

Once Cast 321

Chapter 321 I Can't Let Her Go

Tyrone felt his mood plummet when Brad mentioned that Aella was playing poker in Webster Manor.

He had been injured to save her, and she was still in the mood to play poker?

Tyrone lay on the hospital bed, feeling a dull ache deep in his heart.

Brad stood up and put on his coat. "Aella sent another message. I need to hurry over. She hasn't won a single game against Sayer."

Tyrone didn't respond.

Seeing Tyrone lying there like a dead fish, not reacting at all, Brad sighed. "Come on, Tyrone. You'll get used to life without Aella eventually."

Tyrone lay on the bed, slowly opening his eyes when he heard the door to the room open, then close.

He had been married to Aella for 3 years, busy with work, socializing, and a million other things.

Aella waited for him during the day and at night. It was always her waiting for him.

After Zera and her son returned to the country, he had even less time for Aella than before.

Because of them, Aella had cried, thrown tantrums, broken down, and given him the cold shoulder... until their relationship fell apart and ended in divorce.

And he had kept suppressing her emotions, her anger, and her responses.

Tyrone curled slightly on the bed, feeling sad.

It turned out that waiting alone was really hard.

It turned out that being ignored, neglected, and pushed down by someone you care about was incredibly painful.

When Virginia entered the hospital room, she saw her son lying alone in the bed.

Feeling a pang of heartache, Virginia set down the dinner and sat beside the bed. "Get up and eat something. Let's talk."

His eyes slowly focused on her.

He looked at Virginia by the bed and said in a hoarse voice, "Mom, I'm not hungry."

After saying that, Tyrone lowered his gaze to hide the emotions in his eyes.

Virginia said, "Tyrone, after everything you've been through, do you know where you went wrong?"

Her son wasn't not hungry; he just couldn't stomach it.

Tyrone gently closed his eyes, tears gathering at the corners.

He remained silent for a long time before finally managing to say, "I'd screwed up. In every possible way."

He was wrong for being indecisive during the marriage, for not clearly setting boundaries with Zera.

He was wrong for taking Zera's son under the table, promising to take care of her and her daughter.

He was wrong for being so cold and domineering toward Aella.

He was wrong for always trying to solve problems his own way without listening to Aella's needs.

He was wrong for not heeding his mother's advice and destroying his own marriage.

He was ridiculously wrong.

Virginia urged Tyrone, "Aella is doing well now. Don't be so stubborn. Let her go."

Tyrone choked up, taking a long time to respond.

He said, "Mom, I was wrong, and I will change, but I can't let her go."

The thought of never seeing Aella again made his chest ache.

Faced with such a stubborn son, Virginia felt helpless.

In the following days, Tyrone lay in the hospital, moping around to recover.

The most he did each day was stare at the door, hoping it would be Aella who walked in.

But she never did.

Soon enough, discharge day came.

On the side of the road in front of the hospital's outpatient building, Tyrone spotted Aella from a distance, dressed in a white dress, holding Henry's hand while standing next to Mason's black Maybach.

Aella was resting one hand on the car door, and Mason crouched in front of her, helping her change her shoes.

"What are you doing?"

Tyrone blurted out as he rushed over to Aella, stopping Mason from helping her.

Tyrone was so quick that Aella didn't even have time to react.

Mason stood up and politely greeted Tyrone, "Mr. Winter."

Tyrone shouted angrily, "Mason, please keep your distance from my wife!"

Aella was taken aback.

She pushed Tyrone away and corrected him in a serious tone, "Tyrone, we've been divorced for ages. Watch your manners and what you say."

Tyrone grabbed Aella's wrist, lowering his voice as he spoke to her.

He said, "I need to ask you something. Let's talk in my car."

Aella coldly shook off Tyrone's hand.

As Tyrone moved to approach her again, Henry suddenly rushed between them, hugging Aella's leg. "Don't bully Aella!"

With a child blocking the way, Tyrone couldn't get close to Aella, his expression darkening.

Mason explained, "Mr. Winter, don't misunderstand. My son accidentally spilled a drink on Dr. Reid's shoes. Dr. Reid hurt her back a couple of days ago while treating a patient, so I was just helping her change shoes."

After saying that, Mason pulled his son closer.

From Mason's perspective, even though Aella was divorced, Tyrone was still trying to win her back. So, their relationship wasn't entirely over.

"You hurt your back?"

Tyrone instinctively reached out to Aella, but she stepped back to avoid him.

Aella said to Mason, "You don't need to explain to him. In Mr. Winter's eyes, a man helping a woman change her shoes isn't inappropriate."

Chapter 322 The Warning

After Aella speaking, she looked at Tyrone.

Tyrone's outstretched hand fell limply to his side.

Aella stepped closer and lowered her voice to warn him, "Mr. Winter, I'm telling you one last time—we're divorced. Even if you catch me in bed with another man, please calmly walk away and don't disturb my happiness."

With that, Aella turned and got into the passenger seat of Mason's car.

Tyrone stood frozen, his crimson eyes watching as Aella got into Mason's car and drove away. His hands clenched tightly at his sides until the knuckles turned white.

Not far away, Brad was carrying a small chain bag that belonged to Raine. The two of them tilted their heads in opposite directions, frowning as they stared at Tyrone.

Raine said, "Brad, do you think Tyrone has lost his mind?"

"When Aella and I went to the mall, we saw him buy shoes for Zera and even help her put them

on.

"I still remember the details. Aella definitely hasn't forgotten either. How could he go up to question her? Is he out of his mind?"

Brad replied, "Guess your brother's brain just shut down."

He nudged Raine with his elbow. "Go call your brother to get in the car."

Raine crossed her arms. "You go."

Brad said, "He's your brother, not mine."

Raine retorted, "You're my biological brother. He's not."

