracy called out several times, but Maria didn't even look in her direction. Frustrated, Tracy hurried across the street only to be left standing in a cloud of exhaust as the car drove away, leaving her fuming.

"Ungrateful brat!" she muttered under her breath.

Pulling out her phone, she quickly dialed Gorden.

"I finally found her! She just came out of a bridal shop with some man-looks like she's married!"

Gorden cursed, "Daughters are nothing but trouble, can't even acknowledge their own parents. But it doesn't matter. The paternity test results are out. We'll take that to her. She can't deny it now, no matter what she says. We're still her parents, and she'll have to support us!"

Tracy responded eagerly, "Alright, should we go now?"

"I'm stuck at work on the construction site. Let's wait until later," Gorden replied.

"Okay."

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The whole drive home, Maria was deep in thought about moving to a new place. Now that Gorden and Tracy knew where she lived and had seen her today, they were bound to come looking for her again.

What a headache.

Maria realized she needed to move to a more secure neighborhood, the kind where strangers and uninvited guests weren't allowed to enter.

Lost in thought, she suddenly noticed the car had stopped at some point.

Turning to Sidney, she asked, "Why didn't you say anything?"

Sidney gazed at her, replying, "I saw you were deep in thought and didn't want to interrupt."

Maria smiled softly, "I've made up my mind. I want to move to a new place."

Sidney asked, "Why the sudden decision? Is it uncomfortable living here?"

Maria cupped his face with her hands, "We're married now. We need a home together. Are we supposed to live apart even after getting married?"

Sidney took her hand, kissing her fingers and her palm, "I'm not agreeing to living apart."

Maria's lips curved into a smile, "Exactly. So, you should keep an eye out for places you like, and we can check them out together."

Sidney nodded, thinking to himself that he'd have to take on more projects- after all, he wanted to buy their home.

When they got back to the

apartment, Maria went to take a

shower, washing away the lingering heat from the day. Once she lay down on the bed, it wasn't long before she drifted into a deep sleep. After all, the late night and busy morning had left her exhausted.

Sidney gently covered her with a light blanket, kissed her forehead, and looked at her with eyes full of love.

At that moment, his heart felt full, sweet, and completely content.

So, this was what he had been waiting for all along the love between him and Maria.

Chapter 978

As evening fell, Maria slowly woke up.

A soft, muted glow filled the room, and for a moment, she felt a bit disoriented. Just then, she noticed an added weight on her. Looking down, she saw Sidney's arm draped over her. Turning her head, she found him still asleep, his breathing calm and steady, his body pressed close to hers.

In the dim light, Maria quietly watched him for a while, a soft smile gradually forming on her lips. She thought, perhaps her decision had been the right one after all. Marriage wasn't so bad. She didn't move, just lay there watching him for a few more moments. Though she couldn't fall back asleep, she didn't want to wake him either.

As dusk settled in and the room darkened, Sidney began to stir. He turned over, but his arm remained around her.

"Are you awake?" Maria asked.

"Yeah," Sidney responded softly, leaning in to kiss her cheek. "Hungry?"

Maria replied, "A little. We've got dinner plans tonight. We can head straight there."

Sidney nodded. "Alright."

Maria got up, freshened up, and changed into a new outfit.

The dinner reservation Tiana made was at a restaurant that specialized in spicy southern cuisine, one of Maria's favorites. When the two of them arrived, Tiana was already there, along with Herman. "You're here!" Tiana greeted them, her eyes darting over Sidney as she spoke.

"Hello," Sidney said politely, extending his hand in a gentlemanly manner.

Tiana shook his hand, followed by Herman, who greeted Sidney with a warm smile and a calm, steady gaze.

Sidney returned the gesture in kind.

After all, the matter was settled-Maria was now his wife.

"Take a seat. Do either of you have any food restrictions?" Tiana asked, despite knowing Maria's preferences. The question was really aimed at Sidney.

