

TMBA 121

CHAPTER 121 WILL YOU PROMISE ME THA

With a serious expression on his face, Carlos said, "I don't care what other people think of me. I won't stand anyone crossing you. Not even a 5-year-old boy. That's my word."

Messing with his wife meant messing with Carlos himself, and he would not let anyone get away with that so easily.

It really touched Debbie, to have Carlos taking her side against Megan this time. That was quite out of the blue. Feigning anger, she pouted her lips and said, "If you refuse to let it go, it will make me so anxious I might even cry. Would you kick yourself for making me cry?"

Mulling over her words, Carlos lowered his head and saw the hint of emotion in her eyes. A frown marred his face. But he misunderstood her mood. Actually she was teary-eyed because she was touched by how protective he was of her. Sighing in defeat, Carlos didn't get her drift. "Okay, okay. I'll let you have your way, dear. Some concessions can't be avoided between lovebirds," he said with a thoughtful look. Then lowering his head closer to her ear, he whispered, "Don't put on that sulking face, sweet pie, or I'll be tempted to carry you to our room for a full body massage."

Before Debbie could react, Tabitha interrupted them with profound resignation. "Son, I didn't travel all the way to see you show off. Give me time with my daughter-in-law too."

Blushing, Debbie pushed Carlos away immediately and turned to Tabitha's support. "Mom is right. Carlos, stop being so possessive. You should let me enjoy her company for the little time she's here."

Then she walked towards Tabitha calmly.

When she approached Tabitha, she held her arm, and pretending that nothing had happened, asked in a sweet voice, "Mom, what were you discussing with Julie?"

No one knew how much courage it took for Debbie to hold Tabitha's arm and call her "Mom".

While still holding hands, Tabitha showed Debbie Julie's notebook filled with recipes. "We were discussing what we're going to eat this evening. But I think it would be wise if we let you choose. Tell me what your favorite meal is or anything special that you'd want for the night. I'll gladly prepare it for you," Tabitha offered.

It humbled Debbie to have a mother-in-law who, despite all her money and position, was so affectionate to prepare a meal for her.

Sensing the surprised look on Debbie's face, Tabitha asked, "Well, you don't believe I can cook, do you?"

Debbie nodded with embarrassment. "You got me. I must be the dumbest person here. I don't know

how to cook..."

The only time Debbie attempted to cook a meal for Carlos, it was a disaster.

'When dad asked me to learn how to cook, I should've listened to him. Now I so wish I could cook for Carlos...' she rued.

"For now," began Tabitha, patting her hand, "all you need to do is study hard. As for cooking, you don't need to do a thing while you have Julie around. She's a terrific cook. Even if you could cook, Carlos wouldn't be willing to let you cook for him."

There was no need for any woman in the Hilton family to learn cooking, unless she took it up as a hobby. They could learn it if they were really fond of cooking, but if it wasn't something they were passionate about, it wasn't a necessary skill. After all, they would never lack servants.

Carlos chimed in, "No one knows a son better than his mother."

To which Debbie made a phony reproachful glance. Tabitha and Julie couldn't help but chuckle.

By now, everyone had forgotten about the little drama they'd had with Jake.

However, the family's happy moment together was interrupted to Debbie, when the gate to the villa opened again and Megan walked in. The smile on Debbie's face vanished. Tabitha waved at Megan and asked, "Has everything been dealt with?"

Megan came over to Tabitha and with a guilty look said, "Yes, everything is okay. Uncle Carlos, Aunt Debbie, I'm really sorry for what has happened. I promise that such a thing won't happen again."

Nodding to her promise, Carlos suggested, "Mom will cook this evening. Why not stay and have dinner with us?"

His dinner invitation suggested that he had forgiven Megan.

Megan turned to look at Tabitha with an intimidated expression as if asking for her permission. "Please stay here for dinner," Tabitha said with a smile. Whenever Tabitha had come here to visit her son in the past, Megan would have dinner with them. It was normal for the mother and son to ask her to stay.

"Yeah. Thank you, Uncle Carlos. It's been a whole while since I last ate Tabitha's delicious food." Thrilled, Megan jumped to her feet, held Tabitha's arm and took over Julie's notebook.

Feeling frustrated, Debbie bit her lower lip. To be honest, she could feel Tabitha liked Megan very much and treated her like her own daughter.

"I'm going to cook fried crab with pepper, seaweed soup..." Tabitha began to tell them the dishes she

was going to cook. Then she turned to Debbie and asked, "I heard from Julie what your favorite food is. So I've considered your liking too. But just in case, kindly let me know what else you guys would want to add to the menu?"

Debbie shook her head immediately.

"No, thanks, Mom. Of course, what you've selected will be just perfect for me. Maybe, if someone else would want something extra."

"Okay," Tabitha nodded.

Then Carlos went to the study to work, Tabitha went to her room to take a rest, and Megan followed after Tabitha, claiming that she wanted to have small talk with her. Left with nothing to do, Debbie chose to go to her bedroom.

In order to kill the time, she began to clean the dressing table. Suddenly, she received Kasie's message on WeChat. "Tomboy, how was your meeting with your mother-in-law? What is she like?" it read.

Debbie replied without hesitation, "Carlos' mom is an awesome person. Pretty and graceful, and really nice to me. To be honest, I've liked her, right from the word go."

"Sure! I've also done a background check on her. Seems like you have an amazing mother-in-law. Despite her noble birth and the fact that she's highly educated and rolling in money, she's also a welcoming person. In fact, very good with people, from the little information I've gathered. I hope you two will make good friends. Tomboy, I'm so happy for you."

Smiling from ear to ear, Debbie simply typed back, "I feel so lucky."

Then she went downstairs, where she found Tabitha cooking in the kitchen. She wanted to help, but Tabitha drove her out of the kitchen. Feeling bored, she decided to go to the study to keep Carlos company.

Just as she reached the door of the study, she heard cheerful laughter coming from within the room. She wondered when Megan had sneaked into the study. The door was left unlocked, and Debbie could hear them talk through the small opening.

Megan stopped laughing and pettishly said, "Uncle Carlos, you were so bad to me! You stood me up last time and made everyone laugh at me. And even when I tried to reach you on the phone several times, your phone was switched off. I didn't take it kindly!"

Just when Debbie was about to push the door open, she heard Megan mention the night on which she and Carlos had their first time. She curled her lips. The next day after the night, Colleen had alerted Debbie to how mad Megan was.

Carlos' low voice came to Debbie's ears. "Your aunt Debbie and I had something urgent to do that evening. But tell me who had the guts to make fun of you and I'll teach them a lesson."

"You don't need to do that, Uncle Carlos. Just promise me that you'll never repeat whatever you did to me. I'm not an unreasonable girl."

"I..."

Carlos had just begun to say something when Debbie stealthily pushed the door open without anyone noticing her entering the room. She saw Megan walking past Carlos' desk and leaning over to get close as if for a kiss.

"Honey, have you finished your work?" Debbie's voice froze Megan in her tracks.

Megan stood straight and stared at Debbie. Fury could be seen in her eyes.

Carlos closed the folder on the desk and answered, "Yes, I'm through. Come over here, Honey."

Left with no other option, Megan left where she was standing, cutting a gloomy look.

Clasping Debbie's hand, Carlos offered, "It's not dinner time yet. Why not fetch your English book and study with me for a few minutes?"

Debbie's face soured at his words. "Seriously? It's Saturday and I'm not in the mood for classes at all."

CHAPTER 122 YOU STAY OVERNIGHT IN THE STUDY

Before reaching the door, Megan changed her mind and sat on the couch in the study instead. Looking at Carlos in admiration, she said, "Aunt Debbie, Uncle Carlos speaks English so well. He used to teach me. Actually, my English grades improved vastly, thanks to his tuition."

The more she droned on and on, the more she irritated Debbie. 'Such an airhead! Can't she just leave us alone?

What joy does she derive from being the third wheel all the time? She keeps showing off her relationship with Carlos again and again! I must put an end to this,' Debbie mused.

Suddenly, a light bulb went off in her mind. She cradled Carlos' neck and kissed his short hair. It smelt good. "Honey, I've changed my mind. Let me fetch my book for a short lesson as we wait for dinner. I guess it might take Julie and Mom a little longer to cook what they have in mind," Debbie said playfully.

Pleasantly, Carlos curled his lips and stroked her arm. "Alright. Go fetch the book. I'll be here waiting for you."

"Sure. I'll be back in a minute." Before Debbie trotted to get her book, she gave him a kiss on the cheek.

With eyes full of affection, Carlos stared at her retreating figure. Once Debbie was out of sight, he turned to Megan and said, "Why don't you go to the living room and watch TV?"

With a cute smile, Megan answered, "Uncle Carlos, I wish I could join Aunt Debbie for the lesson."

Carlos shrugged as he couldn't find a reason to turn down her request. When Debbie returned with a book in her hand, Megan, still sitting on the couch, cast her a challenging glance.

