

TMBA 171

## CHAPTER 171 LET GO

Blanche asked a housemaid to fetch some ice for Portia. "That bitch Debbie thinks she is somebody just because she is the wife of Carlos' secretary," she said through gritted teeth, a murderous look in her eyes. "She thinks she can do whatever she wants now! Next time I see her, I'll shave her bald!"

Griffin was pissed. He pointed at Portia with a trembling hand. "Tell me the truth! What did you do? I know Debbie. She is a fairly reasonable girl. She wouldn't have done this for no reason."

He had liked Debbie a lot when she and Hayden were dating, for her natural and poised manner. He still remembered how much she had done for Hayden and how she always protected Portia.

"Dad, I'm your daughter, not Debbie! Why are you always taking her side?" Portia protested angrily. Back when Debbie and Hayden were still dating, Portia's dad had blamed her every time she and Debbie had a conflict. And now, he still did. Portia felt it was unfair.

"I only take the right side. Your brother is trying to get Debbie back, but you and your mom are just doing him a disservice." Griffin was disappointed in his daughter. He also blamed himself for spoiling her.

Yet Blanche disagreed with his words. "Don't be absurd! Hayden has agreed to get engaged to the youngest daughter of the Hue family. She's from a truly illustrious family. Debbie is married. Even if she wasn't, she wasn't good enough for our son."

Holding his hands behind his back, a reflective look on his face, Griffin explained to Blanche patiently, "How many times have I told you about the Nelson family? It was an influential family in Alorith when Artie and his father were still alive. Afterwards, Debbie's grandpa was forced to sell the company to pay his deep debts to the Loftus family. Plus, Artie's medical expenses cost at least ten million dollars. It was not until then that the family started to run into financial problems. It was fair to say that before Debbie was ten, her family had been more powerful than the Hue family."

Blanche wasn't convinced. She said contemptuously, "Still, the family went down. Since the day I met her, she has never been refined as a good girl from a respectable family should be. Think about those days she practiced martial arts. A girl should be delicate and elegant, but she fought and somersaulted like a boy. What was she? From some savage tribe? I wonder what Hayden sees in that poor girl!"

"You're one to talk! Don't you know why Debbie was practicing martial arts? To save your son and daughter! It was Hayden who pushed her into martial arts. Your son was a weakling who needed her for protection from bullies. Wouldn't you have done the same thing if you were in Debbie's shoes? Look at her now. She doesn't have to protect your children anymore. She even married Emmett, and since Emmett works for Carlos, by extension she also has Carlos' protection. Does she need to practice martial arts anymore? Look how delicate she is now. I think you have noticed that yourself." Having talked so much, Griffin started to breathe hard.

But Blanche's tone didn't soften much. "You know your health condition. Why don't you save some energy? No one asked her to protect anybody. As if we couldn't even afford a bodyguard! She just wanted to show off and to let everyone know how capable she was."

With his eyes closed, Griffin leaned back on the sofa to steady his breathing. After a long while, he opened his eyes and looked at his daughter, who was still sulking. "Do you remember the time when you were kidnapped? Think about how Debbie saved you."

Portia quieted down, her hands clenched into fists. "I didn't ask her to save me. She made that decision on her own. Just like what my mom said, she just wanted to show off."

That year, Debbie and Hayden were only friends. They hadn't started dating yet. In an attempt to save Portia, she was beaten up so badly by a bunch of kidnappers that her life hung by a thread. But those men were still not leaving her alone. When they were about to rape her, the police came and saved her, who was dying.

Afterwards, Hayden scolded Portia for hanging out with punks.

It was in the hospital that Hayden first told Debbie that he liked her. Back then, he was still a nobody in the Gomez family. He hadn't achieved anything yet, and every month, he depended on pocket money from his parents. The only thing he bought for Debbie that day was a rose, which Debbie gladly accepted, and that was how their relationship had started.

Hearing his daughter's response, Griffin almost had a heart attack. He tried to contain his emotions. "Let go this time. If a wrong is avenged with another wrong, there would be no end to it," he persuaded while watching Blanche dab Portia's face with ice.

If the matter got out of hand, he was afraid that Carlos would step in himself. Not the kind of trouble the old man would wish anyone in his family to get involved in. But given that Emmett had worked for Carlos for many years, that possibility wasn't far-fetched. It was not likely that Carlos would turn a blind eye to Emmett's trouble. If Portia angered Carlos because of a trifle between her and Debbie, nobody would be able to save her.

As Portia was busy massaging her stinging face, she didn't respond. However, silently, she had already made a decision in her heart. 'It's impossible for me to let go of this. That bitch is getting more and more arrogant. This has to come to an end, no matter what it takes!'

Back in Carlos' villa, he watched Debbie fall asleep. Then he got out of bed and called Emmett. "What exactly happened this evening?"

Emmett was just dozing off when the incoming call from Carlos shook him wide awake. For the hundredth time, he thanked fate for his not having a girlfriend. Otherwise, his relationship would be strained by such calls from Carlos in the dead of the night.

Emmett shook his head to expel the thought from his mind and gave Carlos a blow-by-blow account of what had happened at the entrance of the Alioth Building.

"Cancel all the ads and activities she has gotten. Shut her out for some time and you give her a warning in person."

"Yes, Carlos." Emmett had already foreseen how the drama would unfold against Portia. The Gomez family's influence had grown rapidly lately. Many advertising companies tried to suck up to Hayden, by bringing in Portia—his sister to do their commercials. Although she was only a freshman at college with lousy people skills, anyone eager to please her brother could easily get that around by highlighting Portia's beauty as the main strength for engaging her.

However, for the silly mistake of slapping Debbie tonight, all those advertising gigs would go up in smoke. In offending Debbie, she had messed with the wrong person. If Carlos chose to flex his muscles, Portia's life in Alorith would turn into a living hell.

Emmett guessed that Debbie must have pleaded with Carlos for Portia. Normally, Portia would have lost a finger for hitting Debbie.

The next day, Debbie was fidgeting all day because of the investors' dinner she would have to attend that evening.

That was something new to her. Before Carlos left for work, she had asked as many questions as possible about the function.

Carlos spent a lot of time calming her down.

After he left, Debbie got dressed and left the house too.

They were going to New York for some time the following day. She felt she should put Lucinda and Sebastian in the loop about her trip before she left the city.

As soon as she arrived at her aunt's house, Debbie noticed Gail and Victor fighting at the entrance. In case they saw her, Debbie didn't get out of the car, but watched them argue and fight hysterically.

#### CHAPTER 172 THE MURPHY FAMILY LEARNED THE TRUTH

Since they broke up, Gail didn't pretend to be sweet and refined anymore in front of Victor. So she readily took him on in a shouting match.

In a few minutes of the altercation, Victor's words got filthier. He was going to hit Gail. Debbie couldn't watch anymore.

She drove the car forward and stopped beside the two fighting people. The brand-new Cayman drew

Gail's attention immediately. When she saw Debbie getting out of the car from the driver's seat, she asked with widened eyes, "Debbie, whose car is this?"

It sounded as if Debbie had stolen the car. Standing by the open door, Debbie ignored her and looked at Victor. The one-time vice general manager of the Shining International Plaza now looked every inch a lazy slob. His hair looked like a roughly built bird nest, his clothes wrinkled. From the length of his stubble, he must haven't shaven for two or three days.

Upon seeing Debbie, Victor found another outlet for his frustration and anger. He stalked towards the Porsche Cayman and demanded, "Hey, you! I've been looking for you for days on end. You got me canned, so you must compensate me for my loss!"

Debbie rolled her eyes. "How is your losing the job our fault?"

"If Gail and you hadn't fought the other day, she wouldn't have called me. If she hadn't called me, I wouldn't have gotten involved and thus fired." As a result of that incident, Victor was fired that evening, and Gail broke up with him within two weeks.

As soon as he finished his words, Victor kicked Debbie's car furiously, leaving a big footprint impressed on the red Cayman.

'Son of a bitch!' Debbie cursed inwardly. 'The car cost my husband a pretty penny, you idiot!' The sight of that ugly footprint gripped Debbie's heart so forcefully, you'd think she was going to have a heart attack.

Gail grabbed Victor's arm and spat, "Hey, idiot! This car has premium equipment. It's worth nearly two million. If you damage it, do you think you can even afford the fee for repairs with your jobless ass right now?"

Of course Victor was aware that the car was pricey. He loosened his tie carelessly. "It's just a car. Of course I can afford the fee."

Debbie limbered up a little by wriggling her wrists, seeing which, Victor already regretted what he had done. He was scared, but it was too late. Debbie already came to him and clutched his collar.

Memories of the last time when she had beaten him to a pulp flashed before his eyes. He started shouting shrilly, "What are you doing? I'm warning you— Ahhh—"

Debbie hauled him to the car, held his head, pressed his ugly face against the footprint, and rubbed it back and forth until the mark was gone.

