

Once Cast 341

Chapter 341 She Made Him Promise

Tyrone was in so much pain he couldn't even stand. He reached toward her weakly. "Aella..."

Standing at the top of the stairs, Aella turned when she heard his voice. Her face stayed cold as she walked upstairs without a word.

Tyrone watched her go, whispering her name over and over. "It hurts... it hurts so bad...."

He tried to stand, wanting to stop her from leaving, but his legs gave out and he fell hard onto the floor.

The pain in his body mixed with the pain in his chest until he could barely tell them apart. He curled up, trembling, staring blankly at the staircase.

His lips quivered, but no sound came out.

She ignored his pain again. She left him again.

Aella didn't love him anymore.

Not even a little.

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The color drained from Tyrone's face. He looked like someone whose soul had already died.

He couldn't imagine life without her.

Tyrone knew he had done wrong.

But why couldn't she just give him one more chance?

Why did she have to punish him like this?

Why was she so cold?

When Noel came back with the medicine and saw Tyrone collapsed on the floor, he rushed over. "Mr. Winter!"

He quickly helped Tyrone onto the couch and gave him the medicine.

"Hang in there, Mr. Winter. Once you take this, the pain will ease soon."

Tyrone swallowed the pills and lay back, silent. "She's never coming back," he said quietly.

A tear rolled from the corner of his eye, falling down his cheek and soaking into his heart like a silent storm.

That night, when Tyrone finally dragged his aching body to the bedroom, Aella was already asleep.

He stood beside the bed, staring at her peaceful face. His lashes trembled so hard it almost hurt.

Tyrone was in agony, but Aella was capable of sleeping soundly.

How cold her heart had become.

His body was numb from the pain.

He lay down beside her, careful not to wake her, and pulled her gently into his arms through the blanket.

It was him.

He was the one who had slowly burned out her passion.

It was him, that one, who destroyed her love with his own hands.

He deserved every bit of this pain.

The little island villa was cold late at night.

Tyrone slid closer to Aella without thinking. His arms tightened around her, but he didn't pull the blanket over himself.

Aella hated that his heart had once raced for another woman.

She hated that he had cheated on her in his mind while they were married.

She thought he was dirty. She refused to eat what he cooked and pushed him away when he tried to get close.

The room was dark except for the stream of moonlight coming through the curtains.

Maybe he was too tired. Maybe the pills he'd taken finally worked. Maybe having Aella beside him was enough.

The man who'd suffered from sleepless nights fell asleep at last.

In the morning, Tyrone found the bed was empty.

Aella was gone.

Panic hit him.

He jumped out of bed and tore through the bathroom, down the stairs, and out of the house.

Noel, seeing his boss, pointed toward the beach. "Boss, Mrs. Winter went down to the shore."

Tyrone lost his balance for a second, then ran like a man beside himself.

He stopped only when he saw her standing safe and whole by the water.

Aella wore a white dress and stood on the soft sand. The sea lapped just below her calves.

She spread her arms and tipped her face up, letting the wind tangle her long hair and the hem of her dress.

Early sunlight poured over her. In that light, she and the blue sea looked like one picture.

Tyrone stared, dumb with longing.

He remembered their honeymoon on this island.

Aella loved crowds and big gestures. She liked romance and noise. But Tyrone preferred quiet and being alone.

She had planned a big trip to Euravia for their honeymoon, but when it came time to go, she gave in and came with him to this lonely island.

That month had been bliss for both of them.

They woke up each morning wrapped in each other.

At dusk they walked the beach.

Aella splashed and laughed in the surf.

If he ignored her, she'd pour water on him or pout until he picked her up.

She'd take off a flowy boho dress in front of him, show him the swimsuit underneath, and ask him to teach her to swim.

They held hands on the sand. They kissed.

Sometimes they tumbled together and made love on the beach.

After the heat died down, Aella liked to lie on his chest, listen to his heartbeat, and dream about their life after marriage.

She said she'd give him two children -a son and a daughter.

He would be the breadwinner; she would take care of the home.

She used to say she couldn't sleep without him beside her and wouldn't allow him to spend the night anywhere else.

No matter how busy work got, he had to reply to her messages and pick up her calls.

On holidays, he had to bring her flowers—bright red roses, no excuses.

And every time he didn't answer, she would bite him, tease him, and make a scene until he laughed and gave in.

Chapter 342 When the World Went Dark

He lost control again and pushed her down until both of them were exhausted, until the room

fell silent.

Back then, Aella was like a newly bloomed red rose—bright, passionate, and full of life. She could light him up without even trying.

She gave him her time, her energy, and even her future.

But none of the things she dreamed of ever came true.

When he got busy with work, he ignored her calls. Every time she sent him a silly emoji, he'd never reply.

The only time he ever gave her roses was on their wedding day, and even that was arranged by Brad and Raine.

He couldn't even keep their baby.

And he once stayed away from home for a month because of another woman.

Tyrone walked toward Aella, numb and quiet.

Without thinking, he wrapped his arms around her from behind.

Aella froze, then began to struggle.

Tyrone held her tighter, his voice muffled and filled with pain.

He said softly, "Aella, I wish I could go back to the past."

Her tone was colder than the ocean waves beneath them. "Tyrone, stop lying to yourself."

There was no going back.

Not ever.

She pulled away while he was lost in his thoughts.

Tyrone grabbed her hands again, his emotions spiraling.

His throat moved as he swallowed hard, his voice shaking with desperation.

Tyrone looked into Aella's eyes, his own red and wet with tears. "I know I did unforgivable things during our marriage," he said hoarsely. "I lost my way. I broke the vows I made to you on our wedding day."

He took a shaky breath. "Aella, I'll change. I'll even replace this heart if I have to. Can we start over?"

Aella stared at him blankly. "If you change your heart, are you still you?"

Their eyes locked. Heat rose in Tyrone's eyes as tears began to spill.