"Aunt Debbie, Uncle Carlos has agreed to let me join you for the class." With a haughty face, she had her chin and nose up in the air.

Instantly, Debbie fumed, but she did her best not to lose her temper. Just then, an idea struck her. With a fake smile, she conceded, "Okay. Why not?"

Sitting on the couch with Debbie and Megan on either side, Carlos began his lesson.

In a minute or so, Debbie casually put her hand on his lap. Every now and then, she adjusted herself, getting closer and closer to him until, at long last, she completely leaned into his arms.

Occasionally, she'd give him a peck on the cheek or earlobe without Megan noticing. Even Megan could sense something unusual with Carlos. When the class was finally over, he ordered, "Megan, go check if the dinner is ready."

Megan knew Carlos was trying to dismiss her so he could be with Debbie alone. She also didn't want to stay here any longer to see Debbie almost getting cozy. Without hesitation, she left the study.

Carlos went to lock the door and came back to Debbie. Before she could say a word, he pressed her against the couch. "Seducing me, huh?"

With intense passion, he kissed her, while his hands ran over her clothes, hurriedly stripping her.

Although she wanted to resist his advances, she was unable to. Instead of wrestling him, she allowed him on top, her arms wrapped around her waist. She bit her lips so that she could hold back her moans.

After about thirty minutes, there was a knock at the door. A housemaid had come to tell them dinner was ready. "Got it," Carlos answered in a low voice. Debbie, who was pressed against the windowsill, turned her head and tried to stop Carlos. "C-Carlos, dinner...is ready..."

"Mmm," Carlos grunted.

"It would be bad if we...if we... didn't go...downstairs now..."

after Mom has put in so much effort...to make our dinner special tonight."

Still, Carlos didn't let her go. His mouth was open slightly, and his breathing was heavy. He groaned.

Between moans of pleasure Debbie kept pleading with him to let her go. Eventually, Carlos decided to let her go despite the fact that he didn't come. He caressed her hair and gave her a peck on the back. "Honey, we need to bang this evening," he whispered in a hoarse voice.

When she tried to stand, her legs were shaking from the frenzy. With the support of the windowsill, she turned around and snapped, "Old man, we'll see to that when the time comes. But you shouldn't be so infatuated. A bit of moderation would go a long way."

As he dressed, Carlos asked casually, "Deb, have you been taking exercise lately?"

Confused, she nodded, "I like running. As long as I'm free, I usually go for a run, especially at nights."

Carlos eyed Debbie from head to toe and commented, "You need to improve your endurance. Otherwise, you may find it difficult keeping up with my pace."

The tongue-in-cheek remark left Debbie blushing.

'This shameless old man! Is he a sex maniac or something?' she cursed inwardly.

When they appeared at the stairs on the second floor, the housemaids were busy serving the dishes.

Debbie raised her left leg and was about to descend the stairs, but her right leg suddenly went soft. If it weren't for Carlos' fast reaction, she would have fallen and rolled down the stairs.

'It's all his fault!' Debbie cast him a reproachful glance.

"Is it so funny?" she retorted to his naughty smile. Since he didn't deny her causation, Debbie gnashed her teeth and whispered in his ear, "You'll stay overnight in the study!"

"You want Mom to worry about us?"

"Mom is a smart woman. Even if I don't tell her, she'll know it's all your fault," Debbie joked with a confident smile.

To support her, Carlos held her arm and slowly led the way to the dining room, where everything was ready by now. Straightaway, he led her to the sink so that they could wash their hands. Just then, Tabitha and Megan walked out of the kitchen together. "Debbie, how do you find his English class? Is he easy to follow?" asked Tabitha in an honest tone.

But Debbie's face blushed again. A lot of things had taken place while they were in the study. She answered with embarrassment, "Yes, Mom, he is. He's a great teacher."

"From a tender age, Carlos showed promise in languages. Even through college he maintained a distinction in English," explained Tabitha.

The stellar academic achievements of her son were something she greatly took pride in. There was no denying, Carlos' grasp of languages was exceptional. In particular, Debbie was impressed by his English. As Tabitha and Megan took their places at the table, Carlos, now at the sink, quietly listened with no emotion on his face, as if he didn't know what they were talking about.

Not to be left out of the women's talk, Megan echoed, "Uncle Carlos is not only good at English, he's also fluent in French, Russian, Japanese, Korean and German. Meanwhile, he's also studying Spanish, Arabic..." Megan droned on, until she was interrupted by Debbie, who cut in, in praise of her husband. "Aren't you incredible, darling?!"

To which Carlos replied genially, "Thanks for the compliment, Honey."

"I guess I might never catch up with you in that area," Debbie grumbled, pouting her lips. At one time, she had imagined getting ahead of him. Apparently, she had underestimated just how versatile Carlos was.

Language ability was only one of his many exceptional skills. Would she ever come close to his other areas of strength?

"You can give it a try. Maybe you'll succeed," he teased with an arched eyebrow.

'Give it a try? Then I'll have to bury myself in those foreign languages every day? No, no, no!' She shook her head immediately. "Old man, I've made up my mind that I'll be a housewife. You support the family, and all I have to do is take care of you. What do you think of it?"

The running water washed away the liquid soap on Carlos' hands. He pinched her cheek with his wet hand and answered, "You're the boss."

Debbie elbowed him gently and pouting her lips, complained, "Mind your hand, old man! In order to make a good impression on your mom, I put on some makeup this morning. See, I used primer and BB cream. Better be careful where you touch me, or my makeup will run."

Although her cosmetics were water-proof, she was still worried that her makeup might run.

It occurred to Carlos she might be honest about her makeup.

Earlier on, while he was engrossed on the phone, he had seen Debbie doing something before the dressing table. It must have been makeup she was putting on.

At long last, when they went to the dining table, Tabitha and Megan were already waiting for them.

There were ten main courses and two soups on the table. The housemaids had already poured a glass of wine for everyone. The wine was one of Carlos' best collections.

Carlos and Debbie sat at one side of the table, while Megan and Tabitha sat opposite. They clinked glasses and began to eat.

The atmosphere was quite good at the very beginning. Debbie raved about the dishes, praising what a terrific cook Tabitha was.

CHAPTER 123 YOU'VE EATEN SO MUCH

The dinner had a pleasant start, but it wasn't long before Megan began to fawn over Carlos. "Uncle Carlos, this is popcorn chicken. I helped Tabitha cook it. Give it a try, please."

"Mmm," Carlos said, unwilling to say more with a mouthful of food. The look on his face and the sounds of chewing were enough to gauge how he felt.

"Uncle Carlos, taste the soup. I helped Tabitha flavor it. Does it taste good?" Megan put a bowl of soup on the table, setting it down in front of Carlos.

She acted as if she were the hostess, and anyone who didn't know better might believe that Megan was Carlos' wife.

His face deadpan, Carlos answered "Mmm" again. He was a man of few words, yet those few words usually said enough.

Still, Megan continued to pile food onto his plate, and soon his place was inundated with all sorts of tasty dishes.

Debbie, on the other hand, grew angry when she saw this. As any woman would be. Tabitha kept putting food onto Debbie's plate, ignoring the gal's rage. Debbie had to take a deep breath to suppress her anger, so she wouldn't snap at the wrong person.

She lowered her head and ate her food quietly. Suddenly, a piece of fish was put onto her plate and the man finally spoke, his mouth finally forming words that were not just sounds. "I boned the fish."

Debbie paused for a moment. If Tabitha were not here, she would mock him, "So you finally remember your own wife, huh?"

She put on a fake smile and said icily, "Thank you."

Before long, he put a piece of raw lobster onto her plate. "I remember you like seafood. Mom made a couple of dishes just for you. Here..."

Tabitha smiled at Debbie, "This lobster was flown in from Australia earlier today. It was very fresh, so I

just sliced it. You'll love it."

"I really appreciate it, Mom!" Debbie gave Tabitha a sweet smile, and ate the lobster. She always loved lobster, ever since she was a little girl. Even when she was too young to properly shell it, her dad had always made sure to give her some. It was a nearly lifelong love affair with the dish. Carlos now paid all his attention to his wife. When Debbie was about to pick up a piece of lobster again, he was one step ahead of her and picked it up himself.

Debbie stared at Carlos in confusion. He dipped the lobster into the sauce before putting it onto Debbie's plate. Then he picked up another piece of lobster with shell and began to shell it.

Debbie's jaw dropped. She approached Carlos and whispered in his ear, "Put it down. Mom and Megan haven't touched the lobster yet."

He answered with a shrug, "They're not fond of lobster."

"Don't worry about us, Debbie. I'm allergic to it, and Megan hates seafood." But that didn't echo her thoughts. What Tabitha was really thinking was, 'My ungrateful son forgot his mother after he got married.