Brad stared at Raine for a few seconds before giving in. "Fine, I'll go."

At two in the afternoon, the Winter Estate's butler knocked on Aella's office door. "Mrs. Winter..."

Upon meeting Aella's warning gaze, the butler quickly corrected himself. "Dr. Reid, Mr. Edwin would like to see you."

More than ten minutes later, Aella arrived at a café near the hospital, confidently sitting down across from Edwin.

The two of them sized each other up, their gazes unyielding.

Edwin spoke first. "If you had been a bit more gracious and sensible back then, you and Tyrone. wouldn't have ended up like this."

Aella cursed inwardly.

Raine was right.

Edwin was selfish, protective, and completely unreasonable.

To him, his grandson was completely innocent of any wrongdoing in getting to this point. It was all because she wasn't gracious enough or sensible enough.

Feeling uneasy, Aella didn't bother sugarcoating it. "Mr. Edwin, you've stooped so low to come find someone like me, who you say is not gracious or sensible. What exactly do you want?"

Edwin sneered dismissively. "Tyrone is dating Vivienne. As long as you promise not to interfere with their relationship, I can let your family off the hook."

Aella raised an eyebrow. "Mr. Edwin, why do you assume I'm the one after your worthless grandson?"

Edwin responded with disdain, "You, a bankrupt heiress, shouldn't think that just because you know a few wealthy people as a doctor, you can act so high and mighty."

He continued, "Even if you worked your tail off forever, you'd never measure up to Tyrone."

Aella stood up, not wanting to continue this conversation with him.

She sternly told Edwin, "Rest assured, even if every man in the world died, I would never reconcile with your grandson!"

As she turned to leave, she reminded Edwin, "Please keep a tighter leash on your grandson; don't let him come and disturb my life."

Aella left without giving him a chance to explode in anger.

Hearing the sound of a teacup crashing onto the table behind her, she didn't look back.

Aella returned to the hospital for her patients.

Vivienne's mother, Jasmine, knocked and came into Aella's consultation room.

Aella looked at the young woman, adorned in flashy jewelry, and then at the patient's name on the computer, noticing the significant age difference visually.

Aella asked for confirmation, "Are you Jasmine?"

Jasmine glanced around the consultation room, sizing up Aella before sitting down.

Aella inquired, "How long have you been experiencing insomnia? Have you taken any medication during this time?"

Jasmine replied, "I'm not here for treatment. I'm here to warn you."

Aella moved her hand off the keyboard, locking eyes with her and sensing the contempt.

However, Aella didn't know Jasmine. She felt a bit confused and wary.

“Care to be more specific?” Aella asked.

Jasmine leisurely fiddled with the emerald bracelet on her wrist.

She looked at Aella with a warning look and said, “Dr. Reid, whether you and Mr. Winter were childhood sweethearts or were married for a few years, that’s all in the past. I hope you can conduct yourself properly and not think about using your looks to seduce Mr. Winter into remarrying you.”

Her tone was vicious. Aella frowned.

Jasmine continued, her expression cold, “Even if you’re unwilling to accept it, my daughter Vivienne is about to get engaged to Mr. Winter. If you ever even think about messing with their engagement, you’ll regret it.”

Chapter 323 Ignored

Aella’s lips curled into a mocking smile.

So this is Vivienne’s mother—Jasmine Guinevere.

What a day. Trouble just keep coming one after another

Aella rose from her chair. Standing in front of Jasmine, she slipped her hands into the pockets of her white coat.

“Mrs. Guinevere,” Aella said coolly, “whatever you want to do for Vivienne is your business. But this is

my

clinic. If you keep talking like that, I won't stay polite."

Jasmine was proud, but she wasn't stupid.

As the lady of the powerful Guineveres, she would never stoop so low as to get into a fight with someone like Aella. That would only make her look cheap.

She stood up calmly, meeting Aella's gaze with a sharp look.

Her voice dripped with sarcasm. "I've seen plenty of people who want to do bad things and still keep a good reputation. You say I'm defending Vivienne—but tell me, what about when Mr. Winter got hurt saving you? What does that mean?"

"That was his own choice," Aella said evenly.

"I'm divorced from Tyrone," she continued. "We have nothing to do with each other anymore. Whether your daughter and he get engaged or married is none of my business. Go talk to Tyrone if you want attention, not me."

Jasmine gave a satisfied nod. "Dr. Reid, I'll remember what you said today."

As soon as Jasmine left Aella's office, Daniel knocked and stepped in.

"You need any help?" he asked.

Aella sighed and shook her head.

Daniel frowned. "Aella, Vivienne and that Zera woman aren't even in the same league. The Guineveres are one of the most powerful families out there—tough, sharp, and ruthless. Vivienne might have a decent reputation, but her mother is a nightmare to deal with."

He went on, "The Guineveres only care about power and profit. Before you even married Mr. Winter, they already wanted to ally with his family. Now that you're divorced, Mrs. Guinevere clearly plans to make that happen. If Tyrone keeps holding on to you, she'll make sure your life

gets harder."

Daniel looked serious. "If anything happens, promise me you'll tell me right away."

Aella gave him a helpless smile. "Daniel, I didn't do anything wrong. So I'm not afraid."

She decided to take things as they came.

She didn't start trouble, but she wouldn't run from it either.

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Daniel suddenly said, "The Cunninghams are hosting a dinner party this weekend. If you've got time, come with me as my plus-one. There's someone I'd like you to meet."

Aella raised a brow. "Wait, you mean the Cunninghams? One of the Eight Great Families?"

Daniel nodded. "Yeah. George Cunningham just got back from Ressovia. He's throwing a party to introduce his new wife."

Aella blinked. New wife? Didn't he just turn 50?

Daniel smirked and flicked her forehead.