He held her hands tightly, nodding again and again. "It's still me! I'm your Tyrone!"

But Aella stood firm, her voice calm and steady. "You're not. Not the man you are now, not the one with a new heart. You're not him."

Her words were sharp and final. "The man I loved died a long time ago."

Tyrone broke down, clutching her to his chest. "No, Aella! I'm still here! I'm right here!"

She struggled against him, her voice trembling but clear. "Then tell me, how does a dead man start over with me?"

Tyrone broke down, his voice shaking, "Please don't leave me, baby. Please."

Aella's tone softened, but her eyes didn't waver. "Don't make this task harder for me."

Aella pushed Tyrone away and looked straight into his eyes.

"We're both Scorpios," she said coldly. "We're both obsessed with cleanliness. You can't stand a woman who has betrayed you, and I can't stand a man who has cheated on me, whether with his body or his heart."

Tyrone shook his head in disbelief. "I told you I'd change. I'd replace my heart if I could! I swear, Aella, if you give me one more chance, I'll do it right this time!"

Even Tyrone didn't realize how desperate his words sounded.

He carefully took Aella's hand, his voice trembling as he begged, "I'll lose my mind without you."

But Aella only shook her head, calm and steady, as if his words couldn't touch her anymore.

"Tyrone, no," she said softly. "You won't."

Tyrone was a businessman who worshipped logic and power.

He was always composed, always calculating, always chasing profit.

A man like him would never truly lose control over a woman he no longer valued.

They stood facing each other in silence.

Then, sharp pain tore through Tyrone's chest. His body trembled violently, struggling to stay upright.

Aella didn't even look back. She pulled her hand free and turned away.

Behind her came the sound of a heavy splash. Tyrone had fallen straight into the ocean.

Aella saw Noel and the bodyguards running toward her from the beach. Her eyes were red, but her steps were firm. She didn't look back once.

After everything she'd been through—the heartbreak, the arguments, the years of love and pain -this ending felt too cruel, too small compared to what they once had. It left a quiet ache in

her chest.

Noel dragged Tyrone out of the freezing water. His face was ghostly pale, and his body trembled from exhaustion.

Yet when he saw Aella's thin figure stumbling forward, about to collapse, he pushed everyone aside and forced himself to move.

The moment Aella's knees gave out from her low blood sugar, Tyrone rushed to her. In a heartbeat, he dropped to his knees, sliding across the sand just in time to catch her before she hit the ground.

"Noel!" he shouted. Noel pulling a small vial from his pocket. He poured the glucose into Aella's mouth, praying she'd respond.

Tyrone knelt in the wet sand, holding Aella tightly in his arms.

His lips trembled as he pressed one kiss after another onto her forehead. "I'm sorry," he whispered again and again, his voice breaking. "I'm so sorry."

"Mr. Winter," Noel said carefully, "even if you don't care about your health, please think about Mrs. Winter. She's weak from low blood sugar and hasn't eaten in days. If this continues, her body won't make it."

Tyrone's hands were shaking so badly Noel stopped talking, afraid he might break completely.

When Aella finally opened her eyes again, the sky was already dark.

Chapter 343 The Goodbye on the Balcony

Aella stepped out of the bedroom and onto the ocean-view balcony. The night breeze was cool, and the deep blue sea stretched endlessly beneath the dark sky.

Tyrone stood by the railing. He seemed a little slow to react.

When he noticed Aella beside him, he quickly put out the cigarette in his hand and took off his jacket, gently placing it over her shoulders.

Aella looked up at him.

Their eyes met. For a long time, neither spoke.

Tyrone's gaze darkened, his eyes slightly red, his voice low and rough with exhaustion.

"I'll get you a clean shawl," he murmured.

Aella stopped him and held the jacket tighter around herself.

Tyrone froze, confused by her reaction. There was no hint of relief on his face—only panic.

Aella stood by the railing in her thin pajamas, the black suit jacket draped over her frame. Her hair fluttered in the wind as she stared out into the distance.

Tyrone, in his white shirt and black slacks, watched her in silence, eyes fixed on her profile as if he could burn the image into his memory.

Time seemed to stretch endlessly between them until Aella finally broke the silence.

"Do you remember our honeymoon here?" she asked softly, turning slightly toward him. "Do you remember what I made you do on this very balcony?"

Tyrone's lips trembled, but he couldn't find his voice. His throat tightened painfully.

Aella answered for him. "I made you swear you'd love only me for the rest of your life," she said. "You called me childish. I remember I even threw a tantrum after that."

Aella's faint, self-mocking smile stung Tyrone's eyes.

His eyes burned red, filled with pain as he stared at her. Leaning weakly against the railing, he could barely stand straight.

“I still remember,” Aella began softly, “when I was little, I used to run to your house all the time. Raine was so cheerful. We were inseparable. Your mom was beautiful and kind to me. Even though your dad and Mr. Edwin always looked serious, they treated me well. I really treasured

that warmth, that sense of family.”

She turned her gaze toward Tyrone again, her voice calm and steady. “I remember that time Raine and I sneaked out after school. It started pouring halfway there, and you and Brad came looking for us. The four of us ended up huddling under a tiny roof, sharing one small bag of cookies.”

Her lips curved faintly. “Those were such happy days.”

Tyrone’s throat tightened. His voice came out rough and broken as he lowered his head, his shoulders trembling. “Aella...

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He repeated her name, whispering apology after apology like a child who had done something terribly wrong.

But Aella only shook her head. Her tone was quiet, yet every word hit hard. “If I hadn’t been so naïve—if I hadn’t insisted on marrying you, knowing you didn’t love me—maybe we’d still be happy. Maybe we’d still be friends.”

“Aella!” Tyrone’s voice cracked.

His emotions broke through all restraint, and he tried to stop her from keeping talking.

He looked at her, eyes red and raw with pain. Tyrone's voice was trembling as if every word was scraping against his throat.