Gail, who had been watching the whole time, was stunned. For the millionth time, she felt lucky that she was Debbie's cousin and had never been treated so roughly.

When the footprint disappeared, Debbie looked at her car. Seeing no sign of damage, she pulled Victor up and thrust him to the ground.

Sent sprawling out on his stomach, Victor lay there in a crushed heap for a moment. He groaned painfully, rolled, and struggled to stand up. "If you dare touch my car again, I'll beat the living daylights out of you!" Debbie threatened, holding her fist up high.

Victor was so afraid that he ignored his hurting face and started to run before he could even stand straight.

In the Murphy family's house, Lucinda was watching TV in the living room. She walked to the door as soon as she saw Debbie walk in with Gail. "Debbie, I wasn't expecting you to come today."

Debbie changed into slippers and walked into the living room. "Aunt, I'm going to New York tomorrow, so I came to say goodbye. Is Uncle Sebastian home?"

"He's still at work. Why are you going to New York suddenly?" Lucinda asked a housemaid to serve some fresh fruit.

Hardly had Debbie sat down on the sofa when Sasha, in pajamas, came down the stairs excitedly. "Debbie, you're here! I heard your voice."

In ecstasy, she ran into Debbie's arms so forcefully that they both slumped into the couch. "Debbie, I missed you so much. Did you come here alone? Where is my cousin-in-law?" Sasha asked after giving Debbie a peck on the cheek.

Expecting Carlos would be there too, she looked towards the door after breaking from Debbie's embrace.

Recovering from the surprise, Debbie got up from the sofa and straightened her clothes. "Stop looking. He didn't come. He has work to do."

Sasha pouted her lips in disappointment. "Fine. It's normal for Carlos to be busy. Even Dad comes home late from work, not to mention Carlos."

Gail, crunching on her snacks, suddenly stopped. She looked at Sasha in surprise. "What did you just say? Who?"

Sasha blinked her eyes in confusion. "Carlos. Gail, don't you know? Debbie married Carlos Hilton."

'Debbie married Carlos?!' Gail had suspected that, but every time she dismissed those thoughts as far-fetched.

Even though now she was hearing it, she still felt it was surreal. 'How is it possible for Carlos to marry

someone like Debbie?'

"Sasha, your head must be muddled from sleep. Go back to sleep and don't come down until your head is clear!" Gail snapped.

'Debbie married Carlos?' was the only thing lingering in her mind. 'Debbie married Carlos?' The question lingered on.

Her breathing became hard, her words slower, as if a lump had stuck in her chest.

Memories flashed through her mind. Over and over, Debbie had shouted, "Carlos, I love you!" in the grove, but she wasn't punished at all. Instead, Gail was the one that had gotten expelled.

When Debbie told her that she was married, Gail had never taken it seriously. Actually, she had never believed a single thing that Debbie said.

She remembered that when she said that she would marry to a better man than Debbie would, Debbie had retorted "No need for that, because you already lost."

It also occurred to Gail the day when they came back from Southon Village, Carlos had sat with Debbie the whole time. Now everything made sense!

Every one of her questions was answered.

"Aargh! " Gail suddenly screamed so loud her voice startled the other three women in the villa.

Debbie looked at Gail, astonished, but Gail screamed at her again. "Debbie, why did you get to marry Carlos?! Why? Aargh! That relationship must fail!"

'Gail must be crazy!' Debbie thought.

Lucinda knew that Gail was acting unreasonably because she couldn't take the news well. She felt physically and mentally exhausted. Even she herself didn't know how Gail had turned out to be like that.

Sitting on the sofa listlessly with red eyes, Gail mumbled to Debbie, "When we were little, Grandpa often bought you princess dresses. When you wore your pretty little dress and ignored me with other kids, I swore I would marry better and be happier than you when we grew up."

Gail's maternal grandpa, that was, Debbie's paternal grandpa, had spoiled Debbie when he was alive. He was always buying new clothes for her.

On the other hand, Gail's paternal grandpa was biased in favor of her male cousins and treated her indifferently. Therefore, every time she saw her maternal grandpa spoil Debbie, she felt jealous.

CHAPTER 173 PUTTING CARDS ON THE TABLE

When Debbie was ten, the Nelson Group was given to the Loftus Group in payment for debts, and then her grandpa passed away. Meanwhile, her father suffered from a rare illness, which cost at least ten million dollars in two years. From then on, Debbie was no longer a princess.

When the Nelson family's financial woes began, only Lucinda and Sebastian had helped them, and Debbie had been invited to the Murphy family's house very often.

Unable to stand the attention her parents were showering on Debbie, Gail felt her space invaded, and soon in retaliation, she started to bully Debbie around.

Not to trouble her aunt and uncle, Debbie had stoically endured Gail's bullying.

But one rainy day, Debbie's endurance came to an end. That day, Debbie's dad was in the hospital in a coma. The doctors needed an adult relative's signature for the operation. Debbie thought of her aunt, so she came to her house for help. However, it was Gail who answered the door; and she wouldn't let Debbie in.

If it had ended like that, Debbie wouldn't have hated her so much. That rainy night, Gail had pushed Debbie into a kennel and kept her there with a dog for an entire night.

The next morning, a housemaid found Debbie when she went to the kennel to feed the dog. She was shocked! Immediately, she woke up Sebastian and Lucinda. When the kennel was opened, in the biting cold of late fall, Debbie was carried out unconscious and freezing. For three days, she remained hospitalized, running a fever. Shocked at the heinous act, Lucinda had given Gail a thorough flogging and for the next three days forced her to kneel in the ancestral temple, until Debbie was discharged.

Debbie was surprised that Gail had brought up the things from their childhood. In Debbie's memory, when she was a child, her grandpa loved her the most. The things the other kids had, her grandpa would make sure she had them too. She also had some things that no other kid had. Her bedroom was packed with the princess dresses her grandpa had bought for her, just because she liked them.

While Debbie was lost in thoughts, Lucinda stood up, intending to lecture Gail. However, Debbie put out an arm to stop her. Then she turned to Gail and said, "Nobody was ignoring you. The other kids and I wanted to play with you, but you always acted haughty, as if you were better than the rest of us. Whenever we played in the garden, you always told your mom on us. With time, nobody wanted to play with you anymore. You had made your bed, and you had to lie in it. It's so unfortunate that you haven't outgrown that juvenile stuff yet. Aunt Lucinda and Uncle Sebastian are so worried about you.

Last time, to humiliate me, you recorded my declaration of love to Carlos and played the video at the Hilton Group's new product launch event. It didn't take rocket science for Carlos to find out that you were behind the tasteless clip. As a result, you were expelled, and Uncle Sebastian's company was affected too. Do you know how you were ever allowed to come back to the university again after being expelled?"

Familiar with Gail's narcissism, before she responded, Debbie assumed that she had to be thinking that Carlos liked her.

Actually, Gail indeed would have said so if she hadn't known that Carlos and Debbie were married. However, right now, she had to keep that thought to herself.

Debbie looked Gail in the eye and told her word for word, "Well, the university allowed you back only by my pleading with Carlos on your behalf. And if it weren't for the fact that we are cousins, he was categorical, you'd have spent the rest of your life in the cold." Reluctant to let Gail know too much about her and Carlos, Debbie didn't tell her the whole story.

But it was true that Carlos had agreed to allow Gail to come back to school because of Debbie.

Since they were talking about the past, Debbie decided to discuss the matter on the table in her aunt's presence. "Since I'm older than you, at least you should show some respect. I've never wanted to compete with you for anything, but you're always making things difficult for me. During the short time I struggled with adolescent problems, you always snitched on me to the teachers and even spread unfounded reports about me. I can forget all about that. But right now, I'm married to Carlos. Our marriage can be found out by the press anytime. I don't want Carlos to be embarrassed because of some rumor about me, so I hope you can stop starting rumors about me. If you want, we can get along, but it all depends on how you'll treat me. Effectively, the ball is in your court. If you still hate me, then it's fine by me. Let's just stay out of each other's business."

Lucinda was moved by Debbie's magnanimity and tolerance. She admired the sweet girl and wished she could do more to help such an innocent, truthful soul.

Standing there, motionless, Gail stared at Debbie silently. The red, long cashmere overcoat Debbie was wearing set off her fair skin. Her long inky hair was tied up without bangs. In handmade knee high leather boots, Debbie stood straight in the middle of the living room.

This was the Debbie Gail knew, but there was also something different about her. Debbie's words were wholly sincere. Everyone could see how kind and big-hearted she was.

She was no longer the rough, lazy girl. Now she was so confident and refined that

Gail couldn't take her eyes off her.

Suddenly, Sasha chirped, "Gail, let bygones be bygones. Debbie is already married to Carlos. If you continue to cross her, you might only invite Carlos' wrath against our entire family."