Look, how considerate he is. He boned the fish and shelled the lobster for his wife, but he didn't dish up anything for me." Despite her thoughts Tabitha was glad that Carlos and Debbie loved each other.

"Allergic? Are you okay now? You sliced the lobster." Worry was obvious in Debbie's eyes.

Tabitha shook her head. "Don't worry. As long as I don't eat it, I'm good."

"Er... Mom, have some of this." Debbie placed the almond curd in syrup in front of Tabitha.

"Thank you, Debbie." Tabitha scooped it onto her plate.

"How about you? Are you allergic to seafood? Or just don't like it?" Debbie asked Carlos.

He shook his head.

'Come on! Can't he say something? He's acting like a mime!' Debbie rolled her eyes secretly. 'They say silence is golden, but this is ridiculous!'

Megan was the first one to finish. Then Tabitha, and finally, Carlos. He had eaten slowly on purpose, because he knew Debbie had a good appetite and she would feel embarrassed if she was left eating alone. Besides, he liked to take his time, and not much would make him rush. Even if the house were on fire, he might simply walk out of the door, calmly and elegantly.

Debbie was still eating, while Tabitha and Megan ate some fruit as a dessert and chatted with each

other.

Debbie felt a little embarrassed. 'This is the first meal that I've had with my mother-in-law. Will she freak when she sees me eating so much?'

Carlos noticed that Debbie was distracted. He put a piece of bamboo shoot onto her plate and said, "Here, have some more!" It was his quiet way of telling her to focus on her meal.

Debbie came back to her senses.

Megan was amazed by Debbie's good appetite and exclaimed, "Aunt Debbie, you've eaten so much! How do you even keep that wonderful figure? I really admire you."

Debbie couldn't tell whether she was praising her or mocking her. She gave Megan a smile and continued eating.

As a thoughtful woman, Tabitha chimed in, "Debbie, a good appetite is a blessing. Take your time."

Debbie was almost moved to tears. How lucky she was to have such a good husband and a caring mother-in-law! "I will, Mom."

After the dinner, Carlos asked the housemaid to make a fruit platter for Debbie. Looking at more than a dozen fruits on the platter, Debbie gulped them all down. She loved fruit, and after taking so much time to eat, there was some room left in her stomach.

Megan stayed at the villa until 9 in the evening. As a result, Tabitha invited her to stay overnight.

Debbie shrugged. 'Whatever! Carlos will be sleeping with me. Megan won't have a chance.'

All was quiet in the dead of night.

Tabitha knocked on the door of the study, and after Carlos gave his assent, she entered. Carlos was working on his laptop. Tabitha closed the door behind her and sat opposite him. "You busy now?"

"I always have time for you. What do you need?" Carlos asked in reply.

"You and Debbie..." She paused, not knowing how to say it. "You know, your father..."

Carlos remained silent.

Tabitha continued, "He thinks the eldest daughter of the Lopez family..."

"Mom!" Carlos interrupted her. "Debbie and I are married. Tell him to not interfere in my affairs when you get back home." Determination was written all over his face.

Thinking of her husband's stubbornness, Tabitha flashed an embarrassed smile. Carlos folded his laptop and said in a soft voice, "Mom, I'll tell him about it myself. Don't worry about it."

"No! I know how you are. If you spoke to him yourself, you'd just end up in a big fight. I'll talk to him," said Tabitha. Carlos and James Hilton, his father, always had fights with each other over decisions about the company. They gave no quarter, and there was no reason to think they'd be any different.

After a short pause, Carlos said, "Actually, it was Grandpa who asked me to marry Debbie. But now, I've fallen in love with her. It doesn't matter what Dad thinks, I'm with her for the long haul."

"Your grandpa?"

"Yeah. Grandpa felt indebted to Debbie's grandma." Debbie's grandmother and Douglas Hilton, Carlos' grandfather, were not only classmates, but also each other's first loves. Because of the unrest in the country dozens of years ago, they were forced to separate. It took more than a dozen years for them to find each other again.

But when they finally reunited, they both were married—to other people!

Debbie's grandmother had waited for Douglas for more than ten years before she had gotten married. The last time they had met each other, she was on her deathbed.

Douglas felt guilty and indebted to her when he knew that she had waited for him for so many years.

Back then, she pointed at Debbie, who was washing some towels, and said, "I'm only worried about my granddaughter. Her mother left her when she was born. She's had a hard life. Could you please do me a favor? If you know a nice boy, send him her way. She needs a good man..."

Douglas agreed without hesitation and kept that in mind.

Not long after Debbie's grandmother's death, Douglas also fell deathly ill. When he got over his illness and went to visit the Nelson family again, Artie, Debbie's father, was already in bad health.

CHAPTER 124 THE PAS

When Douglas first put forward a proposal to marry Debbie to Carlos. Artie, who had heard of Carlos before, agreed to the proposal without hesitation.

Debbie had just broken up with Hayden back then. And she couldn't bear to turn down her father, who was terminally ill. She had been so mad at Hayden that she had agreed to marry Carlos in a fit of pique. Their marriage certificate had been issued on her birthday that year.

The reason why Carlos had agreed to marry Debbie was that he respected his grandfather's advice. From

Carlos' childhood, Douglas had dedicated his time and money to his grandson's education.

When weak, frail and advanced in age Douglas sat Carlos down and recommended Debbie for a wife, it made sense.

At that time, Carlos was a workaholic with virtually no time for anything else.

Shortly after, Douglas had been hospitalized, in a coma, before he could let anyone in on his grandson's marriage. It didn't help that Carlos was overextended in time. So much that he hurtled from meeting to meeting, place to place, the world over for business. Until gradually, he had completely forgotten about his wife.

Debbie didn't know the story behind this. She and Carlos had been married for three years, yet had barely known each other until several months ago.

"Your grandpa is still in a coma. When your dad gets to know this, I'm pretty sure he'll throw a tantrum," said Tabitha in a worried voice. That was a real source of concern for her. If there was one thing that Tabitha didn't like in James, it was his quick temper. Over the years, she had learnt to wisely avoid unnecessary strife with her husband. But it wasn't lost on her that if triggered, he could be unreasonable.

And there was no way to tell how he'd receive his son's marriage to Debbie.

Sensing that his mom was worried, Carlos stood up from his seat, walked up to Tabitha and assured in a calm tone, "Mom, just leave it to me. There's no need to fret."

He didn't want her to be blamed for the decision. If anything, his grandpa's word was enough. The only problem was that chances of Douglas ever making it safely at the hospital were infinitesimal.

Eventually, Tabitha agreed to stay her calm, and hoped that James would be rational enough not to throw a hissy fit when Carlos finally got to introduce Debbie as his wife.

"Well, then, when are you going to take Debbie to see the rest of our family?" Tabitha asked. A couple of years back, the Hilton and Lopez families had all moved abroad, which meant Carlos would need good planning of his otherwise busy schedule to take Debbie for introductions.

"I think it won't take long. It's time to visit Grandpa and Grandma," answered Carlos. It had been three months since he had last visited them. And the New Year was drawing near. Carlos planned to take Debbie to see his family to celebrate the New Year together this year.

"All right. Carlos, don't stay up late. I just saw Debbie doing yoga in her bedroom. She must be bored. Why not keep her company? I really hope you two can have a baby. I'd be glad to babysit my own grandchild."

Both the mother and the son beamed with delight at the mention of a baby.

The Hilton family usually had a rather impersonal, business-like atmosphere. Tabitha hoped that a baby would make things less uptight.

Carlos curled his lips and said, "Debbie and I hope so too."

"Great. Oh, by the way, Megan..." Even though Carlos was an adult, Tabitha didn't think he was handling his relationship with Megan properly. Yes, she liked Megan very much and treated her as her own daughter. But of course Debbie was Carlos' wife. "You see, Megan and you are not related by blood. Now that you have Debbie, you'll need to set boundaries in the way you relate to Megan. In all, your wife should be number one on your mind."

Images from earlier in the day flashed back in Carlos' mind. Had Debbie gotten angry at Megan? "Mom, you are overreacting. I've told Debbie before that I treat Megan as my niece. Debbie is a sensible girl, and she perfectly understands."

"Okay..." Tabitha was not convinced, but she could do nothing. All she could do was pray and hope that her son would learn to give priority to his wife.

After a little bit of small talk, Tabitha went back to her room, while Carlos assigned his remaining work to some of his staff and left the study.

In the bedroom, Debbie was still doing yoga. The downward-facing dog posture she was in when Carlos walked into the room instantly turned him on.

At the sound of the door closing, she turned her head and asked, "Are you done with work?"

'Hoo...I'm ready to drop.

Since he's done, I'd better take a shower and go to sleep, ' she thought.

When she was about to stand up, Carlos stopped her. "Don't move!"

"What? But why?"

"In your current posture, we can..."

He stopped in mid-sentence. Debbie struggled to her feet. "Stay away from me, you goat!" she said, blushing like a teenager.