Aella rubbed the spot. "Daniel, are you saying what I think you're saying?"

He laughed. “Exactly. He married her because she’s pregnant—and it’s a boy. This is his third marriage. The man’s obsessed with having a son, so now he treats her like a queen.”

Aella couldn’t help sighing.

Must be nice to be rich.

There were still women out there willing to have kids for a man in his 50s.

After being hassled by both Edwin and Jasmine in one day, Aella was mentally drained.

She went home early.

At home, she helped Miriam cook, tended the flowers in the yard with Warren, and chatted with Clyde. By the time she went to bed, her mood had finally lifted.

Before nine that night, Aella was lying on her bed, playing an online game with Sayer and Henry on her phone. She was laughing when a text from Tyrone popped up.

He said he was standing outside her house—he wanted to talk.

Aella pressed her lips together, her game round, and then stopped playing.

After hesitating for a moment, she called Edwin.

“Mr. Edwin,” she said on the phone, “does your family have too much free time or something? Why is someone from your house at my door in the middle of the night?”

Outside, Tyrone stood beside his car in a crisp black suit, his eyes fixed on the front door of the Reid Residence.

He could see the light still on in the main bedroom upstairs. He knew Aella was awake.

He glanced at the message he'd sent—still no reply.

Truth was, Aella hadn't responded to him for a long time. No texts. No calls. Nothing.

She hadn't blocked him, but she ignored him completely.

She surrounded herself with other people—but never let him get close.

That kind of quiet rejection cut deeper than any wound. It was like being sliced by a dull blade -slow, painful, never fatal, but impossible to forget.

And he couldn't do a damn thing about it.

The sound of a car door opening broke the silence behind him. Tyrone turned around.

The butler from the Winter Estate hurried out of the car.

Tyrone looked at him, then turned back toward the second-floor window, the light still shining through the glass.

His expression darkened bit by bit.

He already knew what this was about. Still, he asked in a low voice, "Why are you here?"

Chapter 324 Not Breathing

The butler spoke respectfully, "Mr. Tyrone, Mr. Edwin asked me to bring you back home."

When Tyrone kept staring at the gate of the Reid Residence without moving, the butler reminded him again, “Dr. Reid already called Mr. Edwin. She’s not coming down to see you. Please, Mr. Tyrone, let’s go.”

Tyrone clenched his phone tightly, his eyes fixed on the lit window upstairs for a long moment. Then, without a word, he turned and got into his car.

It was close to midnight when Tyrone finally returned home, reeking of alcohol.

He stumbled into the bedroom. The sight of the clean room and the gray-and-white bedding instantly sobered him

“Emma!” he barked.

up.

Emma, who had been sleeping in the maid’s room, quickly got dressed and rushed over.

Tyrone pointed at the bed. “Who told you to change this?”

Startled by his anger, Emma stammered, “Mr. Tyrone, Mrs. Winter used that bedding before she left. You’ve kept it all this time without letting anyone wash it. Yesterday, Mrs. Winter came by and told me to replace it.”

Tyrone rubbed his aching head and snapped, “Put it back. Now.”

He went into the bathroom while Emma hurried to replace the bedding with the freshly washed set that Aella had once used.

Later that night, Tyrone lay on the large bed, wearing a dark robe, staring blankly at the ceiling.

His hand reached instinctively toward the space beside him. His heart clenched painfully, as if crushed by invisible hands.

No matter how many times he rolled over or searched, he couldn't find even a trace of Aella's scent on the bed anymore.

Turning to his side, Tyrone hugged the blanket tightly, his mind replaying scenes from when they had just gotten married.

Aella had once told him that the new-Corantia style bedding made it hard for him to sleep and that the gray-and-white color scheme felt lifeless.

When he was away, she secretly replaced all the bedding in the house,

That night, he made her switch everything back.

But Aella stood her ground. She said the country-style bedding felt fresh and calming, close to nature, and would help ease his insomnia.

He was on a business call then and only gave her a cold reply. "If bedding could cure insomnia, no one would need doctors."

He could still remember the hurt look on her face.

Yet when he came out of the study later, the bedding had already been changed.

Aella had ignored his coldness. She wrapped her arms around his waist and rubbed against him. playfully, asking if he'd eaten dinner and whether she should make him supper.

Back then, she truly loved him.

But now... she didn't even want to see him.

She'd once promised to hold his hand for life, never to leave him. Yet now she wouldn't even give him one more chance to make things right.

Tyrone pulled out the crystal pendant. Inside was the AI-generated image Aella had drawn—a baby with red eyes, just like his.

Even the baby seemed to miss her.

In the stillness of the night, his emotions crashed over him like a wave he couldn't control.

His heart ached so much it felt like someone had ripped it out of his chest. The pain was unbearable, almost enough to drive him insane.

Unable to stand it, Tyrone stumbled out of bed and made his way to the living room.

At the liquor cabinet, he steadied himself with one hand and poured wine with the other.

The bottle kept clinking against the glass, his hands trembling uncontrollably. Wine splashed over the counter, dripping down onto the floor.

The next morning, Emma found Tyrone passed out on the floor, surrounded by a pool of red.

Her face went pale.

She shook him several times, but he didn't move. In a panic, she called Virginia.

“Mrs. Winter, something's wrong! Mr. Tyrone's not breathing!”

On the other end, Virginia froze in shock.

But then, as Emma's frantic voice filled the line, Tyrone groaned and pushed himself up, clutching his pounding head.

Emma gasped and quickly said into the phone, "Mrs. Winter, it's okay! Mr. Tyrone's fine—he just woke up!"

Tyrone gave her a tired glance, then walked straight to the bathroom.

Emma had watched him grow up, and seeing him like this—disheveled, empty, and broken—made her heart ache. She hurried to the kitchen to make breakfast.

