

Once Cast 182

Chapter 182 Dangerous Ties

Aella was lost for words.

Tyrone said, "After Victor's mother took her own life, Leland got seriously ill. To pull the Websters out of that mess, Victor took a big gamble and teamed up with an international business group. He made a fortune fast, started his own company, and spent years cleaning up its shady past."

Tyrone went on, "About a year ago, he was attacked by a gang overseas. He barely survived, but one of his legs was badly injured. I'm guessing he came back secretly this time for medical treatment."

He paused and took Aella's hand gently. "I'm telling you this so you'll be careful. As his doctor, you're not just dealing with his condition or his bad attitude—you might actually be facing real danger."

Aella stared at him. "Are you trying to stop me from treating him?"

Tyrone looked up, meeting her eyes.

"Would it even matter if I tried?"

Their gazes locked. Aella's lips curved into a faint, mocking smile. "You're right. Stopping me won't work. But you've got plenty of ways to make me give up, don't you?"

Tyrone frowned, released her hand, and turned away to pack up the medical kit.

"I told you I'd never do that to you again," he said quietly. "And I meant it."

Aella looked at him, feeling a strange discomfort she couldn't explain.

Honestly, she almost wished they'd just argue it out and then give each other the silent treatment for a few days.

She got up to go back to the bedroom, but Tyrone spoke from behind her. "You're going there to treat someone, not to throw your life away. If anything happens, promise me you'll put yourself first."

Aella stopped and turned around. "You risked your life for love. Why can't I risk mine for my career?"

Their eyes met, and Tyrone stepped closer.

He looked right into her eyes. "My life already belongs to you."

Aella let out a short, cold laugh. "I'd sooner believe in the apocalypse than that."

Then she turned and walked off to the bedroom.

What's up with Zera, anyway?

After that one phone call from Tyrone, she hasn't dared to show up for days.

I think Tyrone's losing his mind from not

seeing her. He's been saying weird stuff ever since.

+8 Pearls

The next few days passed in a blur. Aella was swamped with work, while Tyrone stayed stuck in his strange, unpredictable moods.

Before they knew it, March arrived.

One morning, as Aella was about to leave for work, Tyrone stopped her.

“Aella,” he said, “do you even remember the last time you had a meal at home?”

Aella brushed past him to grab her bag. “If you’re bored eating alone, call Zera and Orson to join you.”

Tyrone’s face immediately darkened. Seeing that, Aella pouted a little and teased, “Fine, how about I invite Brad and Mr. Locke to keep you company instead?”

Just as she reached for the door, Tyrone caught her wrist and pulled her back.

“It’s been too long since we’ve had dinner together,” he said. “I’ll make a reservation. Let me pick you up after work, okay?”

Aella thought Tyrone had been acting strange lately.

After hesitating a moment, she nodded. “Have Emma cook something nice. I’ll come home early tonight.”

Getting a clear answer made Tyrone’s tense face finally relax.

His gaze drifted from her eyes down to her lips—the soft curve that always drew him in.

He slipped an arm around her waist and leaned in slowly.

But as his breath brushed against her, Aella turned her head away.

Tyrone froze for a second, then quietly let her go.

The door opened and closed behind her. He stayed where he was, completely still.

Ever since the day Tyrone drugged Aella, they hadn't shared a bed again.

She avoided his touch, flinched from his closeness, and turned away from any show of affection.

No matter what he did, she kept her guard up.

That evening, Tyrone came home to find Emma had set out a full dinner.

"Emma," he said, "you can clean up and head home for the night."

He walked over to the wine cabinet, grabbed a bottle, and poured half into a decanter.

+8 Pearls

When he stepped into the dining room, he spotted a plate of chocolate truffles on the table.

He froze, staring at it as a memory of Aella breaking down flashed through his mind.

Ever since he'd baked that cake for Zera and Orson, Aella hadn't touched a single truffle since.

A sharp ache tightened in his chest. "Emma," he said quietly, "take those truffles away."

Emma had barely left when Aella came home.

But she wasn't alone—two familiar faces followed behind her, and Tyrone's expression instantly darkened.

Seeing his look, Aella quickly said, "I ran into them downstairs, so I invited them up. Dinner's more fun with more people."

Brad and Sayer headed straight to wash their hands like they'd done it a hundred times before. When they passed Tyrone on the way to the dining room, Brad stopped.

"Hey, this wasn't our idea," he said. "Aella's the one who invited us."

Sayer leaned in and added, "Yeah, don't glare at us. Aella said we could eat whatever we wanted."

Tyrone's voice stayed calm, but his tone was icy. "Please address her as Mrs. Winter or Dr. Reid."