This afternoon, Carlos hadn't been satisfied in the study. Now that he had been turned on by her alluring posture, he would by no means let her go.

Despite Debbie's slight unwillingness at the beginning, she gave in to his desires in the end.

In that split second, when he stroked her, every nerve in her body was electrified with the anticipation of being together. Twisting with the surge of power through her whole system, she pulled his shirt over his head. In quick response, he pushed her hard onto the bed, his hands coming up to her neck as he cupped her head into his palms while passionately kissing her lips. She tried to pull away, but he grabbed her hungrily and held her back in the same position. A few moments later, he flipped her over forcefully, Debbie burying her head into his neck, while his hands caressed her all over the body. Their breaths by now came in gusts, fast and furious. When his hand rolled up to her bra, he violently grabbed it in the middle and yanked the thing off, without even trying to undo the strap. A crazy night of love, unlike any they had ever had. Carlos finally let her go after the wild sex. Still tightly wrapped in his arms, Debbie mumbled teasingly, "Carlos, if you act like this again, I will run away from you."

"Do you dare?" Carlos kissed her hair affectionately, his voice soft.

Debbie shook her head first and then nodded. Pouting her lips, she complained, "You always threaten me..."

But apparently she was still dazed from the rigor of the night. Mid-sentence, she then dozed off.

The next day, Carlos went to his company for work. Since he was not in the villa, Megan also bid goodbye to Tabitha and went back home. On their part, Debbie and Tabitha went shopping at Shining International Plaza. They had much to talk, and got along so well.

At noon, they had lunch on the fifth floor of Alioth Building, and Carlos joined them.

When Carlos didn't come home early due to a backlog of work, Tabitha invited Debbie to her room for a heart-to-heart talk.

Looking at the pretty girl, Tabitha said sincerely, "Debbie, I'm going back home tomorrow morning. I've completely enjoyed our time together, for these few days. Before I came here, I was always worried about Carlos' lack of a social life. You know, he's not an outgoing man. I didn't expect that he would find an adorable angel like you for a wife. I feel much relieved now. Hopefully, you can be strong enough to put up with his odd character and bad temper. I know it's not fair to say so, and you may feel wronged. But I really pray that you and Carlos will live happily together. Couples need to learn to give and take, right?"

Debbie could understand Tabitha. She held her hands and answered, "Mom, rest assured please. Carlos treats me well. I'm living a happy life with him. Please don't worry about us." Debbie swore to herself that she would start to be nicer to Carlos.

"Thank you so much, Debbie. Now I can rest assured. I've urged Carlos to take you to meet our family as soon as possible. You're a good girl, and I believe other family members will be fond of you as well."

"Mom..." Moved by the motherly compassion and unable to hold her emotions anymore, Debbie threw herself into Tabitha's arms.

Tabitha was so caring, Debbie felt lucky to have a mother-in-law like her. 'Maybe my own mother wouldn't have been nicer to me than Tabitha if she hadn't been taken away from me, ' she thought to herself.

When Carlos finally came back home, it was almost midnight.

Debbie was ashamed of sleeping in when Tabitha was here. So she had gotten up very early this morning and gone for a run. After a shopping spree with Tabitha, she then went to meet her friends. She was exhausted and went to bed early this evening.

By the time Carlos came back, she was dead asleep. Quietly, he entered the bedroom, careful not to rudely awake her. He approached her stealthily and kissed her on the forehead before he went to the bathroom.

When he walked out of the bathroom, Debbie was sitting on the bed, wrapped by the quilt, playing on her phone. On seeing him, she put the phone away, spread her arms, and invited him with a sweet smile, "Honey, give me a hug."

Although he had come in worn out, the bright smile on her face instantly revived him.

He strode towards her, pulled her into his arms and kissed her affectionately on the lips. After a moment, he let go of her and asked in a hoarse voice, "Did I wake you up?"

CHAPTER 125 A BUSINESS TRIP

Nestled in Carlos' arms, Debbie shook her head and murmured, "You didn't wake me up. Hear that buzz? Someone sent messages in group chat."

Debbie was usually a light sleeper, and the person who had awakened her was none other than Jared. He met a girl recently and couldn't stop posting selfies with her in group chat on WeChat. He just wanted to show off.

Hearing that, Carlos furrowed his eyebrows and reached out to grab her phone to find out who was to blame. Debbie somewhat unsuccessfully tried to keep her phone away from him. She was wrapped in the sheets, and he could reach across the bed easily.

Afraid that Carlos might punish Jared again, Debbie immediately grabbed his hand and said in a charming manner, "Honey, it's no big deal. A friend of mine is overexcited about his S.O. Baby, I'm still really sleepy, and it's cold in here. Snuggle?"

Carlos realized she was covering for someone, so he went along with it. He curled his lips, got onto the

bed and lay down beside his wife. He felt really uncomfortable now. He thought about taking a look at her phone, but somehow it didn't seem worth the effort.

Debbie rested her head on his arm and wrapped her arm around his waist. A satisfied smile found its way to her face.

"It's Sunday, but you worked all day. You must be tired." Debbie reached out her hand and stroked his face, concern showing in her eyes.

Carlos grabbed her hand and put it inside the warm quilt. "No, not really. Close your eyes and get some rest. You have a yoga class tomorrow morning."

The yoga class started early the next morning, so Debbie needed to get up earlier than usual. She liked to sleep late. If she didn't get to sleep now, she wouldn't be awake enough for the class.

"Okay. Night, Honey." She closed her eyes obediently and dozed off in his arms within a couple of minutes. She was tired, and the warm bed was inviting. If she had any dreams, she didn't remember them.

The next morning, since Debbie had to head to the college and Carlos had an important meeting, neither of them could drive Tabitha to the airport. So Damon offered to drive her there.

Debbie and Tabitha were saying their goodbyes at the gates of the villa when Damon's car pulled up. He greeted them playfully, "Wow, two beautiful ladies! Good morning!"

Debbie waved her hand at him. "Morning, Damon."

Tabitha's smile grew wider when she saw Damon. "I've been here all this time, and you never came by."

Damon gave Tabitha a hug and clutched his chest melodramatically. "Tabitha, you wound me. I heard you came to Alorith, so I took the red-eye to get here. At least I can drive you to the airport. You know I wouldn't be able to eat or sleep if I didn't see you at least once."

Tabitha shook her head and sighed, "You silver-tongued devil. No wonder you had so many girlfriends."

"Shhh!" Damon raised his index finger and put it against his lips. In a low voice, he added, "I have a fiancée now. I'm a respectable man. We don't talk about that anymore. What if she heard you and dumped me? Then you'd have to find me a new fiancée."

Debbie rolled her eyes at what Damon just said. Damon and Jared were a lot alike, despite the fact that they had different mothers. She felt as if it were Jared she was talking to, and maybe that was why Damon soon became a friend of Debbie's.

The brothers both had glib tongues, had both dated countless girls, and both seemed to have nothing to

do.

Tabitha took a look inside Damon's car and asked, "Really? A fiancée? Did you bring her along?"

Damon shook his head. "Nope. I just brought her back from abroad. Next time you're around, I'll take her to meet you. Or maybe I can take her to New York, so we can visit you."

"Sounds good."

Debbie's class was starting soon. After bidding goodbye to Tabitha and Damon, she got into her BMW, and Matan drove her to the college. Damon started the engine as well and drove towards the airport.

After the second afternoon class ended, Debbie got a call from Carlos. He said he needed to go to a nearby city on business. Debbie was surprised by the sudden news. "That's short notice!" She was not prepared for it at all.

"I know, babe. There's an emergency I have to fix. I'll be back in like a week. Wait for me, okay?"

"Okay." Debbie pouted her lips. The very thought of it made her feel unhappy. She didn't like to be separated from Carlos for long. When he was difficult, he was infuriating, but there were times he could be really sweet. And right now, things were going well.

Carlos suddenly remembered something and told her, "Deb, can you attend a dinner for me tomorrow evening? Emmett will keep you company."

"Attend a dinner for you?!" Debbie cried in utter disbelief.

"Uh-huh. A business partner is throwing a party, and he invited me a long time ago. I'll tell him who you are, so there won't be any problems." She wanted to keep their marriage a secret, and he was fine with it. But eventually, the truth would come out. He was the most eligible bachelor in people's eyes, but he couldn't really date because he was already married. It looked odd, and some people were talking about it.

He swore to himself that he would tell the media about his marriage once Debbie had graduated. Yeah, that would make it all better. She could get used to the limelight, and it wouldn't make things too uncomfortable for her.

Debbie was very nervous. "I... I don't think I can make it. What if I screw it up?"

"Don't worry, Honey. I already bought a gift for the host. You need only give it to him, and then find a place to enjoy the food and drinks there. Just be yourself, and eat everything in sight."

Debbie burst into laughter. "Come on! You brat! I'm not that bad!"