Aella lifted her hand and gently wiped away the tears streaming down Tyrone's face. "I know I can be difficult," she said softly. "I throw tantrums, I pick fights. Even though you didn't love me, you still bought me everything I wanted. Even when I made you angry, you held it in."

She looked straight into his eyes. "When my family was struggling the most, you married me despite all the pressure. Whatever plans or motives you had, you really did help us through that difficult time."

Aella's voice trembled just a little. "Tyrone, thank you for putting up with me back then, for helping my family so much. You once called me childish, and maybe I was. But I've always valued that bond. Even if you never loved me, thank you for who you were back then."

Tyrone froze for a second. Then he caught the meaning behind her words.

He laughed, then broke into tears.

As he cried, his knees gave way. He crouched down, crying like a lost child.

Aella stood above him, looking down at the man who had completely fallen apart.

She said quietly, "Raine has always been like a sister to me. Your mother treated me like her

But her tone shifted—calm, cold, and resolute. "But if cutting those ties is what it takes to walk away from you, then I'll do it."

"You can't!" Tyrone stood up, his voice cracking. He grabbed her shoulders, his eyes wild.

"You said they were your family for life! How can you just walk away from that?"

Aella didn't flinch, her face flat, and said, "If it means being free from you, I can give up everything."

Their eyes locked once more.

Tyrone's hands trembled on her shoulders.

His red-rimmed eyes looked desperate, like a trapped animal with nowhere to run.

Tears rolled down his face, one after another, splashing onto the floor.

The tall man stood before her, completely broken, crying uncontrollably.

He pulled her into his arms, all control gone. The fragile balance he'd been holding onto these days finally collapsed.

Tyrone tried his best to hold himself together, fighting the panic clawing at his chest. His voice was already hoarse, trembling with every word.

He kept calling her name, over and over again, each time weaker than before. "Aella ... please. Please don't leave me."

They had known each other for more than 20 years. They grew up together, laughed together, and built a life that was supposed to last forever.

She was his wife.

He couldn't accept this was how their story

ended.

Aella didn't push him away. She stood still in his arms, letting him hold her.

Chapter 344 The Last Promise

Aella's face stayed calm as she spoke, "If you still care about the bond between me and your family, if you ever truly felt sorry for me, if you have any real remorse at all, let me go. Give me back my freedom."

Tyrone's grip on her arm slowly loosened. Aella gently pushed him away.

His face was pale, streaked with tears.

His eyes were red, wild, and unfocused, like he couldn't see anything clearly.

His body bent slightly forward, as if the pain might make him collapse any second.

Aella took off the suit jacket and draped it over his shoulders. Then she walked back to the

room.

Tyrone stood frozen where she left him. His lifeless eyes filled with tears that rolled silently down his face.

He stood there for a long time, lost and helpless.

Aella didn't love him anymore.

She didn't want him anymore.

He had lost the woman who once promised to hold his hand for life.

“Spurt!”

Suddenly, he coughed up blood. The bright red splashed across the floor.

As Aella’s figure disappeared into the house, Tyrone’s body gave out. He slid down beside the railing, collapsing to the ground.

His empty eyes stared at the endless night sky. Pain twisted through him as he shut his eyes, letting his tears fall freely.

The girl who once loved him the most had left him. And she would never come back.

The dull ache in his chest spread through every bone. Tyrone curled up, clutching his chest, hitting it hard as if that could stop the pain.

The cold ocean wind swept across the balcony, drying the blood on the floor. It also woke Tyrone from his faint.

He looked around, dazed, realizing he was still lying there.

His eyes burned red as he looked toward the bedroom. His lips trembled.

Slowly, he used the railing to stand up and steadied himself before walking inside.

Before the bedroom’s door, he stopped.

The door was half open, light still on.

Aella sat on the bed wrapped in a blanket, hugging herself. She stared blankly into space- small, quiet, and so helpless it broke his heart.

Tyrone took a step forward. His hand touched the doorknob, but then he froze.

He looked down at the bloodstains on his white shirt. His fingers loosened around the handle.

Aella was a clean freak.

Looking like this, she'd find him disgusting.

Tyrone turned and pressed his back against the bedroom door. His hands hung at his sides and trembled from gripping too hard. His knuckles were white. He felt like his heart had been ripped out.

He and Aella could never go

Not now. Not ever.

back.

Pain burned in his chest. He bit the back of his hand until the taste of blood filled his mouth. He did not want anyone to hear him cry.

Footsteps creaked on the stairs. Tyrone spun to face the wall so no one would see him fall apart.

and lowered his voice. "Mr. Winter, you should take your medicine," he

Noel came up the steps said.

Tyrone leaned forward a little, his shoulders touching the wall. He fought with himself for a long time.

Finally he told Noel in a voice that was barely a whisper, "Book a flight. We leave tomorrow morning."

Tyrone's order to return caught Noel off guard. He froze for a second, then quickly agreed, afraid his boss might change his mind. "Yes, boss," he said, and hurried downstairs, almost tripping in his rush.

By morning, when Aella went downstairs. Tyrone was already in the kitchen, making breakfast.

She stopped on the staircase and hesitated. For a moment she thought about going back upstairs. Then she turned to climb the stairs again.

Tyrone stopped her from leaving.

They stared at each other.

Aella frowned.

In just one night, Tyrone looked completely different. His eyes were swollen and bloodshot, his face pale and sickly, and his whole body looked weak and worn out.

When he spoke, his voice was hoarse, almost breaking.

He spoke with effort, his tone soft and humble to the point of breaking.

He said quietly, "Noel made breakfast. You can eat it."

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Aella felt a tightness in her chest. She turned to leave, brushing past him toward the stairs.

Tyrone grabbed her arm, his voice trembling. "After breakfast, I'll take you home."

Aella froze. She turned back sharply, her eyes searching his face.

"Are you serious?" she asked skeptically.