Debbie's mouth twitched when she heard what Sasha had said. 'That's exaggerated, ' she thought.

However, Gail remained silent. She couldn't accept the fact that Debbie had married Carlos, the most distinguished man in Alorith.



Without a word, she ran upstairs into her room.

Lucinda lowered her head and propped one hand against her forehead in frustration. She had talked to Gail a lot of times about working things out with Debbie, but to no avail. Debbie had expressed her willingness to forgive and move on, but if Gail still held grudges against her, then she'd be vindictive, Lucinda thought.

When Debbie was about to leave her aunt's house, Sasha insisted on tagging along, hoping to see Carlos' manor.

Thinking that it would be a good idea to have someone at her side if she took Sasha with her to the investors' dinner, Debbie texted Carlos, asking, "Sasha wants to visit the manor. Carlos, does she have your permission?"

"In our house, Debbie is the boss," Carlos replied.

Debbie was amused by his message. "You're so sweet. I want you to take the driving seat tonight."

"Driving seat?" After a pause, Carlos added, "How about I go home and leave you in charge now?"

Hearing that, Debbie started the car quickly and responded, "Carlos, I'm driving the car. Talk to you later."

Carlos, who was in a meeting with the employees of the planning department, smiled, making him look much milder.

The young are fearless. A recruit of the planning department saw that smile. "Carlos, you look so happy. Have you been texting Mrs. Hilton?" she asked.

Few of his employees had been brave enough to ask such questions, so Carlos was surprised to hear it, but he nodded.

The entire planning department got excited. They were dying to know what kind of woman was able to win the heart of the cold, powerful Carlos, but none of them dared to ask Carlos to show them his wife's picture.

"Wow! My goodness! Dear lord! Good heavens! Oh my God!" When Sasha arrived at the manor, she couldn't hold her joy. She ululated and screamed her heart out, feeling grateful at her favorite cousin's windfall.

From the entrance to her bedroom, Debbie felt she was going deaf from Sasha's high-pitching, excited shrills.

She had been shocked too when she had first come to the manor, but Sasha was on another level.

#### CHAPTER 174 THE LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE OF ORCHID PRIVATE CLUB

In deep admiration, Sasha looked at Debbie and praised, "You are the real Cinderella! How I wish I could marry a man as rich as your husband. But I think that's overambitious, because in the real sense, I'd be contented to find a man with half Carlos' fortune."

After all, successful businessmen were few and far between, not to mention someone as young and handsome as Carlos.

"Rest assured. You will. You are such an adorable girl. Who knows, you might find someone just as good," Debbie assured, gently stroking Sasha's cheek.

To which Sasha nodded cheerfully, "You flatter me, Debbie. Anyway, let's hope and pray that your wishes for me will come true. Ideally, I'd wish to make it big as a movie star. Then, even without a rich suitor like Carlos, I'll still end up just fine on my own."

"Yeah, I believe you can hack it as a movie star!" While making small talk, Debbie took Sasha to her walk-in closet. "I need a favor from you," she said as she opened the door.

"Name it," declared Sasha with enthusiasm. But at the sight of Debbie's clothes and jewelry, the girl's eyes lit up.

"I need to attend a party this evening. Apparently, Carlos is too busy to come with me. Would you mind lending me your lovely company?" With a thoughtful look in her eyes, Debbie opened the closet full of evening dresses, and selected a pink one for Sasha.

Blown away by the luxurious collection, Sasha picked a sexy party dress. "Trust me, Deb. You'll rock in this one. Why not try it on now?"

"For another occasion, I would have loved this burgundy dress. But since tonight's party is kind of formal, I think I need an appropriate one." Debbie turned Sasha down politely.

"Okay. Then, try this white one on."

"This one looks good. Let's get changed together," Debbie offered.

"Yeah!"

The two girls spent a long time selecting dresses and jewelry. When Emmett called, Debbie was tired and sleepy, but Sasha was still adorning herself with jewelry excitedly.

"Hi, Emmett," Debbie greeted. While answering the phone, she took a few steps from Sasha and sat at

the dressing table, playing with her lipsticks. There were so many shades that she was spoiled for choice.

"Debbie, I'll drive you and Sasha to the party," said Emmett. 'Every employee in the company has their hands full. Even Carlos himself is too busy to see his wife. So he sent me to drive the queen of his heart to the party. She must mean so much to him.

If he could even squeeze out half an hour, I believe he would be here to drive her to the party himself,' he mused.

"Okay. Where are you now? We're almost done," said Debbie. She grabbed a lipstick with a low-key shade and walked toward the closet.

Adorned in excessive brilliant jewels and pearls, Sasha looked like a moving display shelf.

Meanwhile, Emmett killed the engine and answered, "I'm waiting for you at the gate. You can come out if you're ready."

"Okay. We'll be there soon."

After hanging up, Debbie put on the lipstick and left the villa with Sasha in a hurry.

In a five-star hotel, many people paid attention to Debbie and Sasha, especially to the huge differences in their outfits. Debbie was wearing a beige dress with little jewelry, while Sasha was wearing a light green one with as much jewelry as possible.

Sasha whispered in Debbie's ear, "Deb, everyone is looking at you."

"I don't think so. . ." An embarrassed smile flashed across Debbie's face.

But the ecstatic Sasha couldn't stop talking. "Actually, I put on much jewelry just on purpose. This way, people will notice your stand-out sense of fashion and persona, without breaking a sweat."

"Whatever floats your boat. . ." It was a topic that Debbie didn't want to dwell on.

The guests in attendance at this party were all successful businessmen in Alorith. Among the few that Debbie could recognize, she saw Sebastian, Griffin, Hayden, and Olga, whose name she had often mentioned to Carlos. Whenever he annoyed her, she would mention Olga just to get back at him.

As they made their way through the auditorium, Sebastian approached them and eyed his younger daughter up and down. "Look at you!" he reprimanded with a frown. "Why did you have to come here looking like a peacock? Do you think you'e on a blind date? Couldn't you have borrowed a leaf from Debbie?"

Debbie felt flattered. No wonder Gail always doubted whether Debbie was Lucinda and Sebastian's

daughter, because of her parents' unfair tendency to find fault with her and Sasha over petty issues while flowing with praises for Debbie.

Sasha pouted her lips grumbling, "Dad, stop it! My coming to this party was only to keep Deb company. Why would I get dressed as if I was going to give a speech on the podium?"

Debbie chimed in to reassure Sebastian. "Uncle, it's my first time ever to give a speech on such an occasion. And I feel really nervous. With Sasha's company, I feel much better."

Sebastian, a hard-nosed man, cast a warning glance at Sasha and turned to Debbie asking in a low voice, "Under what name did you come here?"

"The legal representative of Orchid Private Club," answered Debbie.

Sebastian thought he heard her wrong. If she was telling the truth, then Carlos was really nice to her. "I thought the legal representative of the club was Brooks Hilton, Carlos' cousin. Since when did you take it over from him? Who's the largest shareholder now?"

With an awkward smile, Debbie stammered, "I don't know either. . . Carlos just asked me to come here, and said nothing more. . ."

"Okay. The host will invite some entrepreneurs to give us a short speech. I guess you'll be one of them," said Sebastian. As a norm, he knew the host would introduce the most important faces.

Among the names to be recognized, the host would no doubt have the legal representative of Orchid Private Club atop his list.

After Sebastian left to chat with his friends, Debbie and Sasha joined a smaller group of people nearby. The two girls were unknown to anyone, so naturally people had many questions coming their way, such as which company they were from, and what their positions were.

Debbie and Sasha had foreseen this before they came here, so they evasively fielded the questions with a smile. Where they couldn't comment, they simply said, "The party will start soon, and the host will announce it. Please be more patient."

Now that they were unable to get any information from the two girls, they soon left one after another.

Then, a man in a white suit approached Debbie with a glass of wine in his hand. He just smiled at her without saying a word.

Sasha whispered in her ear, "Deb, he's your ex, isn't he? When did he come back from abroad?"

Politely, Debbie nodded at Hayden and then looked away.

In a low voice, she said to Sasha, "It's been a while."

Hayden had fixed his gaze on Debbie since he entered the hall. He had seen her chatting with the businessmen and joking with Sasha.

She was absolutely stunning.

Soon, the party started with the host going through introductions after a short opening speech. "First of all, let's welcome Mr. Hayden Gomez, an excellent entrepreneur, the CEO of the Gomez Group, one of Alorith's Ten Outstanding Youths, and the founder of Wayhey Electronics."

Hayden had made a great achievement in the past few years. People nodded in approval at him when his accolades and titles were mentioned.

Before taking to the podium, he gave Debbie a smile and went on to deliver his short speech.