Carlos seemed to be in a good mood. He teased, "Really? Last time I was out on the cruiser, I saw a girl stuff her face with so many desserts. She looked a lot like you, actually."

Back then, Debbie had eaten plate after plate of dessert for more than half an hour without stopping once, which amazed Carlos.

'What? Cruiser? Wait. I remember now.' Debbie snapped, "Leave me alone about that! It was all Jared's fault. Once we got on board, he went after two girls and left me alone. I couldn't do anything but eat." Then she remembered how Carlos had treated her back then.

"Wait a minute. How dare you mention the cruiser! You ordered your men to throw me overboard!"

Debbie said through gritted teeth.

"You should've told me who you were back then!" Carlos defended himself. He felt so lucky right now that Debbie could swim. Otherwise, he would not be living a happy life now. He was grateful that she was in his life, and that she wanted to stay with him.

"So it was my fault you didn't recognize your own wife?"

"It was my fault, Honey. I'm really sorry. I swear I won't do stupid things in the future." Anxiety could be heard in his tone.

Debbie accepted his apology and said, "Okay! I forgive you—this time." She wasn't hurt by the incident, but she was still humiliated.

"So should I say thank you?"

"Of course. But since we're family, don't be so polite. Haha..." Standing under a big tree, Debbie raised her head to look at the sun streaming through the leaves and flashed a big smile.

Family... For the first time, the word meant a lot to Carlos. "Will you miss me?"

"Of course, Honey."

Raymond Grand Hotel was a five-star hotel. Even driving up to it, you could see the 10 acres of blooming gardens, not to mention the gazebo and fish pond. And of course it had a richly appointed lounge and restaurant. The wealthy and shameless rubbed elbows here.

As darkness fell outside, luxurious cars stopped in front of the hotel gates one after another. Men and women in designer threads entered the hotel.

The Kasee Group had booked the entire hotel for its fiftieth anniversary. More than 1,000 guests could be seen everywhere—in the main hall, in the garden, etc.

While the CEO of the Kasee Group made an opening speech in the main hall, the PR team responsible for receiving the guests waited at the hotel gates. The team leader raised her wrist to check the time. The dinner had already been going on for about seven minutes, but their special guests hadn't arrived yet. Their boss had specifically instructed them to treat the two guests with utmost respect.

The next moment, a red Pagani sports car raced along and stopped abruptly before the gates.

When she saw the car, the team leader realized the guests had arrived. It must be Emmett of the Hilton Group and their mystery guest. With a big smile, she led her companions forward to greet them.

The girl in the driver's seat was none other than Debbie. Her head almost bumped into the steering wheel when the car stopped. But she was late, and she didn't want to be any later than this. The man in the passenger seat was in the same situation. His heart rate skyrocketed. He patted his chest to calm himself down and said, "Alright! Here at last!"

CHAPTER 126 AT THE PARTY

When the car came to a halt, Debbie straightened her clothes and fixed her hair. "Emmett, we're ten minutes late. Think anyone will notice?" she asked. This was all Carlos' fault. When she was picking out a dress, he refused to hang up the phone and insisted on video chatting with her.

Carlos picked out her dress and even her earrings. It was like he wanted control over the entire process. Before that, he had watched her change and try on every dress. That had been fun. Some secrets a man should never know—like all the gymnastics it took sometimes just to fit into a dress. The net effect was that no one was supposed to know how much effort you put into getting ready.

Therefore, she ended up getting to the hotel ten minutes late, even though she was an excellent driver behind the wheel of a sports car.

"It's okay. Don't worry about it, Debbie," Emmett answered, frankly relieved they'd stopped. He didn't enjoy the trip over here at all, wondering how long it would take him to stop shuddering. He got out of the passenger seat and trotted over to the driver's seat. After straightening his clothes, he opened the door for Debbie with a serious look on his face and held out his right hand. "Please, Debbie," he said respectfully.

Debbie put her high heels on again. She had taken them off and thrown them aside while she was driving. Then, she put her hand on Emmett's gracefully and got out of the car.

The PR team knew Emmett as Carlos' secretary. When they saw him being so respectful to the woman getting out of the car, they all knew she must be very important. Carlos spared no expense to make sure those close to him were well taken care of, and she was obviously close to him.

In a pair of 6 cm high heels, Debbie walked carefully and nervously into the lavish hotel. Emmett was by her side and the PR team led the way.

The lobby doors were pushed open by two bodyguards, and held in place while Debbie walked in. The boss of Kasee Group had just delivered his opening speech.

Soon, all eyes were drawn to the woman who had just walked in wearing a red evening dress. She was letting her passionate side shine.

Fine feathers make fine birds. The woman they were gazing at had been made up and dressed by an international master make-up artist. Nothing but the best for Carlos' wife. Even the socialite divas and the actresses present at the event couldn't hold a candle to Debbie now.

Her hair was no longer a lilac, and was dyed back to a gorgeous raven hue. Knotted into a five-strand braid, it was coiled up at the back of her head, adorned by a diamond tiara-shaped hairpin.

Debbie took off the white overcoat draped over her shoulders and gave it to her bodyguard, fully revealing the red evening dress underneath. It had three-quarter sleeves and a stand-up collar, and her beautiful clavicles were partly exposed. The dress was a gold medal-winning work by a master designer from Milan. Crystal and diamond studs adorned it from head to toe. The pattern was sumptuous, low-key and conservative.

Her skin used to be dry, but thanks to Carlos it was now delicate and smooth. She used to know little about skin care and so didn't take care of her skin, but now it fairly glowed. Her cheeks were rosy with a sheen of happiness.

Under the dark eye shadow and her long eyelashes, her black pupils glistened as if warning people away, while somehow there seemed also to be a hint of deeply hidden helplessness about them. Beneath her high nose, her lips embellished with red lip gloss, shone in the light, like two dewy rosy petals.

Around her fair neck hung a white crystal necklace, from the same set as the bracelet on her wrist, both perfectly matched and stunning. Her ears bore low-key, expensive crystal ear studs.

She walked slowly in her black high heels, straightening up, with a presence of aloofness and uniqueness. Everyone feasted on her sumptuous beauty but hesitated to approach, all wondering who she was and why she was with Carlos' secretary Emmett. "Who is she? Why have I never seen her before?" someone from the crowd whispered.

"You tell me. I didn't know Emmett got married. My aunt was talking about how she wanted to fix him up with a girl," another person cut in.

"Although her dress looks low-key, it's pricey. I don't think Emmett can afford something like that. Is she Carlos'..."

While they were guessing, the boss of the Kasee Group came over.

"Good evening, Mrs. Hilton, Emmett," the man greeted.

He shook hands with the two. Debbie gave the gift to his secretary and said with a smile, "Nice to meet you, Maddock Truman." When he glanced at the gift, she continued, "It's a present from my husband. He's too busy to make the celebration tonight, so he asked me to come on his behalf."

Emmett picked up two glasses of wine from the tray a waiter was carrying, one for Debbie and the other for himself. They clinked with Maddock's glass, a toast to the health of all in attendance.

Debbie's polite remarks flustered the man. He hadn't expected the powerful Carlos' wife to be so modest and polite. "Mrs. Hilton, you're too modest. It's indeed a pity that Carlos can't come himself, but I'm so glad you're here. The honor is all mine."

Debbie wasn't good with flattery. Nor did she like too many compliments. She smiled nervously, "Thank you for understanding, Maddock. Today's a big day for you. I bet you're very busy, so I'll not take up any more of your time."

"Okay, please help yourself, Mrs. Hilton. If you need anything, please let me know. Please forgive us if the service isn't good enough."

"Thank you, Maddock." They cheered again. Debbie took a sip of her wine, and Maddock left them. He intended to mingle in this little shindig he threw.

Watching him leave, Debbie was relieved. She visibly relaxed, taking a deep breath and untensing her shoulders.

She whispered to Emmett, "Did I say anything wrong?"

Emmett smiled, "No, Mrs. Hilton, you were great. Relax." At that point, Emmett understood why Carlos wasn't worried to let Debbie come to the party on his behalf.

She might not be adept at flattery or socializing, but she was confident and looked even more amazing after the makeover. She was definitely cut out for the job.

With Carlos' effort, she had changed into a different person inside a matter of months. Several months ago, she had been a hot-tempered, reckless troublemaker, who got into a fight now and then. For this reason or that, she went to the dean's office at least twice a month. Her grades were always the worst in the class.

Now, she still had a bad temper, but when she wasn't mad, she even seemed tender. In her spare time, she practiced dance, yoga, flower arrangement, piano, and art, specializing in pen and ink. Debbie hadn't picked a fight or gone to the dean's office for a long time. Her grades had climbed to respectable levels.

Anyone close to her might not see these changes, for they were gradual, but the ones who hadn't seen her for a while could sense them at once.

Emmett thought this was how a girl should be: not too gentle, not too tough, not too hot-tempered.