She stood one step higher on the stairs, while Tyrone stood below. Their eyes met evenly.

He took a cautious step closer and gently held her hands.

"I told you," he said, looking into her eyes, "I'd never lie to you again."

He tried to steady his breathing. "I know I've made a fool of myself," he said, his tone full of regret. "I know how much you hate seeing me like this. But I mean it—I was wrong. I'm not trying to force you or control you. I just want to take you home. I want you back in my life."

Tyrone's voice cracked as he continued, "Maybe I'm too desperate. I don't even know what I can do to make you forgive me. But I really do want to grow old with you. I swear."

Aella's patience finally snapped. "No matter what you say, I won't believe you again. If you truly feel sorry, then disappear from my life—completely."

They were only a few feet apart, looking straight into each other's eyes.

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The coldness in Aella's gaze cut through him like a blade.

Tyrone forced himself to stay there, refusing to look away.

His eyes were red, his voice low but steady. "If that's what you really want," he said, "then I'll respect it. I'll give you back

your

freedom."

Chapter 345 Is There Really No Future for Us?

Aella stared hard at Tyrone and couldn't believe what she was hearing.

Her voice was firm. "I want you to swear. Swear you'll never bother me or my family again. Swear you'll never hurt anyone around me. Swear you'll never come near me for the rest of your life."

After she spoke, they stood in silence for nearly a minute.

The air grew heavy, almost frozen.

Tyrone's vision blurred as he looked at her. Slowly, he closed his eyes and nodded with all his strength.

Tears rolled down his face. He took Aella's hand with one hand and raised the other high.

His voice trembled as he swore.

"I swear on my life. I won't disturb you or your family again. I won't hurt anyone around you."

His voice cracked with emotion.

He paused, staring at Aella, hoping she'd stop him.

But all she said was, "Go on."

A sharp pain twisted in Tyrone's chest. His body shook, and he stumbled back a step.

He looked into her cold, steady eyes and said in a broken voice, "I swear I'll never come near you again. If I break this oath, may I die in the most gruesome way."

Silence filled the room once more.

They stared at each other for a long time before Aella finally looked away.

She quietly walked to the dining table and sat down.

Tyrone held onto the railing, his body bent, watching her eat in silence. His chest ached so badly he could hardly breathe.

Even if she never forgave him, even if he could never be close to her again, he would still protect her with his life.

After standing there for a long time, Tyrone finally joined her at the table.

He sat across from her, quietly watching her eat.

Seeing how focused she was, he picked up his spoon and took a sip of grits.

The bitterness spread through his mouth. He forced himself to swallow it.

The grits were bitter—just like the moment.

His hand shook around the spoon.

“I’ll go change,” she said softly. “Take your time finishing breakfast.”

Aella stood up and went upstairs to pack. Tyrone slowly rose and followed behind her.

Ten minutes later, they walked out of the villa side by side, silent the entire way toward the helicopter.

The sound of the spinning blades filled the air. Hearing it, Aella finally relaxed a little.

Tyrone was a man who always put profit first.

She knew he wouldn’t waste too much time staying here with her.

“Aella,” he said suddenly, stopping in his tracks, “come with me to see the beach one last time, will you?”

Aella’s face turned cold. “Don’t forget the oath you made.”

He tried to stay calm, tried to hide his emotions, but his bloodshot eyes grew wet again.

His voice came out rough and low, heavy with exhaustion.

“Maybe after today,” he pleaded humbly, “there won’t be another chance.”

The morning sun stretched across the empty beach. Tyrone and Aella stood side by side, looking at the endless blue horizon.

Her eyes were calm, almost distant.

His were full of pain and longing.

After a pause, Aella said softly, "Let's go."

When Tyrone didn't move, she continued to walk toward the helicopter.

"Aella!"

Tyrone broke down and rushed forward, pulling her into his arms as if afraid she would vanish before his eyes.

Before Aella could struggle or say a word, Tyrone broke down and begged, his voice shaking, "Please... just let me hold you. One last time."

He wrapped his arms around her, holding her tighter and tighter, as if he could keep her from slipping away. He buried his face in her hair, breathing in her scent like a man trying to remember what life felt like.

I'm sorry, he closed his eyes and thought silently. I just want to

remember your scent, to remember what it felt like to hold you.

He asked softly, almost in a daze, "Is there really no future for us?"

His voice was quiet, like he was speaking to himself.

The morning light spilled across the beach.

Tyrone, dressed in a white shirt, held Aella, who wore a white dress, in his arms. He tried to hold back his sobs, but his shoulders trembled.

A few years ago, on another summer morning, he had worn that same white shirt. Aella had worn a white dress. He'd held her close then too, kissing her softly with love and hope.

But now, no matter how strong the sea breeze blew, it couldn't bring back what they once had.

Aella slowly pulled away from his arms. "Let's go," she said quietly.

Tyrone stood behind her, staring blankly at her back. His steps felt unbearably heavy.

Neither of them spoke again.

Aella walked ahead. Tyrone followed behind.

The morning sun hid behind the horizon, stretching their shadows long across the sand. Two shadows moved side by side, but never touched each other.

Once on the helicopter, Aella leaned back with her eyes closed, calm and quiet.

Tyrone fixed his eyes on her, unable to look away for even a second.

Hours later, by the time they reached Vleka, it was noon.

The helicopter landed smoothly on the Winters' private airfield.

As Tyrone and Aella stepped out, both their families rushed forward to meet them.

Chapter 346 When Everything Falls Apart

Aella saw her family and Sayer running toward her. She turned to Tyrone and held out her hand. "Mr. Winter, my phone."

Tyrone's eyes were bloodshot as he stared at her. He handed the phone back without a word.

Aella was ready to walk away; Tyrone couldn't stop himself. He reached out and grabbed her hand.

Aella stopped and looked back at him. "Tyrone," she said quietly, "this time, I choose to believe you."

They locked eyes for a few seconds. Then Tyrone's hand dropped weakly to his side.