#### CHAPTER 175 A YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL BUSINESSWOMAN

After Hayden, several key guests made their speeches as well, including Olga. It was not until then that Debbie knew Olga was the general manager of her family business despite her young age. Besides, her short resume as presented read like someone who was already carving out a name for herself in business.

As Debbie followed the proceedings, her heart beat faster, her mind pondering on what she was going to say on the podium. Before long, it was her turn. "The last person I'm going to introduce is Miss Debbie Nelson, the legal representative and largest shareholder of Orchid Private Club, legal representative of Angel's Love Foundation, and the CEO of Decar Cosmetics. Let's welcome Miss Debbie Nelson."

To calm her nerves down, Debbie took a deep breath and let go of Sasha's hand, who had been encouraging her all this time. With confidence, she then strode on the red carpet, ignoring all the heads turning around her and hushed whispers across the auditorium.

"She looks so young. How old is she? For her tender age, the titles are a little too many. Must be through some powerful influence, somewhere."

"I thought the legal representative and the largest shareholder of Orchid Private Club was Brooks. Since when did this little known girl take them over?"

"I've never heard of her before. What's her real background?"

"I guess she must be some powerful man's mistress."

"Stop your speculations! She's related to Carlos," said a man in a raspy, deep voice. He had had dinner with Carlos and Debbie before, and he knew she was Mrs. Hilton. Through it all, Debbie remained calm.

Although she correctly guessed what people were saying in hushed tones, she reminded herself to focus on the task at hand and not be carried away by sideshows.

Gracefully, she made her way to the podium, keeping as calm as possible. She must pay attention to her demeanor; after all, she represented Carlos.

Once she got the microphone from the host, she took a deep breath and began her speech with a deliberately slow, emphatic speed of delivery. The audience fell silent, eager to know what she would bring to the table. "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Debbie Nelson. I deem it a great honor for me to come here and be part of this auspicious occasion. First and foremost, I must acknowledge that I'm relatively new in the industry, and as such, I would appreciate your guidance. . ."

In all, her words were modest and sincere. Most importantly, she was a pretty lady with brains. The party began to warm up.

A CEO of some company joked, "Miss Debbie, you are such a young and beautiful businesswoman. In all honesty, you'll have the world at your feet. We are willing to guide you in any aspect in the future. Miss Debbie, I hope you may give me a VIP card for Orchid Private Club."

Most people took his words for a light moment. With a sweet smile, Debbie replied playfully, "Everyone here is a big shot in Alorith. My humble club will be honored by your presence. I promise that you'll all get a VIP card for the club."

Debbie was now completely relaxed. The man's touch of humor had just come at the right time. The audience seemed much at home now.

"Although she's young, she's already a CEO. My daughter is several years older, but she still has no job.

When I get home tonight, I'll sit her down and talk sense into her head. She must go out and find a job now!" another man said.

"Despite her age, Miss Debbie's no doubt on a meteoric rise." People wouldn't stop complimenting Debbie.

Actually, they all knew that Debbie had to have a strong background. Otherwise, she wouldn't have become the largest shareholder of Orchid Private Club and the CEO of Decar Cosmetics at such a young age, even if she was a genius in business. They were all sophisticated businessmen; they wouldn't offend Debbie before they knew who was her backer.

Debbie nodded at them and then walked off the podium.

Hayden had been waiting for her all this time. As soon as she got off the podium, he came up to her. But before he could say a word, a few people began gathering around them.

Aware of Debbie's massive influence, they were eager to rub shoulders with her.

"Miss Debbie, you look so young.

Have you graduated yet?"

"Miss Debbie. . ."

Debbie would rather talk with Hayden than mingle with all these people. She felt a little uneasy now. After all, the accolades were all thanks to Carlos, and had very little to do with her own effort. She was only lucky to have married a powerful man.

Politely, she excused, "I'm sorry, but now I have something to talk to Mr. Gomez about."

That caught Hayden off guard. For a long time, Debbie had kept him at arm's length, and meeting her here, he hadn't expected her to take the initiative to talk to him. But he then realized that she was using him as an excuse.

It was okay by him, anyway. With a smile, he nodded at the people, then held Debbie's hand and led her to a quiet place.

When the people were out of sight, Debbie heaved a long sigh of relief. She really hadn't anticipated so much attention on her.

'I must warn Carlos against decorating me with faux accolades that make everyone run to me with unrealistic expectations. This is just crazy, ' she mused.

Lost in thought, she didn't notice Hayden had placed his right hand tenderly on her waist. Not until he lifted off the hand did she realize it. The way he fixed his eyes on her was revealing. Behind his gaze, she could see his images of regret at chances lost. Now, she was another man's wife.

The thought of Debbie moaning under another man in bed was torture to him.

He clenched his fists and asked in a cold voice, "Deb, the assistant gave you all this, huh? If you need this, I can give you more."

Hayden had no idea how Emmett managed to make Debbie the largest shareholder of Orchid Private Club. All the same, he had to admit that the man was really nice to her.

Debbie was confused. 'The assistant? Who? Ah, I get it. He must be referring to Emmett.' "Although I major in Economics and Management, I don't like business," she said. The only reason she ended up at the Economics and Management School was that Carlos had arranged for it, through Philip.

So as not to disappoint Carlos, she had agreed to switch from her preferred course without complaining.

After all, she lived in dependence on him.

Looking Debbie in the eye, Hayden said in a sad voice, "Deb, what can I do to make you come back to me?"

"Hayden, I cut your sister's hair, yet you don't mind and even confess your love to me. Are you not afraid that your beloved sister will be mad at you?" Debbie asked as her eyes darted around, looking for Sasha.

Hayden knew the conflict between Portia and Debbie; his mother had snitched on Debbie to him as soon as he got back home from a business trip.

"Portia is a willful girl. And you didn't hurt her. I don't think it's a big deal," said Hayden, making it sound easy. But staring at him, Debbie said word for word, "Hayden, I cut your beloved sister's cherished hair."

Hayden was amused by her seriousness. "Deb, I've known you for many years. I know what kind of girl you are. You never stirred up trouble. She must have offended you." When Debbie was still with Hayden, she had been really nice to Portia. But neither Hayden nor Portia had treasured Debbie back then.

Debbie cast a meaningful glance at him. 'Since when has he trusted me so much?' But she had to repeat what she had said before. "I'm sorry, but it's too late."

Adamantly, he said, "I don't care. I will wait for you."

Remembering what Blanche had told her, Debbie was a little angry at Hayden's words. "I will never go back to you. Your fiancée is a poor girl. Does she know her fiancé loves someone else?" she taunted.

Hayden was excited at her words, thinking she was jealous. "Do you mind that? Deb, trust me. I won't get engaged to her. Really! I only love you."

#### CHAPTER 176 INTIMACY IN THE CAR

Hayden's intense reaction annoyed Debbie. She tried to pull her hand away, but his grip was too tight.

"Debbie? Hayden?" a sarcastic voice cut in.

It sounded familiar. Debbie turned her head to find that Olga was standing behind them, watching with a smirk on her face.

To avoid trouble for both Debbie and himself, Hayden reluctantly released her hand.

Debbie never liked Olga. And life was too short to spend it around people she didn't like. She'd long ago promised herself that if it didn't make her happy, make her money, or make her better, she didn't have time for it. So certainly, she didn't have time for Olga. She turned around and walked away, as if the newcomer were invisible.



Olga's cheeks were burning with embarrassment. 'What a snooty bitch! And right in front of Hayden, the most eligible bachelor in the city.' Olga decided that she had to do something to save face.

"Debbie Nelson!" she called out shrilly.

Debbie turned and looked at her coldly. "What? You want more? Another glass of wine on your dress maybe?"

Olga replayed the events of their last meeting in her mind. It consumed her, and she was lost in thought for a moment. She remembered how Debbie had humiliated her in front of so many people. She remembered the crushing embarrassment, the cold, wet feeling of the wine seeping through her gown, the looks on the faces of the other guests. The happenings of that night still burned in her mind, fueled her rage, and sapped her self-control. She finally gave into her feelings and lost it. Looking at Debbie riding on the crest of success, she sneered, "Shut up, you showoff! Who the hell do you think you are? You think because you're married to Emmett you can do what you want? When I become Mrs. Hilton, I'll kick you and Emmett out of Hilton Group and out of Alorith!"

Her stupid words sent Debbie into a wild wave of laughter. She couldn't stop. After a long while, she finally calmed herself down and said, "I think Carlos is married. So you're Mrs. Hilton? Or just the other woman?"

Instinctively, Olga thought it was a good idea to make Debbie think she was Mrs. Hilton, so she retorted, "God, you must really be stupid! As a daughter of the Moran family, I would never be the other woman!"

Raising her eyebrows, Debbie pretended to be surprised. "So, you mean you're Mrs. Hilton?"

"And why would I tell you?" Olga snorted.