Carlos had changed a lot too.

His fury was more terrifying than ever. His rage was a fire that burned you when he got too hot.

But when he was in a good mood, he would talk more and even smile occasionally.

Emmett was amazed at the changes in both of them. The two had affected each other in ways he hadn't dreamed of.

After a while, a waiter came by and said, "Mrs. Hilton, there are some snacks in the refreshments section. I hope you get a chance to try them."

Debbie looked at Emmett in confusion. He reassured her, "Carlos arranged that. He asked a dessert bar to work together with the hotel to make these snacks."

A smile of happiness crept over Debbie's face, brightening the room. 'He thinks of me even when he's out of town,' she thought.

She followed Emmett to the refreshments section. On the way, she was shocked to see some familiar faces. It was Gail, along with Olga. Plus Jared, who was worried about Carlos suddenly showing up, and others.

CHAPTER 127 FAKE CRYSTAL

Among her acquaintances, the girls kept looking at her with an envious eye. If gazes could kill, Debbie would have been dead.

"Debbie," called Colleen and Curtis in unison.

Some men wanted to approach Debbie, Emmett noticed. But when they saw Curtis and Colleen, they stopped.

When Debbie, who was eating a snack, heard them, she put the snack down and clinked with the two. "Hi, Colleen, Mr. Loftus."

Taking a step back to look at Debbie, Curtis complimented, "You look great. No doubt Carlos has been good to you."

Colleen released Curtis and took Debbie's hand. "Of course. One has just to look at Debbie to know that

she is in love,"

she said, as gentle as the first time Debbie had met her. If Debbie hadn't seen Colleen on the dance floor the other day, she wouldn't have believed the woman could dance seductively like that. Debbie smiled resignedly.

Playfully, Curtis pinched Colleen's cheek before he turned to look Debbie straight in the face. "Did you come here on Carlos' behalf?" he asked.

"Yeah, he is on a business trip," Debbie replied.

Curtis nodded. "Not bad." He was relieved to see that Debbie and Carlos were happy together.

After a short while, Curtis and Colleen were needed somewhere else and left Debbie. So did Emmett. Even though he was only a secretary, many people sucked up to him, on account of having Carlos as his boss.

Left alone, Debbie ate some more snacks and went towards the bathroom.

When she walked out of the bathroom, there was another woman standing in the hallway. Adorned in an expensive champagne evening dress, and holding a fashionable handbag, the woman must have been waiting for Debbie. Straightway, she called out, "Debbie?"

Her voice was not too loud nor quiet, emotionless.

It was Portia. 'Why is she here?' Debbie wondered. 'Since Portia is here, is Hayden here too?'

Debbie nodded and said, "Hi."

"Is it really you?" It was only then that Portia believed the glowing woman at the party was Debbie.

Debbie smiled faintly and excused herself. "Yeah, it's me. If you have nothing else to talk about, I have to go."

Now that she was married, she didn't want to engage with anyone from the Gomez family, unless it was necessary.

Just as Debbie was about to leave, Portia began, "What's the rush? Are you hiding something?"

Debbie sneered. She looked at Portia and retorted, "Hiding?"

Born and brought up in a wealthy family, Portia, with a single look, could tell how much Debbie's outfit was worth, but she wouldn't admit it. "Are you afraid that people might know you are wearing a fake designer dress and fake crystal?" she taunted arrogantly.

Debbie laughed. Touching her crystal bracelet, she raised her right hand, which looked smooth after the skin care. "Since when is the daughter of the Gomez family so ignorant? Is the Gomez family degrading? Or does Hayden grudge giving you money after he became the head of the family?" Debbie fired back.

From Emmett's evaluation of Debbie's dress and accessories, Portia was being either painfully ignorant or simply insulting. If anything, Debbie's dress for the night was something few divas could afford. Even her crystals were not ordinary white crystals, but rare natural ones.

Apart from being pricey, Debbie's accessories had another significance. They were coveted Buddhist souvenirs. In addition to Crystals being one of the seven treasures, the bracelet she was wearing had been consecrated by an eminent monk, for psychic energy to charm and protect.

The bracelet had briefly appeared on display for sale at Shining International Plaza the other day, only to be bought on the afternoon of the same day, by a mysterious collector. Most likely, Carlos had seen it on display and sent someone to make the purchase on his behalf. Later that evening, he had come to the villa with a sweet surprise for Debbie.

Today, Debbie wore brown nail polish and had an extra crystal—a ring on her right hand, which glared in Portia's eyes against the light.

Trying to conceal her envy, Portia said with a fake air of superiority, "Sorry to disappoint you, but the Gomez Group is thriving under my brother's leadership. Also, my brother and I are on such good terms that besides my basic income of \$500,000 a month, he always gives me more than double that amount. What about you, Miss Debbie? I hear you got married. To whom? A secretary?"

Emmett might be respected by people because of his identity as Carlos' secretary, but at the end of the day, he was not Carlos.

Debbie took her hand back. She smiled at what Portia said, but she didn't deny it. "What about him being a secretary? He works for Carlos. You should know that anyone connected with Carlos is influential and powerful."

She exhaled and continued, "You get \$500,000 a month or double that? Isn't that peanuts the Gomez Group pays some of its highest ranking members? I hate to break this to you, but my husband gives me more than ten times as much."

Aside from the bank cards Carlos gave her, the monthly revenues of Orchid Private Club alone were more than 50 million.

However, Portia had no idea about that. She thought Debbie was married to Emmett, the secretary. 'She is only the wife of a secretary. How dare she mock me!' she thought. Squinting at Debbie, she snorted, "Right. Anybody connected with Carlos is important and powerful, but don't you forget that he is not Carlos after all. He is still just a secretary. So, what are you gloating over? Are you really expecting me to

believe that a secretary can give you that much as pocket money? Do you take me for a fool? Or is your husband corrupt?"

Debbie felt speechless. She had never said Emmett was her husband. Corrupt? Emmett would never do that. He was always honest. She felt bad about dragging him into this.

'Thank God I married Carlos. Otherwise, Portia and Gail would laugh at me for the rest of my life, ' she thought. "Whatever. I'm busy. Bye." Debbie didn't want to waste any more time on Portia.

"Stop!" Portia called out. She found Debbie had changed a lot. Power never scared her, but she was even prouder than before, not giving a damn about anybody else.

From the arrogant way Debbie carried herself, Portia began to suspect her husband was not Emmett but Carlos.

Debbie turned her head and said, "I always tolerated, humored and even flattered you. It was all because of your brother, but not anymore. From now on, I will humor neither you nor your brother."

"What do you mean? You are going to see my family as enemies?"

Debbie laughed scornfully, "Whatever." None of the Gomez family mattered to her anymore, and she didn't give a hoot about what they thought of her.

With her head held high, Debbie walked away, leaving Portia guessing and clutching at straws. She acted calm, but her long fingernails stuck into her handbag, leaving deep marks.

CHAPTER 128 BREAKUP IN THREE MINUTES

It hadn't been that long since Portia last saw Debbie. But this wasn't the Debbie she knew. Debbie used to be humble and self-effacing, with low self-esteem. Now she was parading around with her nose in the air, all puffed up with pride as if she were the queen.

'Dammit Debbie! Your husband's just a secretary. Don't get cocky. It's not like he's Carlos! We'll see who comes out on top!' she thought resentfully.

On Debbie's way back to the party, two other women stopped her in her tracks. They sized her up and down, and then one of them said curtly, "Someone wants to see you."

'I wonder who they're talking about, ' thought Debbie.

"Who?" she asked. Neither of the two women looked even remotely familiar. She'd know if she'd met them before. So it made her even more curious who wanted to talk to her, and why.

The woman in a black dress snapped, "Don't ask. Just follow us."

'This is crazy!' Debbie was irritated. It was supposed to be simple, and maybe fun. She went to the party on Carlos' behalf, but ended up coming across all kinds of weird things and hostile women. Mental note: Don't do this again. And now, why did she have to deal with some ridiculous mystery boss? She didn't. She was thinking that maybe now would be a good time to bug out of here. She had made an appearance, presented her gift, and now she just wanted to be left alone.

"Sorry, I'm busy." She passed them without giving them a second glance. Who were they? And why were they following someone else's orders? And more importantly, why were they trying to get her involved?

The woman in black shouted to her back, "Hey, you! Olga wants to see you! Get your butt over here now, unless you want that butt kicked out of Alorith! Just so you know, Olga is Carlos' woman. I wouldn't turn her down if I were you." 'Really! We'll just see about that!' Debbie thought.

The two looked at Debbie gloatingly, anticipating that she would turn around and follow them timidly to see Olga. After all, these two were at her beck and call, so why shouldn't Debbie be the same? She wasn't any better than them.

Nonetheless, to their disappointment, Debbie only paused for a second and then continued walking away.