"You piece of trash! I'm going to kill you!" Clyde roared, charging forward and punching Tyrone square in the face.

Blood spilled from Tyrone's mouth.

Sayer shoved Clyde aside. He jumped in and was ready to swing again. Tyrone reacted instinctively and fought back.

"Motherfucker! You only fight me, huh?" Sayer yelled.

Aella rushed over and shielded Sayer with her body.

When Tyrone met her furious gaze, his raised fist fell weakly back down.

She pulled Clyde with one hand and Sayer with the other. Aella dragged them both backward.

Aella steadied herself and told them. "He didn't do anything to me. Please, don't make a scene."

She had no idea if Tyrone would lose control again. But if this got any uglier, Ralph and Edwin would absolutely turn against them.

And with the airport crawling with their bodyguards, picking a fight now would only end badly for them.

Just

as Aella managed to calm them down, a crowd of men in suits escorted Edwin over.

Aella couldn't hold back anymore. "Mr. Edwin, if the press finds out that your grandson broke the law and locked up his ex-wife, I wonder how that'll affect your company's stock price."

Edwin's face turned a shade that words couldn't describe.

Aella then faced Ralph. "Mr. Ralph, will you still accuse me of seducing your son and scheming to marry back into your fortune next time?"

Ralph's jaw tightened. He glared at Aella, but couldn't come up with a word of defense.

Miriam pointed a shaking finger at Tyrone and shouted, "We must've been blind to ever let Aella marry a jerk like you!"

Tyrone just stood there, numb and silent.

After a long silence, he walked toward Miriam and Warren, lowered his head, and said quietly, "I'm sorry."

Warren shoved him away hard. Tyrone stumbled back a few steps, barely keeping his balance.

"If you still have a shred of decency," Warren said, "stay away from Aella. Forever."

Virginia saw her son's broken state. She quickly stepped forward. "It's us who owe Aella an apology. I didn't raise my son right. I apologize for what he's done."

Brad caught the tense silence and gave Raine a look. Then he turned to Aella and offered, "Come on. I'll take you all home."

Aella nodded, gathered her family, and quietly left.

Tyrone watched as Aella got into the car and drove away. His feet moved on their own, chasing after her. "Aella—"

Smack! Ralph's hand came down hard across Tyrone's face. "You fool!"

The hit made Tyrone stagger back. Noel rushed forward to catch him before he fell.

Ralph pointed a finger at Tyrone, his face red with rage. "You threw the

away company, the whole damn empire, for a woman? Have you

lost

your

mind?"

Virginia tried to calm the situation, her voice soft but heavy. "Tyrone, everything that happened between you and Aella, you caused it. You've gone as far as you can. Let it end. Stop torturing yourself."

Edwin had been silent all this time, his face dark and stormy. Finally, he snapped. “You’re getting more and more out of line! Look at yourself! Do you still look like an heir to this family?”

His voice was sharp and cold. “Since you’re home, this matter ends here. Get ready for your engagement to Vivienne at the end of the month.”

Tyrone’s face was expressionless, but his tone was unshakable. “That engagement isn’t

happening. You can forget it.”

Edwin’s fury erupted. He jabbed his cane toward the direction where Aella had just left. “You refuse to marry Ms. Guinevere—are you still clinging to that woman?”

Tyrone shoved Noel aside and stepped closer to Edwin.

His voice was steady and clear. “Even if Aella never takes me back, I’ll never promise myself to anyone else.”

Ralph’s patience broke. “Tyrone, you’re the only heir to our family! You stand at the top of Aldoria’s pyramid! You could have any woman you want!”

He continued, his voice rising, “When you married Aella, you barely cared about her. You did what you were supposed to do—calm, rational, and focused. Why did the divorce break you? What did she do to you?!”

Tyrone’s voice came out weak but steady, filled with exhaustion. “Dad, it’s me. I’m the one who can’t let her go. I hurt her. I wasn’t good enough for her. It’s my fault. All of it is my fault.”

Ralph’s face turned red, veins bulging on his forehead. He raised his hand and was ready to strike Tyrone again.

Before his hand came down, Tyrone coughed up a mouthful of blood and collapsed with a heavy thud.

“Tyrone!”

Ralph and Virginia froze in terror.

Edwin’s cane slipped from his grip and clattered to the floor. His legs gave out, and he nearly fell over.

Justin caught him in time. He cried out, “Mr. Edwin!”

Ralph shouted, “Get the car ready! Now!”

Then he turned on Noel, eyes burning with anger. “Talk! What the hell is going on?!”

Noel’s face went pale as he reported honestly, “Mr. Winter has been suffering from severe gastritis and angina since the divorce. Without Mrs. Winter’s medication, he hasn’t slept properly in weeks.”

Chapter 347 The Broken Figurine

Noel gathered his courage and said, “Mr. Edwin, Mr. Ralph, if you keep forcing Mr. Tyrone to give up his wife, you might as well be asking him to give up his life.”

Tyrone was rushed to the hospital in critical condition.

Aella made it home safely.

Brad and Raine dropped her off at the door, then quietly left home.

In the living room, Aella sat on the couch, surrounded by her worried family. They asked over and over if she was hurt.

Aella comforted them. “Dad, Mom, he just wanted to force me to remarry him. He didn’t hurt me.”

Warren sighed. “I used to think that kid was calm and steady. Never thought he’d turn out like this.”

Sayer, still angry about everything Tyrone had done, snapped, “That’s because you never saw through him. Smart people like him are always a little twisted inside.”

Miriam nodded in agreement. “Look at the other powerful families—every one of them sticks together. Brothers and sisters watch each other’s backs. But him? He took over the company all by himself at such a young age. Outsmarted those old board members, fought through the business world, and came out on top. A man that ambitious and ruthless? He’s not normal. We should keep our distance from now on.”

Aella silently agreed with her mother.