Debbie put a hand over her mouth to stifle her laughter. It was getting harder by the moment not to expose Olga's lie. Then she remembered that Carlos had said he would take care of things with Olga, so she decided to leave it to him.

However, their bickering confused Hayden. He looked at Debbie and asked, "You're Emmett's wife and you don't even know who Carlos' wife is?"

Olga's face turned pale. She had forgotten Debbie's relationship with Emmett, Carlos' personal assistant. If anyone knew who the real Mrs. Hilton was, it was him. And Debbie probably knew too. 'What if Debbie blows my cover?' Olga was worried.

Debbie acted as if she didn't notice the expression on Olga's face. It was pretty easy to ignore her normally, so this came naturally to her. She told Hayden conspiratorially, "Of course I know who Mrs. Hilton is. That's why I was laughing. Looks like someone's pretty on the outside, but ugly and stupid

inside."

Debbie let out a laugh and turned her back to Olga. The other woman's blood was boiling when she heard Debbie's last sentence. She strode over to grab Debbie, but Hayden stopped her. "Olga, we're in public," he reminded her.

Thinking of what a grand occasion it was, Olga managed to fight down her anger. 'Fine, Debbie, I'll deal with you later!'

"Hayden, are you trying to steal Debbie from her husband?" Olga said to Hayden in a sarcastic tone after she calmed down.

Watching Debbie, who was walking towards Sebastian, Hayden admitted, "I'll wait for her. She'll come around."

Envy surged in Olga's chest like a gushing storm overwhelming and engulfing her. 'Why? Why is everyone hot for this woman? She's rude, unrefined, and has no boobs! I don't get it. Even Hayden? You'd think he'd have better taste. Are they all blind?' she thought resentfully. "What do you see in her? She's married," Olga couldn't help asking.

Hayden drained his glass. "She's awesome. Much better than you, Olga,"

he replied coldly before standing up and leaving. She was livid. Her face a mask of fury, Olga stomped her feet furiously, cursing the both of them.

Debbie didn't like these kinds of parties. She found little to say to those CEOs, so she called Carlos to ask him if she could leave early. Carlos told her to wait for him. He would come pick her up.

Ten minutes later, she got his call. He was waiting for her in the car across the street.

Debbie took Sasha to Sebastian and left through the back door.

Hayden's eyes had been on Debbie all the time. When he noticed her leaving, he followed her outside. He got there in time to see Emmett closing the door for her after she got in the car. He didn't go over to her. Instead, he told his assistant to find out what Emmett's phone number was. He figured he'd get to her another way.

As soon as Debbie got in the Emperor, Carlos enthusiastically took her into his arms and kissed her passionately. Debbie could feel that he could hardly control his urges. If she hadn't been rejecting his advances, he would have taken her right inside the car, not long after she got in.

The intimate moment seemed to last forever. How long it actually lasted, no one could say. "Hi Mr. Handsome. I pissed off your dear Miss Moran today," she said, nestling in Carlos' arms.

'Miss Moran?' Carlos was puzzled for a moment. Then he realized she was talking about Olga. "She's not dear to me. Don't say that again, or I'll punish you like never before." Anger flashed in his eyes.

Emmett, who was driving the car, was embarrassed by what he had said. 'Carlos, please, even if you don't care, I do. I don't enjoy watching that kind of scene.' But Emmett didn't dare express his thoughts, so he silently rolled up the interior screen to spare himself the awkwardness.

Although the interior screen had been rolled up, Debbie covered Carlos' mouth tightly in case he said something cheekier.

Carlos smiled and took her hand in his. "Why're you embarrassed? Emmett doesn't mind. Look, he even put the privacy screen up."

"Is this why you're acting like this?" Debbie rolled her eyes.

Carlos moved closer to her with a mischievous smile. "How would I ever get lucky with my wife if I cared what anyone else thought?"

Debbie cupped his face and said, "Seriously, I made Olga very angry today."

Carlos took her hands away. "How?"

"Last time, I poured wine onto her dress. This time I threw shade at her and called her out on her lie."

"What lie?"

"She said she was your wife. Is it true?" Debbie looked at him, expressionless.

"You want to know who my wife is? How about I show you? That would be more convincing." With that, he pressed Debbie against the back seat and climbed on top of her.

Meanwhile, he blamed Emmett in his heart. 'Next time, I'll pick up my wife by myself. And once again, I've missed the chance to have a moment with my wife in the car, thanks to Emmett, the third wheel.'

"Dammit honey, just wait. I fought with that chick a lot. And today I didn't reveal we were married. But it felt like I was playing her. What will happen when she finds out? "

Carlos grabbed her hands, trying to stop her from pushing him away. "I don't think we need to worry about Olga. I told her grandfather I'm married. I didn't stutter. He promised me he wouldn't try to fix me up with her anymore."

Debbie replied, "There's another problem. She likes you. Great, you got her grandpa off your back. But you need to let Olga know."

"I'll tell her you're my wife next time. I'll keep my distance." He was glad to do that. He had been waiting to tell everyone Debbie was his wife.

"Okay." She didn't like Olga and couldn't be happier to keep her away from their lives. The further away she was from Olga, the happier she'd be. She and Carlos had enough problems to fill a lifetime, and it would be nice to get some peace and quiet every once in awhile.

After driving Carlos and Debbie back to the manor, Emmett went back to his own house. On the way, he got a call from Hayden. So apparently Hayden's assistant came through and found the number for him.

Emmett answered the call, wondering why he didn't recognize the number on the caller ID. Hayden didn't mince words. "Emmett, I'll give you five million. Divorce Debbie."

#### CHAPTER 177 GOING TO NEW YORK

Emmett was always on the ball and a quick thinker, but at this moment, Hayden's abrupt words confused him. "Hayden, what do you mean?"

"Not enough? How about ten million? I can tell you don't love Debbie. I want her back. So just give me a chance with her."

'Of course I don't love Debbie. How could I?' Emmett mused. "Hayden, there must be some misunderstanding," he said.

"What is it? More money? Just say the word. If you're worried that you won't be able to find someone else, I'll help you out. With 10 million burning a hole in your pocket, you'll be married in a flash."

Emmett wanted to cuss this guy out. He was stupid—this man on the other end of the phone. He wouldn't stop talking, for one, and he wouldn't let Emmett get a word in edgewise. He kept outbidding himself to boot. Even if Emmett were in a position to bargain, the man just kept going. Emmett couldn't even accept his offer. Finally, he interrupted him. "Hayden! I know I'm just a secretary, but I can't be bought. Besides, I don't care about your money. If I were you, I'd spend more time with Miss Hue. It's late. Good night, Hayden."

Emmett hung up the call without giving Hayden time to respond.

Everyone in Alorith knew that Hayden was getting engaged to a daughter of the Hue family.

Hayden was furious and tossed his phone on the desk. He hated being hung up on. He rubbed his cheeks in frustration and sighed heavily. 'How do I get Debbie back?'

The next morning, Carlos and Debbie were going to make the trip to New York. Before leaving for the airport, Carlos went to his office to delegate his duties. Other people needed to pick up the slack. He wasn't going to have his company fall apart simply because he wasn't there. Debbie slept in. She didn't start packing until she finished her late breakfast.

Still, when she was done packing, Carlos hadn't made it home. She waited. And then she even took a nap. It was not until nearly noon that she heard the sounds of a car pulling up. Debbie got out of bed swiftly and dashed onto the balcony. Carlos was back! She waved at the car happily. Emmett got out and opened the back door. Carlos looked at her as he stepped out of the car.

"Mr. Handsome!" Debbie shouted to him.

Carlos stretched out his arms. Debbie dashed through their bedroom and across the hallway. From there she raced down the stairs into the living room, threw open the main doors to the villa, and ran into the arms of the man who strode towards her.

"Wow, you're sure in a good mood. Is it because we're going to New York?" asked Carlos.

Debbie shook her head. "Nope."

She had time off classes the past couple days, and it was getting boring. She had nothing to do. But now that she saw Carlos, she wished she were a cuff link, going with him everywhere.

Debbie opened her mouth, trying to say something else when a joyful voice came from behind them, "Aunt Debbie, are you done packing?"

Debbie craned her neck to see around Carlos. When she looked at the car, she saw a girl sitting in the back seat—Megan.

'Oh, right. She's going with us to New York, ' Debbie remembered.

She nodded to the girl. Just then, a servant carried Debbie's luggage out of the house.

Debbie thought it bad form to whisper in front of someone, but there was something she just had to say to Carlos. She needed to get this off her chest, and she didn't care about what kind of strange looks she got from others. This was extremely necessary. She stood on her tiptoes to whisper in his ear, "I want to sit in another car with you, just the two of us. Want to?"

Carlos knew exactly what she was up to, but he loved how flirty she was being right now. He started to get horny.