But Tyrone didn't touch a single bite. He went straight to work.

After the morning meeting, he sat in his office, unable to focus.

His gaze fell on his hands, his eyes flickering with guilt and pain.

He didn't want to remember the past with Aella—but he couldn't stop himself.

The more he thought about it, the clearer it became that he had pushed away the one woman who truly loved him.

Across the office, Noel noticed Tyrone staring at his own hands with a grim expression.

Oh no, Noel thought nervously. Boss isn't thinking about cutting off his own hands, is he?

He glanced at the fruit knife sitting on the coffee table, then quietly walked over, grabbed it, and slipped it away just in case.

Meanwhile, Tyrone picked up his phone and opened his WhatsApp chat with Aella. Still no message.

Chapter 325 Abandoned

Tyrone opened Aella's Instagram and gently brushed his rough fingertips across her latest selfie on the screen.

Just then, Brad knocked and walked in.

Seeing Tyrone staring blankly at his phone, Brad sighed. "You're at work, man. What's so fascinating about your phone?"

When Tyrone didn't respond, Brad leaned over to take a look. Tyrone quickly turned off the screen.

Brad smirked. "What—are you waiting for her ceiling fan to break so she'll call you to come fix it?"

Tyrone lifted his eyes and gave him a cold glare. "Did Keller Group go bankrupt or something? Why are you so free?"

Brad leaned casually against the desk, still grinning like a troublemaker. Then he pointed at the fruit knife in Noel's hand. "Hey, what's with the knife first thing in the morning?"

"Uh, I forgot my nail clipper, so ... I used it to trim my nails," Noel blurted out, making up an excuse on the spot before scurrying out of the office.

Tyrone stared wordlessly.

When Noel was gone, Brad's expression turned serious.

"You probably already know who Mr. Cunningham's new wife is, right?"

That weekend, on the day of the Cunninghams' party, Aella went to the supermarket near her neighborhood early in the morning to buy some groceries.

To her annoyance, she ran into Tyrone.

He was dressed sharply in a tailored suit, and he approached her with a cautious tone. "Aella, I need to talk to you."

Aella's voice was cold. "Talk? What's there to talk about? Tyrone, I have nothing to say to you."

She set the box of salt back on the shelf and turned to leave.

Tyrone, clutching his stomach from a dull ache, quickly blocked her way. "Please, I really need to talk to you. Just a few minutes."

Aella looked him straight in the eye. "Tyrone, I don't want to see you, and I don't want to hear a word from you. Whatever's going on in my life has nothing to do with you. If you really want to help me, stay away from me. Got it?"

Their eyes met, hers calm but firm. Tyrone's already pale face turned even whiter.

When he didn't move, Aella pushed him out of her way.

Tyrone stumbled and fell hard to the floor.

The burning pain in his stomach made him grimace in agony. He instinctively grabbed Aella's ankle.
"Aella my stomach hurts."

Aella glanced down at him, her eyes unreadable. Then she shook off his hand and stepped right over him.

She paused for a moment, her back to him. "Mr. Winter, you don't have a stomachache—you just need to calm down."

Without another word, she walked away.

Tyrone lay in the middle of the supermarket aisle, his vision blurring.

"Aella, let's talk when you've calmed down."

Her voice echoed in his head. "You just need to calm down."

Two cold voices overlapped. Tyrone felt pain not just in his stomach, but in his heart—and all over his body.

He thought back to the past—how Aella once cried because of Zera, how she fainted in front of him, and how he'd coldly accused her of faking it.

Back then, he had told her the same words. "Calm down." Then he'd left her alone at home.

Now the roles were reversed.

He was the one on the floor, sick and helpless, and she'd walked away with the same cold words.

Only now did he realize how much it hurt to be ignored and abandoned by the person you loved most.

“Ugh!”

A metallic taste filled his mouth, and a spray of blood burst out before he collapsed completely.

A nearby employee screamed, “Oh my God! Someone’s bleeding! He’s passed out!”

That night, at 8 p.m., on the second floor of the Cunningham Residence, Brad leaned casually on the railing in a white suit, watching Tyrone come up the stairs.

He shook his head. “You had a stomach bleed this morning and were rushed to the hospital, and now you’re here at a party? Are you trying to die?”

Tyrone, in a perfectly tailored black suit, looked like he’d stepped out of a magazine—tall, handsome, and icy.

He stood next to Brad, both hands gripping the railing as he looked down at the glittering crowd below.

Even though his face was pale and tired, that sharp, cold aura of his was still impossible to ignore.

He didn’t say a word. His deep eyes kept scanning the room, searching for Aella.

When George learned Tyrone had arrived, he came upstairs personally. “If you don’t feel like mingling, just rest up here.”

He ordered the staff to set up a small lounge area on the balcony before heading back downstairs.

Tyrone sank into a single couch and picked up the wineglass on the table.

Brad immediately took it from him. "Even if you drink yourself to death, Aella won't care anymore."

That sentence hit Tyrone like a blade to the heart. His face darkened even more.

Seeing how bad Tyrone looked, Brad sighed and tried to comfort him. "Just go home and rest. Aella came with Mr. Hill tonight—she'll be fine. And if anything happens, I'll be here."

Tyrone lowered his gaze, eyes fixed on the hall below.

Chapter 326 Who Are You?

Tyrone said coldly, "You and I aren't the same. What's between me and Aella is different."

Brad let out a short laugh. "So you finally figured that out? Back when Zera was around, I don't remember you ever treating Aella half as well as you treated her."

Tyrone's knuckles turned white as he gripped his glass tighter.

Brad kept going. "You clearly favored Zera over Aella. You even wanted Aella to accept her."

When he noticed Tyrone's face turning pale and his hand clutching his chest, Brad stopped talking immediately.

