

Chapter 847 Proposal

Early the next morning, Sophie finally touched down in Ublento and bolted straight for the hospital, her mind fixed on nothing else.

Jarrett was still lost in sleep, so Sophie made her way to Ruben and Diane first—to face them, to offer what words she could.

The hospital gleamed with exclusive privilege, all polished surfaces and hushed corridors. Jarrett occupied a luxury VIP suite, and the Evans family had claimed the entire floor for themselves—a fortress of privacy. Ruben and Diane had taken the adjoining room, close enough to reach Jarrett in seconds if he stirred.

Ruben and Diane had known Sophie would arrive today. They'd risen before dawn and waited, tension coiling in the silence between them.

The moment Sophie crossed the threshold and saw them standing there, she dropped to her knees. Her voice cracked, splintering around the edges. "I'm so sorry!"

Years ago, Ruben and Diane had wrapped Sophie in warmth she'd never expected. They'd resisted the marriage at first—of course they had—but once she became family, they'd embraced her wholeheartedly. Even when illness had ravaged her later on, when everything had fallen apart, they had never abandoned her. They'd searched relentlessly for specialists across the globe to seek treatment for her, refusing to let her face the battle alone.

Sophie had never forgotten their kindness, and her heart swelled with gratitude.

Still kneeling, Sophie stripped away her hat and mask as tears carved paths down her face.

Elliana's treatment over the past few weeks had worked small miracles—Sophie's color had returned, some vitality seeping back into her frame.

But Sophie hadn't undergone reconstructive surgery yet. Her face

remained a battlefield. When the disguise fell away, it revealed everything. Angry scars slashed across her skin in jagged lines, a map of suffering etched into flesh.

Ruben and Diane had steeled themselves for this moment, but preparation meant nothing when confronted with reality. The sight landed like a blow, stealing their breath.

Sophie bowed her head, bracing for their recoil. For the inevitable step backward. But it never came.

Ruben's and Diane's shock passed, melting into something softer. Heartache bloomed in its place—raw and aching for what she'd endured.

"Sophie, please. Get up." Diane moved forward and helped Sophie to her feet. She then wrapped both hands around Sophie's trembling one and patted it gently, over and over, like soothing a frightened child. "You're back now. That's what matters. Our family is whole again."

Ruben's voice roughened with emotion. "Sophie, whatever comes next—whatever storms you face—please don't carry them alone anymore. We're here. We've always been here. Do you understand that?"

Sophie's tears came harder now, spilling freely. "Thank you."

Cole appeared in the doorway then, his expression urgent. "Mom, Dad's awake. He's asking for you—sounds pretty anxious."

Sophie went rigid at his words. The entire journey here, she'd fortified herself with determination. She'd rehearsed this reunion a thousand times, convinced herself she could face Jarrett despite everything. But now that the moment had arrived, her courage scattered like smoke. Concern gripped her. What would Jarrett see when he looked at her? Would disgust flash across his face before he could hide it? Would he turn away?

Ruben and Diane read her hesitation instantly. They moved closer, their voices gentle but firm. "Sophie, go to him. Your face changes nothing—not for Jarrett. His love doesn't rest on something so fragile. He's been desperate to see you. Don't make him wait another second."

Their words breathed life back into Sophie's resolve. She pulled in a shaky breath, summoned what courage remained, and turned toward the door.

She reached Jarrett's room just as Elliana stepped out.

"I just finished checking on him," Elliana said, offering a reassuring smile. "He's doing remarkably well—stable. Go on in. With you beside him, he'll be back on his feet before you know it."

Sophie nodded, her throat too tight for words, and slipped through the door.

Elliana eased the door shut behind her, granting them the privacy they needed.

The moment Elliana turned around, Cole was there. He caught her hand and brought it to his lips, pressing a kiss to her knuckles. "Thank you."

Elliana raised an eyebrow and pulled her hand back with exaggerated hauteur. "Excuse me, who gave you permission to kiss me like that? We aren't even remarried yet."

Cole drew her into his arms and kissed her cheek, soft and deliberate. "I've already written the third application."

Elliana blinked in surprise. That was fast. She gentled her voice, though mischief danced in her eyes. "You know, you squandered your first two chances pretty spectacularly. Maybe you should give this last one a bit more thought? It's all you've got left."

"I have thought it through," Cole's voice dropped, steady and sure. "Long and hard." Then, he pulled out the third application, sank to one knee right there in the hospital corridor, and looked up at her. "Elliana, will you marry me?"

Elliana hadn't expected this—not here, not now. Her gaze darted down the hallway, half-worried someone would round the corner and stumble into this intimate moment. Most men proposed with diamond rings blazing under restaurant lights. Cole was proposing with a piece of paper. How much faith did he have in whatever he'd written?

Curiosity won. She plucked the application from his hand and unfolded it. It read, "We'll weather every storm together, never leaving each other's side."

Tears sprang to her eyes before she could stop them. He'd finally

understood. He'd let go of the pride and stubbornness that had nearly destroyed their relationship. This was it. This was the marriage she'd always wanted—not perfect, but honest. Not easy, but committed.

A playful idea seized her. She fished a pen from her pocket and scrawled one bold word across the letter. "Approved!"

She handed the application back with a grin that felt like sunlight breaking through clouds. "I do!" she responded.

Cole stared at that single word on the application, then at her radiant smile. He surged to his feet, hauled her into his arms, and peppered her face with kisses—her cheeks, her forehead, her hair. "Thank you!"

Elliana laughed, ready to say something sweet and sentimental—but Cole suddenly released her, grabbed her hand, and started marching toward the elevator.

She stumbled forward, caught off guard by his sudden momentum.

"Where are you taking me?"

"To get remarried!"

Elliana burst out laughing. Was he really that eager?