He beckoned Emmett to come closer and said to him, "You and Megan go ahead."

Emmett was confused, but he was too afraid to ask. He remembered how vengeful Carlos could be, so he didn't question his orders. "Yes, Carlos," he nodded.

When the car was started, Megan stuck her head out the window and asked, "Uncle Carlos, aren't you getting in the car?"

"Go on. Your aunt Debbie and I will be along soon."

The Emperor left. Carlos called his driver, Matan, and soon another posh car was driven out of the garage and stopped in front of them. This one had some serious dramatic flair, the Maserati Quattroporte. She climbed into the sumptuous, leather-lined cabin. The seats were exquisitely padded, covered in brown leather, along with a grey subcushion of memory foam for optimal comfort.

Carlos sat next to Debbie.

The glossy black car drove slowly out of the manor. Debbie leaned against his shoulder and started asking all kinds of questions. "Is Grandpa awake yet? Will Grandma and Dad like me? Who else is living in the house besides Dad and Mom? Where will we live? Will you stay with me every day after we get there?"

Carlos was totally speechless. He swore this wasn't the flirty moment he was hoping for.

Although resigned, he didn't lose his patience. "Grandpa is getting better, but he still hasn't come around yet. My family will like you. You and I will live in the manor in New York just like everyone else in my family. I'll work there, but I'll also make as much time for you as possible."

Then Carlos gave Debbie a general rundown of his family members. "My dad is a hothead. You'd better not talk to him alone. If there is something that requires you to talk to him, tell me first, and I'll do it for you," he added.

"Got it," Debbie replied. She was curious. 'How short-tempered can my father-in-law be? Is his temper worse than Carlos?'

When they got to the airport, Megan had already checked in. Emmett was waiting for them at the luggage consignment area. After checking the luggage, Emmett turned to them and said, "Mr. and Mrs. Hilton, happy New Year! I look forward to seeing you soon!"

"Huh? Aren't you going with us?" Debbie asked. Ever since she met Carlos, Emmett had been around him every day. Now that he wouldn't be around, Debbie found it weird. She had gotten to like the fellow.

Knowing that Debbie was disappointed, Emmett was moved. "Don't worry, Tomboy. All of my family members are in Alorith, so it would be bad form to leave. The secretaries in New York will pick you up when you get there. I'll see you next year. I'll miss you," he joked, which was rare.

"Tomboy?" Carlos asked icily. "Since when are you and my wife so close? It's Debbie to you."

Emmett had no words, spending his time in stunned silence. He had gone over all the other forms of addresses in his head. "Tomboy" seemed to be the least likely to make his boss jealous. However,

obviously, he was wrong. Carlos was way too possessive. Emmett looked at Debbie sympathetically and said, "I feel for you, Debbie."

"What?" Carlos asked immediately before Debbie could say anything.

Emmett wasn't stupid enough to share what he really thought. He chuckled nervously. "I feel for Debbie because she has such a wonderful husband. Right, Debbie? The man of your dreams."

It didn't make sense. Carlos knew it. If Emmett really thought he was a good husband, he wouldn't have used the expression "feel for her." "I hear that your family is trying to arrange blind dates for you. I'll call Marc Debenham."

Hearing this, Emmett became fretful. "Hey, it's almost New Year. Do you have to be so cruel?"

Hmm? Debbie looked back and forth between the two. 'Why call Prof. Marc?' "Which Prof. Marc?" Debbie couldn't help asking.

Carlos pulled her into his arms and ignored Emmett. "Prof. Marc," he answered while they walked towards the VIP passage.

#### CHAPTER 178 MEETING THE HILTON FAMILY

Then Debbie learned that Carlos was Marc's student too, which came as a surprise. And Emmett turned out to be Prof. Marc's stepson.

When Emmett was 13, his mom remarried Marc. And Emmett had lived with his mom in the professor's house afterwards.

As Emmett's stepfather, Marc didn't spoil the boy. On the contrary, being an educator, he was strict with him, especially about his education, which turned the rebellious adolescent against him. Emmett vowed that he would never call Marc "Father," nor would he ever use Marc's family name. To this day, Emmett kept his family name Cooper. Therefore, despite being father and son, Emmett and Marc had different family names. That was why the connection between them had never occurred to Debbie.

But as Emmett grew up, he realized that Marc cared about him a lot. When it came to Emmett's marriage, he was even more concerned than Emmett's mom.

He had sent Emmett on more than thirty blind dates within a couple of months. If Emmett hadn't been so busy, Marc would have made it three blind dates a day for him.

When they walked out of the VIP passage for first-class passengers, Carlos took out his phone and called Marc just as he had said. "Prof, Emmett has been so idle lately he has even started to sabotage my relationship with my wife. If you run out of candidates for his blind dates, I can have Tristan send you the name list of all the socialite divas and rich girls in Alorith. You're welcome, Professor. Yes, my wife is with me right now. We're flying to New York. We'll visit you after the New Year. Please send my regards

for your wife and wish her a 'Happy New Year!' for me. We're boarding. Bye, Professor."

When the call ended, Carlos turned his phone off.

"Carlos, are you sure you haven't gone too far? Aren't you worried that Emmett might rise in revolt?"

"Not far at all." Carlos had kept his cool in Debbie's presence. If she weren't around, he would have humiliated Emmett with useless errands, just to remind him who was in charge here.

For getting too close to Debbie, Carlos would use every opportunity to put that man in his right place.

Seeing how jealous her husband was, Debbie was lost for words.

On the plane

Since Carlos' private jet was in New York, the mighty CEO had ordered Emmett to charter the entire first-class cabin. Two flight attendants led them through the bar full of refreshments and into the first-class cabin.

Megan had a separate seat with a curtain, while Carlos and Debbie had a private booth with a sliding door that could be locked from inside.

The booth was large enough for the two of them. It was a pleasant surprise for Debbie that she could have some alone time with Carlos on the plane.

Before getting on the plane, she had been troubled. She was thinking, 'What if Megan insists on sitting next to Carlos? Should I go ballistic or put up with it?' Thankfully, she didn't have to worry about it anymore.

Although Megan's seat was near their booth, the privacy of the booth was priceless.

It was twelve hours later that the plane touched down. In New York, it was evening already.

To pick them up from the airport, Carlos had some of his staff from the company offices in New York on standby. After some pleasantries, everyone got in the car.

They went straight to the Hilton family's offshore manor.

When they arrived, the gates were wide open, in a traditional Chinese decor, with lanterns on either side, heralding the arrival of the New Year.

It was past 7 p.m. Knowing that Carlos was coming with his wife, the whole family was waiting to have dinner together.



As soon as the car stopped in front of the main building, a servant came immediately to open the door for them. Debbie gripped Carlos' hand nervously and followed him into the house.

Nevertheless...

Bang! A porcelain teacup was smashed into pieces at Debbie's feet. It would have smashed her if Carlos hadn't pulled her away.

Everything in the living room turned silent all of a sudden. It was not until then that Debbie noticed that more than ten people were sitting in the living room. Even "Mr. Jerk" Lewis, who was always frivolous, was now sitting nicely with a serious look on his face. When he saw Debbie, he seemed excited. Then Debbie learned that Carlos was Marc's student too, which came as a surprise. And Emmett turned out to be Prof. Marc's stepson.

When Emmett was 13, his mom remarried Marc. And Emmett had lived with his mom in the professor's house afterwards.

As Emmett's stepfather, Marc didn't spoil the boy. On the contrary, being an educator, he was strict with him, especially about his education, which turned the rebellious adolescent against him. Emmett vowed that he would never call Marc "Father," nor would he ever use Marc's family name. To this day, Emmett kept his family name Cooper. Therefore, despite being father and son, Emmett and Marc had different family names. That was why the connection between them had never occurred to Debbie.

But as Emmett grew up, he realized that Marc cared about him a lot. When it came to Emmett's marriage, he was even more concerned than Emmett's mom.

He had sent Emmett on more than thirty blind dates within a couple of months. If Emmett hadn't been so busy, Marc would have made it three blind dates a day for him.

When they walked out of the VIP passage for first-class passengers, Carlos took out his phone and called Marc just as he had said. "Prof, Emmett has been so idle lately he has even started to sabotage my relationship with my wife. If you run out of candidates for his blind dates, I can have Tristan send you the name list of all the socialite divas and rich girls in Alorith. You're welcome, Professor. Yes, my wife is with me right now. We're flying to New York. We'll visit you after the New Year. Please send my regards for your wife and wish her a 'Happy New Year!' for me. We're boarding. Bye, Professor."

When the call ended, Carlos turned his phone off.

"Carlos, are you sure you haven't gone too far? Aren't you worried that Emmett might rise in revolt?"

"Not far at all." Carlos had kept his cool in Debbie's presence. If she weren't around, he would have humiliated Emmett with useless errands, just to remind him who was in charge here.