Downstairs, Aella made her entrance at the Cunninghams' party. She wore a strapless white satin gown

that hugged her waist perfectly, walking in arm-in-arm with Daniel.

Everyone's eyes followed her as she entered, and Aella, calm as ever, quietly took in the luxurious scene around her.

Every corner of the Cunningham Residence screamed wealth and extravagance.

So, it seemed like the family's third new mistress was quite adored.

Her gaze accidentally met Jenny's from across the room. Jenny's crooked little smile made Aella's skin crawl.

Just then, a middle-aged man in a suit came over and pulled Daniel aside for a chat.

Before leaving, Daniel leaned toward Aella and whispered, "Brad's upstairs."

Aella knew Daniel was worried about her being alone, so she smiled and reassured him. "Go ahead. I'll be fine on my own."

After he left, Aella found a quiet corner to stay away from the crowd.

But when she saw Daphne walking toward her with Julian and Jenny, dressed in a flashy, over-the-top gown, her heart sank.

As they approached, Aella frowned. "What are you doing here?"

Daphne chuckled behind her hand. "What kind of question is that? If you can come to the Cunninghams' private party, why can't we?"

Julian gave her a sharp look. "After what you did to Zera, your good days are over."

Aella's eyes turned cold. "Zera killed someone. It was Mr. Winter himself who sent her to prison. That had nothing to do with me. Even if you want revenge. I'm not the one you should come after."

Jenny sneered. "Dr. Reid, you're wrong about that. If you hadn't come between Zera and Mr. Winter, she would've been his wife by now. And if she were his wife, do you really think he would've sent her to jail?"

Daphne crossed her arms with a smug grin. "You ruined Zera, Aella. Being kicked out by the Winters was what you deserved!"

Julian smirked. "We couldn't do anything to you before, but things are different now?"

Jenny stepped closer, leaning in to whisper in Aella's ear. "Dr. Reid, looks like someone's here to teach you a lesson."

Aella stared at the three of them, then turned to walk away.

Could it

be... that Mr. Cunningham's new wife is Zera?

But that didn't make sense. Zera was serving time in prison—there was no way she could be here.

Just as Aella was heading upstairs to find Brad, Dana stopped her. "Aella! I was just about to introduce you to someone."

Dana gestured to a young woman beside her. "This is Mrs. Cunningham."

Aella looked the woman up and down. She seemed familiar somehow.

She looked to be in her early 30s, with flawless makeup, soft, curled hair pinned up loosely, and a burgundy gown that highlighted the curve of her pregnant belly.

Dana's phone rang, and she excused herself, leaving Aella alone with the woman. Aella smiled politely. "Nice to meet you, Mrs. Cunningham." She turned to leave.

But the woman's faint smile lingered. "Dr. Reid, don't you recognize me?"

Aella paused, glancing around to make sure no one was nearby. She studied the woman's face again—it did look somewhat familiar, but she couldn't quite place her.

Her eyes dropped to the woman's stomach, and she instinctively took a step back. "Stop playing games. Just tell me who you are."

The woman rested one hand on her lower back and the other over her belly, her tone calm but

sharp. "Don't you think I look a lot like Zera?"

Zera?

Aella's eyes widened. "You're ... related to her?"

The woman's smile faded. She stepped closer and whispered, "I'm Zera's aunt—Anna Cunningham."

Anna straightened up, watching Aella's expression closely.

Aella froze, then realization dawned on her.

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Frushed

No wonder Daphne and the others could attend this party—George's new wife was Zera's aunt.

The two women stared at each other in silence.

Then George appeared. "What are you two talking about?"

Anna smiled gracefully. "Mrs. Buckley was introducing me to a brilliant doctor."

George recognized Aella and greeted her politely. "Dr. Reid, I'm glad you could make it."

Then he carefully took Anna's arm. "You should rest for a while."

Aella stood still, her face unreadable, watching George gently lead Anna away.

From the way he treated her, it was clear—Anna held a lot of power in that house.

Chapter 327 Accident

"You scared now?"

Aella turned around when she heard that familiar mocking voice behind her.

Daphne and Jenny were already standing in front of her, smug smiles plastered on their faces.

Daphne gave a cold laugh. "Aella, Anna is the new lady of the Cunninghams now. You'd better be ready—she's not going to go easy on you."

Aella's eyes flicked between the two of them. "I'm not that easy to bully," she shot back. "And who does she think she is to teach me a lesson?"

Jenny smirked, clearly enjoying herself. "Stop being so stubborn, Dr. Reid. Soon, every woman in high society will join forces to drive you out of Vleka. You won't have anywhere left to go."

Aella gave a short, sharp laugh. "Funny. You, a spoiled illegitimate daughter who lives off others, still manage to survive in Vleka. I work hard and live honestly. You really think I'd have no place to stand?"

She stared at them, her tone turning cold. "Zera was sent to prison by Tyrone himself. You don't have the guts to go after him, so you come after me instead. You're just bullies who only pick on the weak."

From across the hall, Aella saw Daniel waving at her. She ignored the duo's angry faces and walked away without another word.

Daniel immediately noticed something off in her expression. "Did someone bother you?"

Aella shook her head.

"Good," Daniel said softly. "Come on, I'll introduce you to a senior doctor."

Half an hour later, as Aella and Daniel came out of a side hall, they ran into Tyrone and Brad.

Everyone exchanged polite greetings—except Tyrone. He stayed silent, his dark eyes locked on Aella like she was the only person in the room.

Aella avoided his gaze and said calmly, "Daniel, Brad, you two talk. I need to use the restroom."

She turned and headed toward the stairs.

Not far away, Daphne, Jenny, and Julian exchanged a look, then quietly followed her upstairs.

