

## Once Cast 124

### Chapter 124 As Long as I'm Around

Tyrone sat on the edge of the bed, watching as Aella carefully prepped cotton swabs for disinfecting his wounds.

Her face was calm, almost detached. It was as if the woman who had just shouted at him didn't exist anymore.

She turned him slightly and began cleaning the deep cuts on his back

"You've got two serious gashes," she reminded him. "Don't shower for a couple of days, or you risk infection."

Tyrone turned, gripping her wrist. "Do you even care about me?"

Aella smirked faintly. "Compared to Ms. Caldwell, does it matter?"

The emotions Tyrone had just managed to suppress started bubbling up again.

He grabbed her by the waist, pulling her onto his lap.

"Aella, can't you just talk to me like a normal person?" he pressed.

She stayed composed, speaking in the cool, measured tone of a doctor with a patient. "Your back's injured. Don't move, or—uhm!"

Before she could finish, he silenced her with a fierce kiss. —

One hand gripped her waist, the other cupped the back of her head. The kiss burned with a possessive intensity, like he wanted to consume her.

Ragged breaths and the sound of their lips meeting tangled in the air, overwhelming them both.

Ignoring her initial resistance, Tyrone bit her lip—part frustration, part claim.

He didn't stop until her body went slack and she finally gave in. Only then did he reluctantly pull back.

He brushed away the moisture from her eyes, taking in her flushed cheeks and uneven breathing. Seeing color return to her pale face, he eased his hold.

He told himself that her coldness was only surface anger. Deep down, their bodies still recognized each other, still responded instinctively.

"I'm going to wash my face," Aella said calmly, stepping into the bathroom. She turned on the

tap, washed, brushed her teeth, and returned to the bedroom.

After finishing the bandaging, she packed up the supplies. Tyrone went out to the balcony for a smoke.

Aella tidied the room and went to bed without waiting for him.

The next morning, Tyrone was still asleep when she woke.

She got up and took a shower. Then she got dressed, applied makeup, and styled her hair.

Seeing him rise, she didn't turn around. "I laid out your suit. The watch and pin are on the dresser. The gray tie goes

best with it."

Tyrone stood behind her, watching her reflection. Her face was flawless, her voice soft and steady. A heavy, suffocating feeling settled over him for no reason.

Emma had prepared breakfast, but neither of them ate.

At 7 a.m., Aella arrived at the press conference, arm looped through Tyrone's.

Cameras flashed nonstop, reporters fired questions, but Aella handled it with grace, smiling without faltering.

When she glanced sideways, Tyrone's face was dark, distant, untouchable.

So she stepped closer and, right in front of the cameras, straightened his tie.

After the host's opening remarks, it was her turn to speak.

She waved off the script Noel handed her and addressed the press directly.

She explained that while visiting her mother in the hospital, she accidentally broke a little boy's water gun. She asked her husband to help her pick out a replacement.

The boy Tyrone held, she clarified, was a relative's child, and she had been there at the time.

Then, holding Tyrone's hand, she smiled and announced that they were happily married. She added that Winter Group's legal team was investigating the rumor leak and would pursue legal action.

Before stepping down, she playfully mentioned, in front of all the cameras, that she was craving Tyrone's homemade chocolate truffles.

Aella handled everything perfectly, leaving Tyrone no chance to speak.

By the time she left, the scandal was completely defused.

Tyrone said nothing, lost in silence as he looked at her.

The crisis over, they left the venue. Aella scrolled her phone, refreshing the news feed as they walked.

Tyrone, still scowling, followed beside her.

The driver opened the car door, and she bent down to get in.

Meanwhile, inside the dressing room of Vleka's top influencer agency, Zera stared at the screen showing Tyrone and Aella at the conference.

press

In a rage, she swept every makeup product off the table.

She had thought the opportunity was hers, that once the media dug deeper, her connection to Tyrone would surface.

But overnight, that shameless Aella had smoothed it all over with a few carefully chosen words.

Watching Aella flirt with Tyrone on stage and seeing how tenderly he looked at her, Zera ripped the headband from her hair, jealousy seething.

I'm Tyrone's first love, the only woman he's ever truly cared for. As long as I'm around, that bitch, Aella, will never win.

Zera glared at her sharp and perfect features in the mirror, forcing herself to regain control. Then she picked up her phone and dialed Tyrone.

A black Bentley sped down Vleka's main road.