"I'm good with anything," Sidney replied with a smile.

"Great, that makes things easier," Tiana said, flashing a grin before calling the waiter over to place their order.

Once the waiter had left, Tiana turned to Sidney, "I've seen you before, but I never realized you were so capable-managing to win Maria over! Care to share how the two of you got together?" Maria quipped, "So, the real reason you invited us was to hear some gossip?"

Tiana shot back, "Why not? You quietly pulled off such a big move, and I'm not allowed to be a little curious?"

"Alright, I'll allow it," Maria replied with a helpless smile.

Around her friends, she felt more relaxed and at ease.

Herman, however, interjected, "Their story is their own. As long as they understand it, that's what matters. Everyone's idea of romance is

different. What seems romantic to

you might not be the same for them."

Tiana glanced at him and sighed. "Brother, sometimes I don't know what to say to you."

Herman replied calmly, "Then say nothing at all."

Tiana was speechless.

He really was determined not to let her dig deeper. How frustrating!

Sidney broke the tension, saying, "It's actually pretty simple. I started out as a designer at Maria's studio. I developed feelings for her early on, and when I became a partner in the business, we spent more time together, and things just naturally progressed from there."

He offered a straightforward explanation, leaving out the complexities of their past and the personal struggles he'd faced. It was the simplest version of their story, free of the emotional weight behind

it.

Tiana wasn't entirely convinced, but she also knew it wasn't her place to pry. Besides, with it being their wedding day, asking too many questions would feel inappropriate.

Chapter 979

After thinking it over, Tiana decided to drop the idea.

Just then, the food began to arrive.

"Let's dig in! The food here is really good. Maria and I used to come here all the time," Tiana said cheerfully.

With that, the conversation shifted, and everyone started eating.

At one point, Maria excused herself to use the restroom. As she stepped out, she bumped into Herman at the doorway. He was on the phone, his voice calm and measured, speaking with patience clearly talking to a woman on the other end.

To be fair, Herman was an impressive man. He was kind, successful, and undeniably handsome anyone could easily be drawn to him. But someone else had already claimed Maria's heart.

With a faint smile, Maria approached just as Herman ended the call.

"I didn't expect you to get married so quickly," he said, breaking the silence.

Maria replied, "That's just how I am. When I decide on something, I go for it. I follow my heart."

"That's a good way to live," Herman remarked. "You seem happy and free. I'm honestly a little envious of that."

Maria smiled. "You could live that way too. You're the only one holding yourself back."

Herman looked at her for a long moment before suddenly asking, "Do you love him?" Maria paused for a second, thinking it over. "Maybe," she said softly.

If she didn't love Sidney, why would she marry him?

But she wasn't entirely sure just how much she loved him.

The truth was, she didn't even know what love truly meant.

All she knew was that being with Sidney made her feel comfortable and happy.

And for now, that was enough.

Herman gazed into her eyes, seeing the calm and serenity within them. There was even a hint of affection and warmth in his own gaze. Finally, he looked away and said, "Let's head back."

"Alright," Maria agreed.

The two returned to the private dining room, and as soon as they stepped in, Maria immediately noticed the atmosphere felt a bit off.

Tiana's gaze darted around

nervously, clearly feeling a bit guilty, while Sidney remained calm, his eyes soft and affectionate as they rested on Maria.

Maria sat down and asked, "Are you full?"

Sidney nodded.

Turning to Tiana, Maria asked, "Do you have any other plans tonight? If not, we'll head out."

Tiana responded quickly, "Why are you in such a hurry?"

Maria smiled. "Things are different now that I'm married."

For a moment, Tiana was at a loss for words.

Herman spoke up, "Well, take care on your way home."

Maria nodded. "Thanks."



She and Sidney got up to leave when Tiana suddenly called out, "Maria."

Maria paused and turned to her. "Yes?"