Aella took her time entering the restroom.

She had thought that after divorcing Tyrone, she could finally live a peaceful life.

But now that the Winters and the Guineveres were preparing to merge through marriage, both families saw her as the one obstacle standing in the way of Tyrone and Vivienne's wedding.

And just when that chaos hadn't settled, Anna—pregnant with George's child—had tied herself to the Cunninghams and instantly become its new matriarch.

Anna hadn't said anything threatening yet, but Aella trusted her instincts.

Anna was clearly here with bad intentions.

Aella silently counted on her fingers. Edwin

, Ralph, Jasmine, Vivienne, Jenny, Anna, Daphne...

Every single one of them saw her as a thorn in their side—all because Tyrone still couldn't let her go.

Lost in thought, Aella stepped up to the sink—only to freeze when she realized Anna and Jenny were already there.

Her eyes flicked to Anna's round belly. She quietly pulled her hands back, deciding not to wash them after all.

When Jenny noticed Aella about to leave, she "accidentally" jabbed her lipstick right against Aella's white gown.

Before Aella could even react, Jenny gasped dramatically. "Oh no, I'm so sorry, Dr. Reid! I didn't mean to! How much was that dress? I'll pay you back in full—please don't be mad!"

Aella lowered her head, looking at the red stain now smeared across her gown. Around them, several guests began to gather—two of Jenny's friends, Daphne, and a few other onlookers.

Realizing something was off, Aella instinctively stepped back, keeping her distance from Jenny

and Anna.

Anna quickly grabbed some tissues and stepped forward. “Dr. Reid, let me help you clean that off.”

Aella took another step back. “Mrs. Cunningham, don’t bother. It’s lipstick—it won’t come off with a tissue.”

But Anna reached out and grabbed Aella’s arm. “You and Ms. Townsend are both honored guests tonight,” she said smoothly. “Since Ms. Townsend offered to pay for the dress, why don’t I take you to change into something new?”

“I said no, Aella replied, her voice firm. She tried to pull her arm back, but Anna’s grip tightened painfully.

“Don’t be so polite,” Anna said with a forced smile.

Aella felt pain shoot up her arm and yanked it free on instinct.

But Anna stumbled backward, giving a sharp cry before falling near the restroom doorway.

She clutched her stomach with one hand and the floor with the other, grimacing as she accused, “Dr. Reid! Even if I’m Zera’s aunt, I’ve never wronged you! How could you push a pregnant woman like me?”

Her voice was loud enough for everyone nearby to hear.

Jenny jumped in right away. “Dr. Reid, Zera already suffered because of you, and now you’re going after her family? You knew Anna was pregnant and still pushed her! Were you trying to make her lose the baby and get revenge on the Caldwells?”

Daphne crouched beside Anna, her voice sharp and dramatic. “Aella, you knew she was carrying the Cunninghams’ only heir! And you still tried to hurt her? The Caldwells may be a small family, but that doesn’t give you the right to challenge the Cunninghams themselves!”

Chapter 328 Outrage

With Jenny and Daphne stirring things up, the crowd quickly turned against Aella, all pointing fingers and accusing her.

Then Anna suddenly cried out in pain, clutching her belly. The servants panicked and ran downstairs to get help.

The people surrounded Aella, blocking her path. They shouted to pull up the security footage.

Aella stood in the middle of the crowd, her face blank as she stared at Anna.

Jenny had purposely smeared lipstick on Aella’s dress earlier. Then Anna had “kindly” offered to take her upstairs to change. But once they were alone, Anna had pinched her arm so hard it made Aella react instinctively—then Anna conveniently fell to the floor.

Now, everyone at the scene was Anna’s witness.

Even if they pulled up the footage, it would only show Aella pushing Anna down herself.

It was a setup. A trap designed to make her look guilty, with no way to defend herself.

Aella stood in the hallway as George rushed past her, surrounded by worried guests. He hurried to help Anna. “Hang in there, honey, I’ll get you to the hospital right now.”

Anna grabbed his hand weakly, stopping him.

“Honey,” she said pitifully, “it’s just a small injury. I’ll be fine. But our baby might’ve been scared. I just... don’t feel so good.”

George still insisted on taking her to the hospital, but Anna refused.

Her eyes filled with tears as she said, “Honey, I can’t believe I could be bullied like this in my own home. I was just trying to help Dr. Reid change her clothes, but she shoved me. She wanted me to lose the baby.”

Aella couldn’t hold back anymore. “Mrs. Cunningham, who do you think you are? You think you know what’s going on in my head?”

Anna’s face didn’t even twitch. “Dr. Reid, there are cameras in the hallway. If I’m lying about this, I’ll apologize to you in front of everyone.”

Before she even speaking, Jenny jumped in. “Dr. Reid, we all saw you push Mrs. Cunningham! Don’t try to deny it!”

The crowd joined in, yelling and demanding the footage.

George immediately ordered someone to pull up the video.

Then he turned his sharp gaze on Aella. “Dr. Reid, if the footage proves you pushed my wife and tried to hurt her baby, I don’t care who brought you here—I won’t let you off!”

He was furious. Anna stayed on the floor pretending to be weak, while Jenny and Daphne kept fanning the flames.

The crowd hurled insults at Aella—calling her cruel, saying she was nothing but a dumped wife who didn't belong in high society.

Some even spread worse rumors—claiming she was still chasing Tyrone, trying to get back into the Winters to live the rich wife's life again.

Others said she only got her job at Hill Hospital because she slept with Daniel.

Someone else chimed in that she'd once broken up Tyrone and his first love, Zera, even sending Zera to prison—and now karma had come for her.

5

The gossip grew louder and nastier.

Aella stood still, face blank, letting their words wash over her. She refused to respond. Silence was her only defense.

Then George's phone buzzed.