For getting too close to Debbie, Carlos would use every opportunity to put that man in his right place.

Seeing how jealous her husband was, Debbie was lost for words.

On the plane

Since Carlos' private jet was in New York, the mighty CEO had ordered Emmett to charter the entire first-class cabin. Two flight attendants led them through the bar full of refreshments and into the first-class cabin.

Megan had a separate seat with a curtain, while Carlos and Debbie had a private booth with a sliding door that could be locked from inside.

The booth was large enough for the two of them. It was a pleasant surprise for Debbie that she could have some alone time with Carlos on the plane.

Before getting on the plane, she had been troubled. She was thinking, 'What if Megan insists on sitting next to Carlos? Should I go ballistic or put up with it?' Thankfully, she didn't have to worry about it anymore.

Although Megan's seat was near their booth, the privacy of the booth was priceless.

It was twelve hours later that the plane touched down. In New York, it was evening already.

To pick them up from the airport, Carlos had some of his staff from the company offices in New York on standby. After some pleasantries, everyone got in the car.

They went straight to the Hilton family's offshore manor.

When they arrived, the gates were wide open, in a traditional Chinese decor, with lanterns on either side, heralding the arrival of the New Year.

It was past 7 p.m. Knowing that Carlos was coming with his wife, the whole family was waiting to have dinner together.

As soon as the car stopped in front of the main building, a servant came immediately to open the door for them. Debbie gripped Carlos' hand nervously and followed him into the house.

Nevertheless...

Bang! A porcelain teacup was smashed into pieces at Debbie's feet. It would have smashed her if Carlos hadn't pulled her away.

Everything in the living room turned silent all of a sudden. It was not until then that Debbie noticed that more than ten people were sitting in the living room. Even "Mr. Jerk" Lewis, who was always frivolous,

was now sitting nicely with a serious look on his face. When he saw Debbie, he seemed excited.

Debbie's eyes eventually fell on the middle-aged man in front of the table. His face was red with rage. When her eyes met the man's, she could see that his eyes were filled with nothing but disgust.

'It was him. It must have been him who smashed the teacup. Who is he? What a head-on blow at our first encounter!'

Carlos' menacing presence seemed to grow. Unknowingly, he squeezed Debbie's hand.

Ignoring the broken teacup, he took Debbie to a distinguished old lady with silver hair. "Grandma, I'm back with Megan and Debbie. This is Debbie Nelson, my wife," he said to the old lady. Then turning to Debbie, he said, "Deb, greet Grandma."

The grandma wore a long garnet cashmere sweater, top-notch pearls around her neck and her wrists. She had been gazing at Debbie, stone-faced, since she walked in.

Just sitting there quietly was enough for her to intimidate everyone. Both her stern face and sharp eyes were telling Debbie, "Don't mess with me!"

Debbie had to keep herself calm by all means. She took her hand out of Carlos' hold and smiled at the old woman. "Good evening, Grandma. I'm Debbie. Nice to meet you."

Valerie Castillo only smiled at her perfunctorily and said nothing. But when she saw the two people behind Debbie, she blossomed. "My dear grandson and little Megan, let me have a look at you. How have you been?"

She smiled, she cared, she stroked their faces affectionately. It seemed all of a sudden she had turned from the icy cold witch into a cordial, loving grandma. It struck Debbie that the Hilton family didn't care for her. Neither the dad nor the grandma.

It sucked.

The old lady's smiles lightened the atmosphere in the living room. Megan ran to Valerie and hugged her tightly. "Grandma, I missed you so much! I've been thinking about coming to visit you all along, but Uncle Carlos had been busy, so we weren't able to come until today." It was the lunar New Year's Eve in China.

Gradually, everybody lightened up. Lewis, the chatterbox, began, "Megan, Grandma has missed you and Carlos. She just couldn't stop talking about you. Grandma, now that they are here, can we eat? I'm starving."

Valerie nodded, holding Megan's hand. "Carlos, Megan, after a long flight, you must be hungry and tired. Let's go eat," she said.

Carlos didn't respond. He pulled Debbie, who had been slighted and embarrassed, close to his side. His eyes swept over the others in the room. "Wait!" he said coldly.

His icy tone brought everyone to a halt. Nobody dared to take one more step.

Valerie, who had just gotten up, slumped back into the couch at Carlos' command. Everyone could see that the dad and grandma didn't like Debbie. Watching Carlos, they all wondered what he was going to say.

#### CHAPTER 179 SHE'S NOT WELCOME HERE

It was Carlos who provided everything for the entire Hilton family, so whenever he spoke, both his dad and his grandmother listened. At least those two, James and Valerie, were less authoritative in front of him.

Sensing Carlos was about to say something, Megan suggested, "Uncle Carlos, grandma hasn't eaten dinner yet. But she wanted to have dinner with us. Why don't we eat first? Do it for grandma?"

Carlos ignored her. He pulled Debbie into his arms and announced, "I only need three minutes.

And I'm going to say this only once. If any of you has a problem with Debbie, you have a problem with me! She is my wife, and I love her. If you can't treat her nicely, then we're not staying."

There was dead silence in the living room. Valerie sighed. After a while, James roared, "Shut up, you ungrateful son of a bitch! Did I say you could marry her? She's not welcome here!"

Carlos was going to talk back, but Debbie pulled at the corner of his shirt and shook her head when he looked back at her.

He knew she was worried about him. After giving Debbie a comforting look, Carlos told James, "Grandpa blessed our marriage. Although he's sick and in hospital, he's still the head of the family. He speaks for all of us. Grandpa's blessing means that she's part of this family. Dad, if you think I should listen to you, you should listen to your dad too. If you have a problem with his decision, take it up with him. Hilton men are gentlemen. You should treat women with more respect."

James pointed at him furiously. His mouth opened and closed, but words failed him.

They knew Carlos never backed down, so Valerie compromised. "James, calm down. If your dad made the match, it isn't the kids' fault. Carlos did the right thing, defending his wife. Okay, enough. Time to eat."

Debbie blinked in disbelief. 'Has Carlos' grandma actually accepted me? My husband is awesome!'

Tabitha, who had been quiet the whole time, echoed, "Mom's right. It's New Year's Eve. James, please

stop. Let's have dinner first."

She barely ever spoke in James' presence. However, as Debbie's mother-in-law, she thought it wrong to remain silent any longer.

Since Tabitha had spoken up, Wade Hilton, James' elder brother, spoke up too. He looked at his three sons and reprimanded, "Are you blind? Escort your uncle James to the dining room!"

Debbie now started to understand how these people were related to each other.

Wade was Lewis' dad, Carlos' uncle. He and Lewis' mom, Miranda Swain, had no daughters, only three sons.

Their first born, Frasier Hilton, was kind and honest. Both he and his wife, Gloria Myers, were professors.

Their second son, Brooks, was a lawyer. Being a hothead, he tended to go from one extreme to the other. But his heart was in the right place. He was soft-hearted. His wife, Connie Foster, was a photographer.

The youngest son was Lewis, who wasn't married and had tons of girlfriends. All playboys, yet Lewis was different from Damon and Jared. The Hilton brothers had new girlfriends from time to time, but they weren't lewd. Lewis, however, was disgusting, despicable, lewd, and a total loser. He dated many different women at the same time. The other day, he was almost engaged to Portia. But then he split that one off. And Portia was better off not being around him.

Carlos had warned Debbie to stay away from Lewis whenever she saw him.

Back in the present, Wade's remark annoyed James. "I'm not crippled. Why do I need anyone to take me to the dining room?"

"

They started to take seats around the table. Debbie sat next to Carlos. Connie came to Debbie and wanted to sit next to her, but someone beat her to the punch. It was Lewis. He rushed to the chair and elbowed Connie away. "Debbie, I didn't expect you to come here for New Year's. It's been only a couple of days, but you're even more beautiful than the last time I saw you," he said impishly.

"Ahem!" Someone coughed heavily, interrupting Lewis. Debbie turned to look, only to find that Lewis' mom, Miranda, was staring at her youngest son coldly.

Lewis was afraid of his mom. He grinned and said, "I know, I know. More eating, less talking."

" Finally, dinner began.

At the table, Megan busied herself with picking up food and ladling soup for grandma. The old lady just couldn't stop laughing. It looked as if they were grandma and granddaughter.

Then suddenly, Megan looked at Carlos and said, "Uncle Carlos, I would like some of the salt-baked chicken." The bratty charm was obvious in her voice, as if you could see it.

Debbie looked at the dish Megan mentioned. It was right in front of Carlos. Since she asked, Carlos picked up the serving chopsticks and grabbed some chicken for her.

"Thank you, Uncle Carlos." Megan smiled like a sunflower, at which Carlos simply nodded.