The party was chock-full of things to do. The snacks Carlos ordered for her were delicious. She was stuffed, but when she returned to the party, she couldn't help walking towards the desserts again. She was compelled by the sweet taste of the treats, and her mouth watered in anticipation.

After getting herself a full plate of food, Debbie found herself a table in the corner, ready to dig in. But before she could take a bite, a familiar figure sat next to her. He looked around and asked cautiously, "Your husband didn't come with you?"

Debbie took a bite of iced mango pudding and rolled her eyes at him. "Why are you sneaking around like that?"

Clad in a plaid charcoal suit and wine leather shoes, Jared stared at her, his eyes wide like plates. "You're asking me? Your husband is way too possessive. That guy's gonna kill me sooner or later, just for hanging out with you."

Giving Debbie no chance to respond, he grabbed her arm and said, "Tomboy, promise me that you'll never cheat on your husband." Debbie almost choked on her food.

"Cuz if you did, I think he'd go after the poor guy's entire family."

Debbie wrenched her arm free from his grip, swallowed the food in her mouth and spat, "Cut the crap."

Seriousness was never part of Jared's personality. The next second, he whispered to Debbie in a conspiratorial tone, "I saw Hayden just now. He's a bigwig in Alorith now. He draws girls and rich guys to

him like a master fisherman."

As if tired from talking too much, Jared paused long enough to grab a Fairy Bean Cake from Debbie's plate and toss it into his mouth. "Why do girls like sweet things so much? How long has it been since you last saw Hayden? Did you happen to catch him after he came back from abroad?" he asked.

"No," Debbie replied. Carlos was the only thing on her mind now. She was totally smitten with him. Other men couldn't even draw her eye anymore.

As they chatted, Jared waved at a girl. Then he looked at Debbie and said, "Hey, dude. I'd like you to meet my girlfriend."

"Sure." Debbie was intrigued. After all, he woke her up with the news, when he posted it in group chat.

The girl walked towards them. When Debbie saw her, she choked on her black tea. Same old Jared. The girl was his typical type—big breasted, thick waisted and with a huge butt.

Looking in her twenties, she wore a seductive black dress and a pair of high heels that seemed to be at least eight cm high. Her long red curls tumbled to her waist.

Jared hooked his finger towards the girl and the latter instantly ran coquettishly into his arms. "Darling, I've been looking all over for you," she said.

Sitting there, Debbie couldn't help but put her hands on her arms, trying to pry the sprouting goosebumps off. When she thought that was hard to watch, the two started to make out. Debbie slid over to be farther away from them, pretending not to know them. This was embarrassing and gross.

"Tomboy, this is my girlfriend DeeDee. DeeDee, this is my buddy Debbie Nelson." Jared introduced them to each other briefly.

Debbie smiled faintly, kind of speechless at his taste. He seemed to have a thing for size. Big boobs, big butt, but never a care for what was attached to. This gal looked like she'd cleared the dessert table a couple of times. Even so, Debbie put the glass of water in her hand on the table and waved at the newcomer. "Hi, DeeDee, nice to meet you," she said.

DeeDee sized her up and down. Noticing the pricey outfit Debbie was wearing, she forced a smile and simply said, "Hi." Then she threw herself at Jared and acted like a spoiled little girl. "I want to go shopping. Go with me," she said while shaking his arm and wriggling her body. It wasn't a pretty sight, but it was what it was. This was how she got her way, because certain men liked the fact they acted bratty. That was considered cute by some. Jared was like that.

"Wait a minute. I need to talk to Tomboy."

Hearing this, DeeDee looked at Debbie sullenly and complained, "Wait a minute! It all makes sense now."

You bought her those clothes, didn't you?" DeeDee had noticed Debbie as she walked over. 'What rock did this ho pop out from? Stealing everyone's thunder like this.

No wonder Olga hates her so much. She acts all innocent when she's just a cheap-ass ho, ' she cursed inside.

Debbie looked at DeeDee in shock, wondering where the resentment came from. She patted Jared on the shoulder resignedly and said, "I'll see you tomorrow. We can talk after class. Go. Have fun."

Her opinion of the woman got lower.

Jared didn't respond to Debbie. Instead, he impatiently pushed the woman in his arms away and scolded, "Didn't I tell you to wait? Besides! Are you blind? I can't afford anything she's wearing!"

Debbie burst into laughter. Jared always hated to lose face.

She hadn't expected him to talk about himself like that in front of his girlfriend. 'He must be really mad,' she mused.

"I'm sorry," Debbie apologized, realizing how inappropriate it was to laugh at that moment. She nudged Jared and reminded him quietly, "Your girlfriend is ticked off. Go make her happy."

Hearing this, Jared stood up and left with his girlfriend.

It was finally quiet. Debbie polished off the rest of the desserts on her plate and started playing with her phone. After reading the updates in Moments on WeChat, she started to bang out a message to Carlos. "I want to..." She intended to say, "I want to go home. It's so boring. Emmett's been busy with work all night."

But before she could finish writing the message, a familiar voice called, "Tomboy."

"Eh? Back so soon? I thought you were out with your girlfriend," Debbie asked curiously.

Jared sat next to her and replied, "We broke up." He sounded upset.

"Um...What happened?" Debbie put her phone down.

They'd only just left. It couldn't have been more than three minutes. They broke up within three minutes? The thing was, they had only been together for a couple of days. Talk about your whirlwind romance.

CHAPTER 129 CALL MR. CARLOS

"You two seemed fine. What went wrong?" Debbie probed.

"Fine? I don't even like her. She seduced me while I was drunk and continually pestered me to take responsibility after we slept together. Otherwise, I wouldn't have even talked to her. Who does she think she is? I've slept with dozens of women. I don't even remember her," Jared said contemptuously before taking a sip of beer.

Debbie was surprised, even though she knew Jared was a playboy. She felt obliged to chime in. "Hey, dude. What you did was disgraceful. How could you sleep with someone and not take responsibility for it? She did nothing wrong to you."

Derisively, Jared waved his hand. "These women are all after my money. It sucks! None of them loves me. They only freaking love my money! If they could marry my old man, they would leave me immediately."

Although Jared was not as handsome as Damon, he was still good-looking in his own way. He was so tall that when Debbie stood beside him, she looked like an elf.

In Alorith, the Hampton Group was one of the leading enterprises. Although it was not as influential as the Hilton Group, it was among the top five most successful enterprises. The Hampton family's assets were worth more than 100 million.

Therefore, it came as no surprise that many women were tempted by his wealth.

Listening to Jared's misery, Debbie felt grateful for Carlos' dour moods, which repulsed women who would have surrounded him like a swarm of bees, if he entertained them.

Gently, she patted Jared on the shoulder and comforted him, "Relax, buddy. You'll find a girl who truly loves you soon."

At that time, Debbie had no idea that that girl would appear very soon. Neither did she know that she was familiar with the girl. Jared didn't take her words seriously.

He knew she was just saying that to comfort him. But it worked, just fine.

For the next few minutes, they remained glued to their seats, chatting freely about everything. Until suddenly, a bunch of loud women descended on them. A gang of socialite divas in Alorith, notorious for their knack for drama wherever they went.

In the meantime, Debbie, oblivious to their approach and enjoying her chitchat with Jared, jokingly rubbed her overstuffed stomach and didn't notice the commotion. The crowd was behind her, so it was Jared sitting opposite her who saw those women. "Tomboy, I've come to learn some women just can't stay away from trouble," he said in a whisper.

"What's wrong?" asked Debbie, curious about why he was whispering.

"Holy cow!" she exclaimed when she turned back to look. There must have been more than ten women in the oncoming gang. In the lead was Olga, flanked on either side by Gail and Portia. Right behind them Debbie could only identify DeeDee who had just broken up with Jared. As to who the rest of the gang were, Debbie had no clue.

One thing Debbie realized at a glance was the hideous looks on their faces, especially Olga, who stood in front of Debbie and Jared. Dressed in an expensive cream evening dress mounted with diamonds, she towered over them and pointing at Debbie, asked arrogantly, "Is she the one?"

To which DeeDee pushed through the group and answered, "Yes, Olga. That's the shameless boyfriend snatcher. She must pay for turning my life upside down!"

'Boyfriend snatcher?' Confused, Debbie glanced at Jared, but he seemed to be enjoying the scene.

She didn't see it when Olga picked up Jared's half full glass of beer.

Thanks to many years of martial arts practice, Debbie was quick to react, when Olga tried to douse her face in all the contents of the glass. But the woman sitting at the next table was not as lucky.

Unintentionally, Olga completely drenched her. Dripping with the frothy liquid, the poor girl screamed, drawing everyone's attention.

Being the party pooper that Olga was, she didn't apologize for attacking the wrong person. On the contrary, she even had the nerve to give the girl a dressing-down for screaming. "There were plenty of tables. Why did you have to sit next to this bitch?"

she chided, as though it was the offended girl who was in the wrong and not the other way round. The impertinent attitude got on Debbie's nerves. 'Who the hell does Olga think she is, to go stepping on everyone's toes?'