Dealing with Tyrone always came with risks. He could turn on you guard down.

the moment you let

your

She said softly, “Don’t worry, I’ve made things clear with him. He promised not to bother me anymore. We’ll both move on with our lives.”

Her calm reassurance finally eased everyone’s nerves.

Miriam stood up. “Aella, go take a shower and get some rest. Your father and I will fix lunch. Clyde will come get you when it’s ready.”

Sayer pushed her gently toward her room. “You must be exhausted. Get some sleep; I’ll call you when it’s time to eat.”

Aella smiled and patted his newly styled hair. "Mr. Locke, thank you for taking care of my parents while I was gone."

On the way home, she'd learned what had happened.

During the two days she was trapped on that island with Tyrone, Sayer had stayed with her parents the whole time.

Sayer worried Miriam might have a heart attack, so he slept on their couch both nights just to be safe.

Aella would never forget that kindness.

Sayer smacked Aella's hand away. "I told you not to pat my head like I'm a dog!"

Aella chuckled. "Fine, I'll invite Ms. Hill over next time. You can keep her company."

Watching Sayer jump up and down in frustration, Aella laughed and closed the door behind her.

No matter how bad her day was, a long hot bath and her favorite cartoon pajamas always worked like magic. Once she curled up in bed, the heaviness in her chest started to fade.

She believed that after what happened today, Tyrone must have finally come to his senses. He must have given up for good.

Without him around, she could finally move at her own pace, without fear, without rush.

Aella reached for her phone to call Daniel, only to find it dead.

She sighed, got up to find her charger, and nearly knocked over a small cardboard box on the shelf.

When she opened it, she realized it was full of old things from high school—stuff her mom must've accidentally brought along when helping her move.

As she rummaged through the box, her eyes landed on a small clay figurine.

She picked it up carefully and noticed a long crack running across its body.

Her mind drifted back to a weekend years ago.

She had begged Tyrone to walk with her, and on a street corner, she'd found a vendor selling handmade clay dolls.

Aella had told him the dolls looked best in pairs—one of her, one of him.

Tyrone said she was childish, but he sat down beside her anyway.

While she tried to mold a tiny version of him with clumsy hands, Tyrone just scrolled through his phone, waiting.

It had taken her over an hour to finish that crooked little figure.

Now, looking at it again, Aella couldn't help but smile faintly. "Yeah," she whispered. "Pretty childish."

With a soft clack, she tossed the clay doll into the trash.

The crack widened instantly, and the figure shattered into pieces.

At that same time, in the hospital.

When Brad and Raine arrived, Tyrone had just been moved into the hospital ward.

The doctor explained that although he was out of danger, the bleeding in his stomach was severe, and he needed to be hospitalized.

Inside the room, Edwin and Tyrone's parents stood in silence, their faces heavy.

Noel lingered nervously outside the door, too afraid to go in.

Brad turned to Tyrone's parents and said quietly, "Mr. Ralph, he's stable now. You should go home and rest. I'll stay here and call if anything changes."

Edwin, who had been silent until then, finally spoke in a low voice, "Ralph, you and come with me. We need to talk."

your wife

Brad glanced at Edwin's grim face and said carefully, "Tyrone's in no state for pressure right now. Please don't push him to get engaged to Vivienne."

Raine nodded quickly and agreed. "Brad's right. No engagement is more important than Tyrone's life!"

Chapter 348 Back from the Dead

Ralph pointed at Raine and scolded, "Tyrone's situation isn't your concern. Just meet your blind date tomorrow like I told you."

Raine was so scared she hid behind Brad and didn't dare to speak again.

After the elders left, Brad and Raine stood beside Tyrone's hospital bed.

Tyrone lay unconscious, pale as paper. Both of them sighed at the same time.

Raine muttered, "Brad, I don't get it. When Aella was around, he didn't appreciate her. Now that she's gone, he acts like his life is over."

Brad glanced sideways at her. "That's because Aella spoiled him. Tyrone knew she loved him since they were kids. He thought she'd never leave him, so he kept pushing it."

Raine nodded quickly. "You're right. Men shouldn't be spoiled. The more you spoil them, the worse they get."

Brad was rendered speechless.

He just stared at her for a few seconds. Then he sighed, pushed her away gently, and said, "You're no help here. Go home."

But Raine refused to leave. She plopped herself down on the couch and started playing games.

Brad went out to take a call. When he came back, Raine had fallen asleep on the couch.

He looked at her for a moment, then at Tyrone lying motionless in bed.

Quietly, he pulled the blanket off Tyrone and draped it over Raine.

Then he grabbed a white sheet from the cabinet and covered Tyrone with that instead.

Brad crouched beside Raine, poking her cheek. "You never spoiled me. How do you know I'd turn out the same?"

He pinched her nose gently and smiled. "You're just like Tyrone. A little troublemaker."

Brad went on to tap her lips with his finger. "You silly thing, you'll end up like him one day- heartbroken and alone."

Without thinking, Brad held her chin and kissed her lightly.

The kiss was soft and quick, but when he pulled back, he couldn't help but lick his lips, wanting more.

Just as he leaned in for a second kiss, a low voice came from behind him—cold, tired, and sharp. "What do you think you're doing?"

Brad froze. A chill ran down his back.

He turned around. Tyrone was awake, staring at him with narrowed eyes.

Brad cleared his throat, keeping a straight face. "Raine snores in her sleep. I was just ... checking."

Tyrone closed his eyes again, clearly disgusted.

Raine woke up to the sound of movement. When she saw the white sheet covering Tyrone on the hospital bed, she froze for a second—then burst into tears. "Waaaah!"

Brad jumped in shock. "What the heck—what happened?!"

Before he could react, Raine threw herself over the bed, crying so hard her words came out broken.

"Tyrone! My only brother!" She sobbed.

“Winter Group still needs you to make money! What are we supposed to do now that you have left us?”