Debbie puckered her lips. 'Ugh! I can't believe it! Carlos is my husband. I didn't even ask him to pick up food for me. You did it on purpose! I hope you choke on it!'

As soon as dinner was over, Valerie and James called Carlos into the study, and a housemaid took Debbie into Carlos' room, at the end of the second floor. Diagonally opposite Carlos' room was Valerie's.

Debbie wandered around Carlos' bedroom, trying to know more about the man she loved. The decor of the room was exactly the same as that of their bedroom in the manor in Alorith. Many of the items she simply left in their places as she walked around the room, hands behind her back. But soon, the urge to be proper was overwhelmed by her curiosity. She started to pick up various items to look at them in more detail. On the bookshelf were the trophies Carlos had won when he was a teenager and the medals he had been awarded in the army. There were medals for first-class merit, second-class merit, and third-class merit. Looking at the medals and trophies, Debbie found her husband was outstanding.

In the study of the manor in Alorith, there were more than one hundred trophies which he had won in the past few years. Now in this bedroom, there were dozens of trophies. He even started winning trophies in kindergarten. He was a remarkable man, driven from the earliest age to excel in everything he put his mind to. A lot of this explained his exceptional nature, and some of his control freak tendencies. He had to be in control or dominate every aspect of his life. And sometimes that was a charming trait, other times quite frightening. None of this occurred to Debbie at the time.

'How lucky I am to be married to this exceptional man!' Debbie thought to herself.

She took a picture of those trophies and medals and sent it to her friends through the group chat function on WeChat. "Carlos is so awesome! I feel inferior compared to him," she exclaimed.

Jared saw the picture and complained, "Shit! How could you put me in such an envious mood by posting this so early in the morning? Damn! He was even awarded medals for first-class merit. That's a state-level honor! Is your husband even human? He is under thirty, for God's sake! How can I ever be as accomplished as him?"

Kristina asked, "When did you touch down in New York, Tomboy? It has to be night there, right?"

Before Debbie could reply Kristina's question, a commotion started in the study. 'Carlos' dad must have exploded with rage again, ' Debbie thought.

'Never mind. Since Carlos is there, he should be able to handle it. I'd better stay away, in case his dad gets even angrier when he sees me.'

#### CHAPTER 180 CALL ME MOM

As Debbie thought about it, she added in the group chat, "Guys, Carlos' family doesn't like me."

For a moment, no one said anything. It was Dixon who first chipped in, "It doesn't matter as long as Carlos likes you."

Later, Kristina cut in, "You never know how complicated life in rich families can be. Before you left, I had thought to caution you, but I downplayed it. Ignore the others. Just as Doctor said, all that matters is that Carlos loves you."

"Tomboy, since when do you care about other people's opinions? This isn't you," frankly wrote Jared, alongside an eye-rolling face emoji.

Debbie's eyes turned teary as she read through her friends' comforting words. In such trying moments, it was enough that her friends were always there for her.

There was a knock on the door. Debbie calmed herself down and opened the door, only to meet Megan, with her usual pesky attitude.

Without waiting for Debbie's permission, she walked in uninvited and locked the door from inside.

'She acts as if she was the hostess of the Hilton family, ' Debbie sneered. "What do you want?" she asked indifferently.

Megan stared at her curtly. "If I were you, I would leave the Hilton family this instant."

The ridiculous way she sounded made Debbie chuckle. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Since there were only the two of them in the room, Megan took off her masquerade and snorted, "Don't you see? You have turned the family into a war zone. Uncle Carlos' dad got so angry he almost passed out. It's New Year's Eve today and everyone is having a crappy mood, just because of you. Don't you feel bad for what you've done?"

"Why should I feel guilty when I did nothing wrong? Carlos' dad almost passed out because he has a bad temper. Do you think I don't know that?" Debbie retorted. She wondered why James hated her so much.

"Did you just say Uncle Carlos' dad had a bad temper? I can't believe you've been talking about people behind their back, and you don't think it's rude? No wonder nobody likes you. I don't understand why

Uncle Carlos is defending you all the time."

Debbie was having a meltdown. "When did I talk about people behind their back? Stop making things up! Is this what you're here about? Are you done? Now get out!"

"No, I'm not yet done! Debbie, do you know?" That was just the provocation Megan was looking for. In an instant, her face flushed red, taking on a threatening aura like a cobra ready to strike. Through gritted teeth, she blurted, "If it were not for you, I would definitely marry into the family."

'I knew it! I knew she liked Carlos,' Debbie thought. "Which one exactly do you want to marry among them four? Carlos? Mr. Loftus? Wesley? Or Damon? Because sometimes it's really confusing."

Megan raised her voice. The look in her eyes was weird. "What the hell are you talking about? I've always only liked Uncle Carlos from the beginning."

"Only liked Carlos? Don't think I haven't seen you hug and kiss Wesley and Curtis! You want them all, don't you? You act like an innocent little girl. But who can imagine that deep down you are such a loose little slut?! You have deceived them all, using your pure, sweet facade. What a scary, manipulative bitch!" Debbie looked Megan up and down in disbelief.

Megan's face twisted with fury and embarrassment. "I'm going to tell Uncle Carlos that you not only said his dad was bad-tempered but also defamed my relationship with him and his friends."

"So now you are going to tell Carlos on me? Stop fooling yourself! Don't you know how much your uncle Carlos cares about me?"

"Yes, he cares about you. But he spoils me more. Just because he married you doesn't mean he loves you. Debbie, Uncle Carlos loves me, not you. If you think he loves you, you can stop dreaming."

Debbie burst into derisive laughter. "You like my husband, don't you?"

Megan neither admitted nor denied it.

"You want my husband to love you, don't you?"

"I don't have to want anything. Your husband loves me from the beginning. If you hadn't popped into the equation out of nowhere, he would have been my husband."

From the time she arrived to the hostile reception, Debbie had been wondering if she had killed someone from the Hilton family lineage in her previous life to be hated so much by her hosts in this life. Carlos' dad had smashed a teacup as soon as she entered the house. Now even an 18-year-old was trashing her right to her face. Did they see her as a pushover? Debbie sighed. "Calling Carlos 'Uncle' isn't enough to show how important he is to you. Since he's fostering you, why not call him 'Dad?' And since I'm his wife, you should call me 'Mom.' I'll spoil you more than he does."



"You! You!" Megan's face turned livid. She stomped her feet and finally managed, "You're taking advantage of me!"

"I am, so what? Come, come. Call me 'Mommy' and live with me from now on. Then you can see your daddy every day."

In a fit of rage, Megan stormed out of the room in tears. But before she left, she warned, "Debbie, you are dead meat!"

"We'll see!" Debbie snorted.

Then with a bang, Megan closed the door, leaving Debbie with so many questions. 'Gail, Portia, Olga, and now Megan, why do they all hate me so much? Is it something to do with my personality?' Then she thought of Carlos' family. 'Oh heck, what have I done to deserve this?'

As soon as Megan left the room, she ran into Tabitha, who was lingering outside the study. "Megan, what's wrong? Why are you crying?" Tabitha asked.

But Tabitha's questions only made things worse. Intent on creating drama, Megan wailed even louder.

"Hey! Stop crying and tell me what's wrong, Megan," Tabitha demanded, genuinely concerned. "Who upset you?"

Since she realized how furious James was, Connie had been hiding in her room to stay out of trouble. But Megan's wailing made her curious. "Why is Megan crying?" she asked Tabitha, who unfortunately had no idea either.

"For the life of me, I can't tell. She has been crying from the time she walked out of Carlos' room. But when I tried to find out from her what the matter was, she wouldn't say a thing."

When the little brat finally stopped weeping, she said to Tabitha, between sobs, "I saw that James seemed angry to see Aunt Debbie, so I went there to comfort her. But Aunt Debbie didn't appreciate it at all. And she even called me names. Boo...hoo..."

"Debbie called you names?" Incredulous, Tabitha looked at the door to Carlos' room and asked, "Why?"

"I don't know. Maybe she was in a bad mood. But how could she take it out on me? It wasn't my fault. To make it worse, she even had the nerve to tell me that James was cranky and I shouldn't be here, because I am nobody to the family; I'm just a freeloader. Can you imagine? She boasts that she'll only be nice to me if I call Uncle Carlos 'Dad' and call her 'Mom.' Boo...hoo..." Tears welled in her eyes once again.

Just to create a scene, she started panting for breath; her face so downcast, you'd think she was going to

pass out any minute. Even Tabitha who had been skeptical at first was moved. 'Could she be telling the truth?' But then it didn't seem possible that Debbie would stoop so low.

Just then, the door to another room opened and Miranda walked out.

Casting a cold glance at Megan, she demanded, "What are you doing here? Don't you need sleep?"

Tabitha smiled, "Miranda, Megan and Debbie had a squabble. We're trying to sort the issue out, before she goes to bed."