"Apologize to me or I'll escalate this issue to the authorities!" demanded the offended chubby little girl.

However, burning to settle the account with Debbie, Olga didn't want to waste time on the girl. "How much is your dress? I'll compensate you," she said impatiently. Then for no damn reason, she added, "But since your waistline is a little thick, I'm worried that maybe no shop has the right size for you. What you need might be a tailor."

As if what she had just said was a wisecrack, her likewise tactless crew laughed at the offended girl.

"You... You..." The girl's face flamed with anger, but she couldn't get the rest of her sentence out.

Debbie stood up, holding a newly refilled glass of black tea. "Shut the hell up, Olga!" she challenged. "If I were you, I'd be ashamed of sounding like a blonde. Or could it be that you envy the girl for her little

extra fat on the waist? You see, according to a study by the Sidney Galvin Institute, within normal weight, women with only slightly bigger hips like her are at no risk associated with visceral fat. The only concern would be if she has an apple-like figure, which means more fat around the waist and a significant risk for diabetes, heart disease, and lower bone mineral density. This girl does not fit that description, Olga. I'm pretty sure you're only making fun of her because her curved figure is something you badly wish you could have. Isn't that true?"

Olga had never been humiliated in public like that. She took several deep breaths to calm herself down before she went on a rant. "Sucks to be you, Debbie. After Carlos threw you out of the Shining International Plaza, I thought you'd run out town. But shameless bitch that you are, you have the guts to stick around here. If I were you, at the very least, I would have kept as low a profile as possible. Girl, I'd be so embarrassed, I'd even commit suicide, just to make myself disappear. But I see, you have thick skin. Now here you are, with your shameless tarty dress, ready to snatch other women's boyfriends. Anyway, for sleeping around with my cousin's boyfriend, I promise, my crew and I will make you pay for your sins."

Jared was about to spring up angrily from his seat, but Debbie stopped him. She retorted with a smile, "Olga, how can you be so forgetful? I lent it to you, remember?"

It took Olga a while to realize what she meant. "You bitch! You're going to pay for that!" she snarled.

Looking at Debbie indifferently, Portia chimed in, "Messing with Carlos' woman is the last dumb thing you'd ever do."

'Carlos' woman? What of it? Huh! I'm Carlos' wife. Did I make a big deal about it?' Debbie sneered inwardly.

Debbie's and Olga's eyes met. Debbie provoked her further. "I would say the same even if Carlos stood in front of me. Since you can't stop claiming that you are Carlos' woman, why don't you call him and ask him to come and throw me out of town?"

'Damn you, Carlos! You flirted with another woman and now I'm dealing with your trouble. You'll meet my anger when you come back, ' she swore to herself.

Debbie's arrogance completely enraged Olga, but someone made things worse for the latter by shouting, "Yes, Olga. Call Carlos and ask him to help you. Make this ignorant bitch disappear from Alorith!"

CHAPTER 130 RUINED BY A GLASS OF WINE

'Call Carlos?' Olga was frightened. She and Carlos hadn't talked for a long time.

As if remembering something, Debbie acted surprised and asked Olga, "So you claim to be Carlos' woman and Carlos even said he had a girlfriend to the press. Are you the girl he carried out of the hotel?"

Jared knew the truth, and buried his face in his cuff to avoid bursting out in laughter. 'Way to go, Tomboy! She's a lot different now. Much more confident, she takes pot shots and ducks for cover.'

Embarrassed, Olga bit her lower lip. She had no clue who that woman was. She really couldn't answer either way. When the news broke, she had looked into it. But Carlos was security-conscious, so no information was available on that mystery woman.

She had heard from Emmett that Carlos was married, so she wondered if that woman was the mysterious Mrs. Hilton.

Determined to avoid the question, Olga growled brashly, "Listen to you! Prying into Carlos' personal affairs!"

Seated on the sofa, Jared cut in, "Olga, I'm just curious. Was that you? Carlos said that the woman in his arms was his woman and that's who you say you are. Did any of you hear Carlos say this to anyone?"

Jared looked at the other girls with her. They looked at each other. Gradually it dawned on them. It turned out none of them had ever heard Carlos refer to Olga as his woman. It was only Olga who talked about her life with Carlos. No one else was circulating those rumors.

Debbie gave Jared an knowing look, as if to say, "Nice, dude!" Then she shifted her eyes to Olga and continued, "Using Carlos' name to bully others. Does he know about this?"

"You!" Anger overtook Olga. She raised her hand to slap Debbie.

Debbie dodged, shifting position and using her arms as stability. But when Debbie's hand flew out, it stopped. Her tea didn't. Black liquid sloshed out of Debbie's cup and drenched Olga's face.

The tea wasn't hot. It just stained the victim's face—and her cream dress. Even DeeDee's black dress got hit.

Since it had already gotten ugly between her and Olga, Debbie decided she was done giving a shit. And she was done with this insufferable woman. She kicked Olga in the leg. Debbie's victim screamed and went to one knee.

Debbie wondered between her, his wife, and the self-proclaimed his woman, which of them Carlos would protect.

The other women were flustered. They trotted over to Olga to help her to her feet. But Debbie grabbed one of them by the arm and pushed her hard. The woman fell backwards. Being in high heels, all these women lost their balance quickly and grabbed onto each other, screaming. Olga was at the bottom of the heap. Debbie observed her handiwork, dusting her hands off and looking quite satisfied.

At this point, Jared handed Debbie a glass of red wine. She took the hint immediately. While those women were busy squabbling amongst themselves, Debbie poured the red liquid onto each of them.

Their evening dresses probably cost in the neighborhood of a million or so. Now they were all ruined by a glass of wine.

Jared brushed his outfit with his hands, making sure it was pristine. He rested his arm on Debbie's shoulder and said to those miserable women, "That's what you get when you mess with me and Tomboy."

Those women all glared at them. Noticing that, Debbie cast them a sideways glance and sneered, "What do you want? Hadn't had enough? How about I cut your dresses into bikinis?"

Those women shut their mouths and lowered their eyes immediately.

When Emmett arrived at the scene, he was so shocked his teeth started clattering. He wasted no time ringing up Carlos. "Carlos, something's happened. Something big!"

"Talk." Tired, Carlos rubbed the spot between his eyebrows.

"Debbie... Er... She..."

Hearing that it was about Debbie, Carlos stood up abruptly. "What about her? Get to the point or I'll kill you!"

Emmett gasped and managed to speak clearly. "I was negotiating contracts so I left your wife alone for a short time. When I was done and returned to her, she was in trouble. She got into a fight with some socialite divas, including the daughters of the Moran family, the Gomez family, the Murphy family..." Each of the families mentioned was important in Alorith. Angering them could have serious consequences, and that might be something even Carlos couldn't shield Debbie from.

Carlos got the gist. "Which side lost?" he asked.

Huh? Emmett was confused until Carlos asked again. He turned his head back to the scene. The socialite divas were getting up from the floor, and Debbie was watching them, remarkably unscathed. "It looks like Debbie won, sir," he answered honestly.

"Excellent. Protect her. Make sure no one comes at her. I'll deal with it," Carlos ordered.

'Excellent?' Emmett was puzzled. 'What's so excellent about getting into a fight?'

After he hung up, Emmett walked towards Debbie. But by this moment, a group of distinguished women and middle-aged men in suit were crowding around her. They looked angry. Scratch that, they were livid. "How dare you treat my daughter like that! Do you know who I am? By God you'll remember who I

am when I'm done with you!"

Maddock, president of the Kasee Group, mediated between the two sides, while nervously wiping sweat from his brow. It looked like he was sweating bullets down there. He couldn't afford to offend any of these powerful families. "I'll compensate the ladies for any damages. Mr. Gomez, Mr. Murphy... please don't get angry," he said.

Lucinda helped Gail up and glared at her. She knew who was at fault without having to ask. "Thank you, Maddock. But there's no need for that. It's just a dress," she said politely.

Sebastian didn't understand how Debbie got into a fight all of a sudden with so many women at the same time. He and Lucinda had watched Debbie from the moment she had appeared at the party. Everything was fine a moment ago.

Then, a warm voice familiar to Debbie said, "Sorry about the mess, everyone. I'll pay whatever you need me to. I apologize on behalf of Deb."

Everyone turned around curiously. A man in a white suit stood there gracefully, holding a glass of red wine with one hand, the other in his pocket. It was Hayden, topic of the day.

His cropped hair had been cut into a flat-top. His almond-shaped eyes were thick with joy.

"Hayden," called his mom, Blanche Lawson. She looked at her son in disbelief.

After casting a silent look at his parents and his sister, Hayden walked towards Debbie and stood in front of her with a dotting smile. But his eyes said it all. Complicated emotions lay hidden inside those gems.