She hiccupped between tears. “Aella doesn’t want you, but you still have us! How could you just drop dead like that?”

Her crying filled the whole room. “Boohoohoo!”

Raine’s dramatic outburst left both men in the hospital room completely stunned.

Tyrone had just started to lift his arm to comfort her when she suddenly punched him in the stomach, wailing, “You never told me your bank password!”

Tyrone was in such pain that he almost passed out on the spot.

Brad jumped in and yelled, “Good grief, woman, are you trying to kill him?!”

He quickly pulled Raine off Tyrone, tore the white sheet away, and helped Tyrone sit up.

Raine’s sobs finally slowed. She opened her eyes and saw Tyrone was alive and breathing. “Wait.

You’re not dead?”

Tyrone held his stomach and glared darkly. “You should get your head checked.”

Raine puckered her lips. “Brad, he just called me stupid.”

Brad

gave Tyrone a helpless look. “She’s just worried about you. Why are you scolding her?”

Tyrone shot back, "Wasn't it you who called her that?"

Raine was at a loss for words.

Brad, feeling guilty, coaxed and tricked Raine out of the room. He told her to head home, check what's going on there, and bring back some grits that gentle for Tyrone's stomach.

Once she left, Brad closed the door, pulled a chair over, and sat beside Tyrone's bed.

He advised in a calm, steady tone, "If you've decided to let go, then learn to accept it. You're carrying an empire on your shoulders. Your life isn't just your own."

Tyrone lay there, his blank eyes fixed on the cold white ceiling.

His face tightened as though some painful memory clawed its way back to him. Tyrone closed his eyes in agony.

Brad noticed his gloomy expression and grew worried. "You don't look good. I'll get the doctor."

He hurried out. When the room grew quiet again, Tyrone slowly opened his

eyes.

He reached for his phone and sent out a short message. Minutes later, Noel walked in. "Mr. Winter."

Tyrone forced himself upright, his face pale but his tone steady.

"Starting tomorrow," he said, "you don't need to go back to the company."

“What?” Noel froze, eyes wide.

Wait—did he just get fired because he accidentally let something slip about his boss’s medical condition?

Chapter 349 Protecting Aella

Tyrone said, “Pick two of the best bodyguards. Starting tomorrow, your job is to protect my wife.”

Noel scratched his head. “Mr. Winter, I’m just an office guy. Fighting and all that isn’t really my thing.”

Tyrone’s face darkened. “You don’t need to fight anyone. Just handle any trouble or danger around her when it comes up. No killing involved.”

Forget his grandfather and father for a moment—just Anna alone was enough to cause problems.

Add the Guineveres into the mix, and it was certain Aella would be in trouble.

All of this started because of him. It was his responsibility to clear out the people who might hurt her and give her back a peaceful life.

Noel stood awkwardly by the bed, rubbing his hands. “Boss, Mrs. Winter’s friends aren’t exactly easy to deal with. If they find out I’m watching her ...

Tyrone cut him off. “Your salary and bonus will double.”

Noel cleared his throat and said, “Understood, boss. I’ll make sure Mrs. Winter stays safe.”

Brad walked into the hospital room. “What are you two talking about?”

Noel smiled awkwardly. “Nothing much, I was just telling Mr. Winter he should stay a few more days and recover before going back to work.”

Brad gave him a light punch in the chest. “Yeah, right. I don’t believe that for a second.”

Noel lowered his head, clutching his chest, and slipped out of the room nervously.

The next morning, Tyrone was fully dressed and ready to leave the hospital. His parents caught wind of this and showed up to block the door.

Virginia looked worried and helpless. “You can work remotely. Just stay in the hospital and rest for a while.”

Tyrone brushed it off. “Mom, I’m fine. A few pills and I’ll be good as new.”

As Tyrone tried to walk past, Ralph stopped him and snapped, “You reckless fool! Are you trying to give us a heart attack?”

Ralph glared at him. “You ended up in the hospital over a woman, and now you’re refusing treatment? What are you trying to prove?”

Tyrone’s face was just as grim as his father’s.

He stared straight at Ralph and said coldly, “Dad, you had me just so I could carry the family legacy, didn’t you?”

His voice was steady but sharp. “What about my feelings? My marriage? My body? My health? Do any of those matter to you?”

“You brat!”

Ralph was speechless. Rage flushed his face. He slammed the door hard before storming out.

Tyrone followed right behind him, his expression unreadable.

Virginia’s eyes reddened as she watched her son walk away. Her heart ached for him. She turned to Brad and said softly, “Brad, take me to see Aella.”

Brad instantly understood what she wanted. He sighed and tried to reason with her.

“Virginia, let me go instead. If Aella refuses to see me, it’s fine. But if you go, she’ll feel caught in the middle. It’ll only make things harder for her.”

After she was gone, Brad got in his car and headed straight to Aella’s office.

Aella stopped what she was doing and stood to pour Brad a glass of water. “Brad, have a seat,” she said.

Brad hesitated before speaking. “Tyrone insisted on leaving the hospital. He refuses to keep up with his treatment.”

Aella froze for a second, the pitcher still in her hand.

Then she set the cup down in front of him. She said calmly, “That’s his choice. It has nothing to do with me.”

Brad studied her face and sighed quietly. There was no need to say more.

Aella had already let Tyrone go completely. She didn’t care what happened to him anymore.

Around noon, outside the hospital, Vivienne sat in her car watching from across the street.

She saw Aella walk out with a coworker and immediately opened her car door.

Her heels clicked against the pavement as she crossed the road. Before she could get close, Noel

Startled, Vivienne asked in confusion, “Mr. Frost? What are you doing here?”

Noel glanced back at Aella and her colleague. “Ms. Guinevere, are you here to see Dr. Reid about something?”

The smile on Vivienne’s face stiffened. “Mr. Frost, I don’t need to report to you who I’m seeing.”

“No,” Noel said calmly, “you don’t. But I’ll need to report it to Mr. Winter.”