Tiana, still looking a bit uneasy, pointed to her phone and said, "Check your messages when you get home."

Maria raised an eyebrow, sensing something might have happened. "Alright."

As they stepped out of the

restaurant, the night sky was fully dark, stars twinkling above, and the

city lights sparkled all them.

Sidney broke the silence, "After you all left the table, Tiana told me you almost became her sister-in-law."

So that was it. Maria had suspected Tiana was up to something.

She looked at him. "And what did you say?"

Sidney, still calm, replied, "I said if it didn't happen, then it wasn't meant to be."

Tiana had clearly been dissatisfied with that answer, but the conversation ended when they returned, and the topic had been dropped.

Maria studied him. "You're not upset?"

Sidney smiled gently. "No, I'm not upset. Because now, you're my wife."

He added, "All anyone else can do is live with their regrets."

## Chapter 980

Maria gazed at Sidney's face, suddenly laughing softly before leaning in to kiss the corner of his lips. "Sidney, I didn't realize you were like this."

Her kiss deepened the intensity in his eyes as he asked, "Like what?"

"Very easy to please," Maria replied with a teasing smile.

He wasn't demanding just because she was his wife, he didn't let anyone's provocations affect him.

Sidney held her gaze for a long moment without saying anything.

She had misunderstood.

He wasn't a man easily satisfied.

In fact, it was quite the opposite-he wanted much more.

But for now, in front of her, he kept those desires in check.

What if he pushed too far and things backfired? He would never forgive himself.

So, he would take his time.

They were married now, and they had all the time in the world.

As they stepped out of the car and headed towards the elevator, two people suddenly rushed forward, blocking their way.

Maria's smile vanished instantly when she saw Gorden and Tracy.

They had somehow snuck in.

This neighborhood's security and management were clearly incompetent.

Sidney immediately stepped in front of Maria protectively, facing the two strangers.

"Who are you?" he asked firmly.

Gorden pointed a finger at Maria and said, "We're her parents, and here's the paternity test to prove it!"

He held out the report for Maria to see.

Tracy added, "Mary, you didn't believe us before, but now you can. We really are your parents."

Sidney frowned, glancing at Maria and noticing the coldness that had appeared on her face.

Without hesitation, he said, "Parents?"

e never heard of you

You've trespassed here, and I'm calling security right now to have

you thrown out."

He pulled out his phone and dialed the gatehouse immediately.

Seeing this, Gorden's expression darkened, and he reached out, attempting to snatch Sidney's phone.

However, Sidney quickly sidestepped, keeping a safe distance.

"What do you think you're doing?" Sidney said coldly. "If you try anything, I'll call the police right now."

"Go ahead, call them!" Gorden spat, pointing angrily at Maria. "We're her parents! We have every right to see her! She can't refuse us!"

Sidney had already connected with security and quickly explained the situation. The guard immediately sent someone over. Maria calmly watched Gorden and Tracy for a moment before asking, "Why are you here? What do you want from me?"

Tracy's eyes lit up, sensing a glimmer of hope. She stepped forward with what she hoped was a warm, motherly smile.

"Mary, we've been searching for you for years. We're so happy to have finally found you. Don't you miss

your family?" Tracy's voice was.

thick

with fake warmth.

Trying to play the family card, were they?

Unfortunately for them, Maria wasn't the type to be swayed by sentimentality.

"You're here because Gorden owes sixty thousand dollars, right?" Maria's voice cut through the act.

Gorden and Tracy both froze, their faces draining of color.

They hadn't expected Maria to know about that.

The truth was, they had come to find her for one reason-to get money.

Gorden's son, their precious pride and joy, was in serious debt-sixty thousand dollars wasn't a small sum. And with the interest from the illegal gambling dens, the amount had likely ballooned beyond measure. If they couldn't pay Gorden's son would lose more than just his freedom; he'd lose his limbs.

They couldn't let that happen. After all, he was the one who needed to carry on the family name.