He opened it and played the video in front of everyone.

On screen, Anna looked kind and gentle as she offered to help Aella change her dress. Aella refused—and then, the footage showed her pushing Anna down.

With that "evidence," Anna's pitiful act looked even more convincing. Jenny and Daphne got louder, and the crowd turned from gossip to outrage.

Jenny shouted, "Dr. Reid, someone like you doesn't deserve to be a doctor!"

Daphne added, “She tried to hurt Anna and make her lose her baby! That’s basically murder! We should call the cops and have her arrested!”

Just as the furious crowd was about to move toward Aella, Tyrone, Brad, and Daniel rushed in.

Brad went straight to Aella. “What happened?”

Aella turned to them—Brad, Tyrone, and Daniel—and her eyes filled with tears.

Tyrone froze as she walked toward him, her expression full of hurt. His heart twisted, and he quickly stepped forward. “Don’t be afraid. I’m here.”

But before he could finish, Aella walked right past him.

“Brad, Daniel, I’ve been framed.”

Tyrone stiffened. Hearing her trembling voice behind him, he turned slowly. His hand, which had been reaching out to her, fell weakly to his side.

So her pain wasn’t for him after all.

He had stepped forward to protect her—but she had walked to someone else instead.

A sharp ache tore through his chest, and his vision went black for a second.

Luckily, Brad caught him just in time.

Daniel didn’t know exactly what was happening, but he stepped up anyway. “Mr. Cunningham, there’s got to be some misunderstanding. Dr. Reid works under me—if something happened, you can take it up with me.”

Anna, still pretending to be fragile, was helped to her feet. She gave Daniel a soft, weary smile. “Mr. Hill, I’ve heard about what happened between Dr. Reid and Zera, but I personally hold no ill will toward her.”

Chapter 329 Turn the Tables

Anna said tearfully, “I didn’t know Dr. Reid hated the Caldwells so much. She even went after me while I’m pregnant! If I hadn’t reacted fast enough to protect my baby, I might’ve lost the child already!”

Jenny added quickly, “Mr. Hill, everyone here saw it happen with their own eyes. And now that the footage confirms it, we can’t ignore this! Dr. Reid clearly hates the Caldwells, but to attack Mrs. Cunningham, a pregnant woman? Shouldn’t we call the police and have her arrested?”

Brad snapped, pointing at Jenny. “Why are you running your mouth so much? What’s this got to do with you, an illegitimate brat?”

Jenny’s face turned bright red, and she finally went quiet.

George stepped forward, furious. “Mr. Hill, even if you were the one who brought her here, that doesn’t change the fact—she hurt my wife! You owe me an explanation!”

Tyrone shoved Brad aside and walked to the front. He glanced at Aella, then looked straight at Anna. “Mrs. Cunningham, Zera killed someone. Prison is already the lightest punishment she could’ve gotten.”

Anna leaned weakly into George’s arms and nodded. “Mr. Winter, I’m not an unreasonable woman. But if you’re planning to cover for Dr. Reid and accuse me of lying, then there’s nothing more to say. I’ll just bear the humiliation.”

Tyrone’s expression turned dark, his tone low and dangerous. “Mrs. Cunningham, I’m the one who sent Zera to prison. If the Caldwells have a problem with that, they can take it up with me. Don’t drag innocent people into it.”

Anna lowered her head, looking pitiful. "Mr. Winter, please don't say that. The Caldwells are just a small family. How could we possibly dare to challenge you? We can't even defend ourselves in our own home, let alone hurt anyone else."

George protectively pulled Anna closer and glared at Tyrone and Daniel. "Mr. Hill, Mr. Winter -there are witnesses and video proof. My wife's been humiliated today, and I won't let this go. If you insist on protecting that woman, then you're making yourselves enemies of the Cunninghams!"

Then, right in front of everyone, George told the butler to call the police.

Tyrone instinctively reached for Aella's hand, wanting to comfort her.

But she suddenly stepped forward, and once again, his hand grasped nothing but air..

He froze, dazed, as she moved away from him.

Aella looked small and fragile, even more pitiful than Anna. Her voice trembled slightly. "Daniel, you were the one who brought me to the Cunningham Residence today. I didn't want to make a scene or damage the relationship between the Cunninghams and the Hills. But Mrs. Cunningham keeps pushing me—I can't stay silent anymore."

Daniel had always treated Aella like a little sister. He'd helped her, mentored her, and looked out for her in every way.

She couldn't let the families fall out because of her—or let Daniel lose face with his brother.

Thankfully, she had prepared in advance. Otherwise, Anna would've destroyed her today.

In front of everyone, Aella calmly pulled up the sleeve on her right arm. z

The crowd gasped as they saw deep red marks on her skin.

Aella lifted her sleeve a little higher, revealing clear bruises.

Tyrone's eyes darkened with pain. He clenched his jaw and stepped closer to her. "Who hurt you?"

Aella didn't answer him. Instead, she turned her gaze toward Anna.

Following her eyes, Tyrone looked at Anna too—his expression sharp and dangerous.

Aella said softly but clearly enough for everyone to hear, "Mrs. Cunningham grabbed me so hard that it hurt. I tried to pull my arm away, but she only tightened her grip. That's why I accidentally pushed her."

"You're lying!"

Anna's face went pale—she hadn't expected Aella to turn the tables.

She leaned weakly against George again, pointing a shaking finger at Aella. "I never touched you! You've always hated Zera. You pushed me on purpose because you wanted to hurt me and make me lose my baby!"

Aella looked completely innocent as she replied, "Mrs. Cunningham, I admit I had issues with Zera. But before today, I didn't even know you—or that Zera was your niece."

She continued calmly, "Why would I knowingly hurt myself and make these bruises—right here in front of a camera—just to frame someone I didn't even know?"