Vivienne’s expression faltered. She glanced once more toward Aella, hesitated, then got back into her car.

At two in the afternoon. Tyrone’s office.

Vivienne knocked and entered.

Tyrone was sitting behind his desk. He looked up briefly, then his face slowly darkened.

Vivienne noticed his cold reaction but didn’t seem bothered. Tyrone didn’t even stand up or look at her again; he simply continued reviewing his paperwork. A faint smile curved her lips.

She leaned slightly on the edge of his desk and said casually, "I came to hand over a project to Mr. Tingey and thought I'd stop by to check on you."

Tyrone put down the paper in his hand and lifted his eyes. "Just say what you came for."

Vivienne slowly walked around the desk, resting one hand on its edge as she studied his face.

"I went to the hospital today to pick up medicine for my grandmother," she said. "But for some reason, Mr. Frost stopped me from going in."

Tyrone lowered his gaze, hiding his emotions. "Did Noel tell you why he stopped you?" he asked quietly.

Chapter 350 The Cost of Letting Go

Vivienne smiled softly as her eyes swept around Tyrone's office.

Her tone was cautious. "Mr. Winter, if you really want to get back together with your ex-wife, I could help mediate between you two."

Tyrone slowly stood up, his face hardening by the second.

His cold stare pinned her in place. "Ms. Guinevere," he warned, his voice cold, "you're crossing the line."

Vivienne shrugged, pretending not to mind. "Sorry, I was just saying."

Tyrone said coldly, "Ms. Guinevere, you've worked with me long enough to know how I do things. When I said I'd never marry again, I meant it."

The air in the office tightened. In just a few minutes, the mood had shifted from polite to strained.

Vivienne sighed and tried to ease the tension. “Mr. Winter, don’t take it the wrong way. Maybe I overstepped. Your mother just spoke to me earlier; she wanted me to check on you.”

Tyrone’s dark eyes narrowed slightly.

Vivienne watched him carefully, then changed the subject again. “Your ex–wife is beautiful, ambitious, and kind. If I were a man, I’d probably like her too.”

She paused, her tone softer. “But we’re born into this world to love family first, before we love others. Since she’s chosen to move on, you should respect that. Think about the people around you.”

Tyrone’s patience snapped, and he cut her off. “Sounds like you didn’t hear a word I said.”

Vivienne didn’t flinch and spoke honestly, “I heard you. If you truly love her, don’t turn that love into her cage.”

His chest tightened like a blade had pierced straight through. He turned toward the door and said sharply, “You should go.”

Their eyes met one last time. Vivienne gave a quiet apology, picked up her bag, and walked toward the door.

But right before stepping out, she looked back at him.

“Mr. Winter,” she said softly, “you and I are more alike than you think. We both put family first and profit above everything else.”

Tyrone met her gaze and replied and corrected, “You’re wrong. We’re not the same.

Vivienne gave a faint smile. “Maybe not now. But before your divorce, you were

She lingered one more second, her voice calm but cutting. Otherwise, you and your childhood sweetheart wouldn't have ended up going separate ways."

Tyrone's eyes stayed on her as she walked out. When the door thut behind her, he snapped, his voice low and sharp, "Close the door!"

Four assistants rushed to obey, quietly shutting it and lowering their heads, too afraid to look at

him.

Tyrone pressed a hand against his chest, the pain stabbing deeper. He opened a drawer, pulled out a bottle of pills, and stumbled to the minibar. His hands shook as he poured himself a

drink.

The office door opened again. Virginia stepped in, carrying a thermos. She froze when she saw Tyrone fumbling with the pill bottle.

Tyrone turned around quickly, slipping the painkillers into his pocket as if nothing had happened.

"Don't bother hiding it," Virginia said softly. "I saw everything."

She hurried over and helped her son to the couch.

Virginia unpacked the food she'd brought, a warm, homemade meal meant to soothe his stomach. She set it in front of him. "Eat first," she said firmly, sitting beside him to make sure he

did.

Tyrone stirred the bowl of grits absentmindedly. "Mom," he asked quietly, "did you talk to Vivienne when you came up?"

Virginia sighed. "I've got a mountain of things to handle at home. I didn't have time for her. Why are you asking?"

Tyrone shook his head. "No reason. Just curious."

Virginia studied him for a long moment.

"So," she asked, "have you finally thought it through? Are you ready to be engaged to her?"

Tyrone shook his head and set the spoon down.

His tone was calm but firm. "Mom, I'm not marrying her."

Virginia lifted the bowl of grits again and handed it to Tyrone.

"You took Aella away without saying a word, and you brought her home safe," she said softly. "I know you've made up your mind. Whether it was your choice or not, what's done is done. Don't overthink it. Focus on getting better. Time will heal everything."

Tyrone's fingers tightened around the bowl.

He had lost the woman who loved him most.

His marriage was over.

Tyrone had lost his home forever.

He knew he would never truly recover.

There were too many things he could no longer change.

No matter how much he didn't want to let her go, he had no choice.

Virginia's heart ached seeing her son in so much pain. His face was pale, his eyes hollow, and every breath seemed heavy.

She spoke softly, trying to reason with him, "Tyrone, I know you don't want to let her go. But it's over—you have to accept it. You've always been calm and rational. Think about the responsibility on your shoulders. Think about me, your father, and Raine. Please, listen to your mom. Don't be so stubborn anymore."

The pain in Tyrone's eyes deepened.

He took a shaky breath and spoke in a low, strained voice, "Mom, don't worry about me. It's just I'm not ready to live the rest of my life without Aella. I just need a little more time."

...

Her son was trying to comfort her, but his words only made Virginia more uneasy.

She looked at him seriously, her tone firm but gentle. "If you truly don't want to be engaged to Vivienne, I'll find a way to talk to your father," she said. "But you have to promise me to cooperate with the doctors and get your health back. That's all I ask."