

Once Cast 132

Chapter 132 Tense

Warren gave a soft grunt and set the fresh bread down on the table to cool.

Aella didn't give Tyrone the chance to speak. She grabbed his arm and pulled him into the bedroom.

It was the holiday. She wouldn't let him disturb her family's peace.

She finished tending his wound and packed the medical kit. Her voice was calm but firm. "Go home, explain things to your family. My mom just got out of the hospital—I want to spend the holiday with her."

Tyrone buttoned his shirt with measured grace. His tone was smooth. "I already spoke to them. Tonight we'll stay here."

Aella blinked in surprise. "What about your dad and grandpa? They'll be livid."

Tyrone's hand brushed through her hair, his voice low and steady. "Let them be."

Aella gave no reply. She turned and walked out.

She knew he hadn't come only for treatment.

She joined her parents in the kitchen. Tyrone slipped into Clyde's room.

Clyde sat hunched at his desk, working on a motherboard. When he noticed Tyrone, he shoved his earbuds in tighter.

Tyrone's eyes flicked over the parts. With a flick of his finger, he tugged an earbud free. "The issue's the LED. The voltage isn't strong enough. Swap it out and try again."

Clyde jumped to his feet. "I don't remember asking for your opinion."

Tyrone's voice hardened. "Watch your mouth—I'm still your brother-in-law."

Clyde's fists balled. His voice shook with anger. "You're not my brother-in-law. You're the bastard who hurts my sister!"

Tyrone clamped a hand on his shoulder. "I hurt your wrist before. Tell me what I can do to make it right."

Clyde's teeth ground tight. "The only way is if I break your hand too."

Tyrone raised his left hand and held it out. "A man keeps his word. Do it."

Clyde didn't hesitate. His glare burned. "You asked for this!"

A sharp, sickening crack split the room.

Tyrone groaned, his jaw tight as pain shot through his wrist. Clyde's chest finally eased with relief.

Tyrone lifted his eyes toward the doorway. Aella stood there, silent. He walked to her, hiding the agony in his hand.

His voice was low. "I owed him that. Now it's even. Can we let it go?"

Aella's tone was flat. "There's a private clinic nearby. I'll take you for an x-ray."

In her heart, she knew the truth. What her family had endured, the things he did to them, could never be erased.

An hour later, they stepped out of the hospital.

Aella spoke gently. "Go back to the estate."

Tyrone's face darkened. "We're husband and wife. If we spend the holidays apart, how can I face my family?"

She wanted to fight back, but she held her tongue. She brought him back to the Reids instead.

The Reids forced cheer for the holiday. They avoided old wounds.

Dinner passed without trouble.

When Aella and Tyrone left, the night was deep and the clock showed past eight.

On the sidewalk outside, Tyrone caught her hand. His voice was soft.

"Clyde and I are even now. The jewelry's yours—let's turn the page on the past, okay?"

Aella nodded faintly. "Fine."

The past would drift away, no matter how deep it cut.

She would never waste herself again. Not for anything. Not for anyone.

She would live bright. She would shine.

Tyrone's gaze lingered, heavy with tenderness. "How about a little post-dinner walk?"

Aella hesitated, then gave a small nod.

They strolled side by side.

His tall frame carried the power of a dark suit and a long black coat. He looked striking and proud.

She wore red beneath a long beige coat.

A sharp wind swept past. It tossed her hair, lifted her coat, and teased the hem of her dress. She looked like a rose that dared to bloom in the cold.

Streetlamps glowed above them. Their shadows stretched long across the pavement.

A black Bentley crept along behind.

Across the street, Zera sat in a white sedan. Her eyes burned with envy.

She bent to whisper in her son's ear. The boy nodded and climbed out of the car.

Aella's steps slowed in her heels. Tyrone bent without warning and swept her into his arms.

His voice was steady, touched with memory. "You don't have to be strong with me. If you're tired, just say it. Like before."

Aella lowered her eyes, silent. Tyrone carried her toward the car.

The driver pulled open the door. Tyrone stepped forward.

Then Orson bolted out and wrapped himself around Tyrone's leg. His small voice rang out clear. "Dad!"

Tyrone set Aella down. His face showed nothing.

Zera rushed over. She struck Orson twice on the rear. "How many times have I told you? You can't call him that!"

Orson wailed louder, clinging tighter to Tyrone's leg. "Dad, I don't want to go home with Mom. I want to stay with you. I want to watch the fireworks with you."

He kicked and cried, but Tyrone didn't move.

The boy turned and scrambled into the Bentley.

Zera sighed, her face a mask of helplessness. "Tyrone, I can't drag him out on my own. Why don't you do it?"