Anna's face froze. She hadn't expected Aella to fight back like this.

She'd already revealed her connection to the Caldwells downstairs, but Aella was acting like she

didn't know, playing it cool in front of everyone.

For a moment, Anna was completely lost for words.

Aella stepped forward, closing the distance between them.

"Mrs. Cunningham, you knew I came here as Mr. Hill's guest, yet you deliberately slandered me to drive a wedge between the Cunninghams and the Hills. What are you really trying to do?"

Before Anna could speak, Daniel cut in firmly, "Mr. Cunningham, have the Hills ever done something to offend you?"

George quickly waved his hands. "Mr. Hill, no, of course not! Our families have always gotten along well. This is all just a misunderstanding."

He turned to the butler, urging him to hang up before the police actually arrived.

Brad gave the Caldwells a mocking smile. "George, women talk a lot when they're emotional. Don't let a few words from them destroy the Cunningham legacy."

Chapter 330 Another Trap

Brad's tone carried a hint of sarcasm, and George's expression darkened immediately.

Anna clenched her jaw and gave Brad a hard look before quickly forcing herself to calm down.

She turned to a servant and ordered them to bring 100,000 dollars in cash, then personally handed it to Aella.

Anna smiled politely. “Dr. Reid, you’re our guest today. Let’s just say this whole thing was my fault. Please take this money as compensation for your dress and any medical expenses. I hope you and Mr. Hill don’t take it to heart.”

Everyone knew Aella and Tyrone were divorced—and that she’d left with nothing.

Sure, Daniel had brought her here, but even as a senior doctor, her salary couldn’t be that high.

Neither Anna nor Jenny could recognize the brand of Aella’s gown, so they assumed it wasn’t worth much—definitely less than 100,000 dollars.

In their minds, offering her that much was already more than generous.

“A hundred thousand dollars?”

Brad let out a short, mocking laugh.

Daniel shook his head.

Tyrone frowned, clearly disgusted.

Aella didn’t reach for the stack of cash. Instead, she looked straight at George.

“Mr. Cunningham, just now your wife accused me of planning revenge, said I pushed her and tried to make her lose her baby. You even called the police and threatened Mr. Hill.”

Her tone was calm but sharp. “Now the truth is out. It was your wife who hurt me first and lied about it—and you just want to sweep it under the rug? Isn’t that a bit much?”

George’s face turned pale. Flustered, he quickly barked at the butler, “Go get another 100,000 dollars!”

Tyrone stepped forward and stood beside Aella, his face cold. “Mr. Cunningham, do you think my family needs your 200,000 dollars?”

His words made it clear to everyone whose side he was on.

George’s face tightened. “Mr. Winter,” he said carefully, “why don’t you name a figure, then?”

Before Tyrone could respond, Aella spoke first. “Since Mr. Winter, the Caldwells, and everyone else are all here, there’s something I need to make clear.”

Her eyes flicked to Tyrone for a moment, then she looked straight at Anna and Daphne.

“Mrs. Cunningham,” she said firmly, “I’ll say this one last time in front of everyone—your niece Zera is a murderer. She was punished by the law, as she should be.”

Anna’s face tightened in embarrassment.

Even though she pitied her niece, she hated hearing Aella bring it up in front of so many people.

Aella’s lips curled in a faint, ironic smile. “Mrs. Cunningham, after Zera and Tyrone broke up because of Mr. Edwin, she went overseas and drugged a married man, trying to trap him into marriage with a fake pregnancy. When that didn’t work, she ended up living with a drunk who abused her for years. When she came back, she knowingly became Tyrone’s mistress, even though he was already married.”

Her words hit like knives—every sentence cutting deeper.

Aella continued, her voice cool and steady, “I actually tried to give Zera a chance. But right after my divorce from Mr. Winter, she was charged with murder. She just didn’t have the luck to marry into the Winters.”

Anna’s face froze, her forced smile stiff and awkward.

Aella went on, “Mrs. Cunningham, it wasn’t me who sent Zera to prison—it was Mr. Winter. I’m begging your family to stop coming after me. If you’ve got a problem, take it up with him. This has nothing to do with me.”

Then she turned toward Tyrone. “Mr. Winter, why don’t you tell everyone if what I said is true?”

Her move was clever—she laid out all of Zera’s crimes, then pushed Tyrone into confirming it, clearing her own name completely.

Anna and Daphne’s faces were pale with humiliation. Jenny didn’t dare make a sound. The crowd fell into an uneasy silence.

Aella and Tyrone locked eyes across the room, a heavy tension hanging between them.

In Tyrone’s deep gaze was something unspoken—protective, maybe even regretful.

He finally turned toward Anna and said coldly, “Mrs. Cunningham, I was the one who sent Zera to prison. If you’re upset about that, come at me.”

Then his voice dropped, sharp as a blade. “And if I ever find out someone’s harassing my ex- wife because of Zera, I don’t care if they’re part of the Eight Great Families—I won’t let it slide.”

George shot Anna a complicated look, then forced a tight smile. “Mr. Winter, Dr. Reid, my wife was out of line. Please, don’t take it to heart. We’ll host a dinner soon to apologize properly.”

Aella knew George was only backing down because Tyrone, Daniel, and Brad were all there.

Without their presence, she wouldn’t have stood a chance, no matter how right she was.

But at least the matter was settled—for now.

Brad, seeing things had calmed down, added casually, "George, maybe start by compensating Dr. Reid for her medical bills and the dress."

Anna glanced at George's face, then forced a smile. "Dr. Reid, why don't you tell us how much you think it's worth?"

She deliberately threw the question back to Aella—setting another trap.

If Aella named a high number, people would call her greedy. If she said it wasn't worth much, they'd laugh at her instead.