

TMBA 191

CHAPTER 191 PIGGYBACK

When she heard that Carlos was going to take her out, Debbie was thrilled. "Awesome! Let's go!"

Just as they stepped out of their bedroom, they came across Valerie and Megan who had just come upstairs.

Seeing Debbie and Carlos both fully dressed, Megan asked, "Uncle Carlos, Aunt Debbie, are you going somewhere?"

Debbie ignored her. Carlos nodded. "Grandma, we're going out for a bit."

"What for?" Valerie asked.

"A movie," Carlos replied. It was Debbie's suggestion. Her idol's new movie was just released. She had been talking about seeing it for a couple of days now. It was about time that he took her out on a date, and the theater seemed like the perfect excuse.

Megan's eyes lit up. "A movie? Uncle Carlos, I want to go. Can I go with you?"

'Bitch, we're on a date. Can't you see that?' Debbie thought.

"Next time. I don't think you'll like this one," Carlos said, flatly refusing. Debbie was relieved. She had been worried that Carlos would have agreed to everything Megan asked.

Megan trotted to Carlos and held his sleeve. "Uncle Carlos, I'm bored here. I want to go to the movies with you. Grandma Valerie will go to sleep later, and then I'll have nobody to talk to and nothing to do. Please let me go with you. Please."

Valerie knew Megan's intent. She decided to help her. "Yes. To keep me company, Megan's been cooped up here for days. As her uncle and aunt, you should take her out for some fun."

Several minutes later, Debbie, Carlos and Megan left the house together.

In the cinema, Debbie took Carlos to the self-service machine to get the tickets through her phone, while Megan went to buy some snacks and drinks.

According to the tickets, Debbie's seat was right between Megan and Carlos, yet in the theater, Megan took somebody else's seat and sat beside Carlos.

So now, Carlos sat between the two women.

"That's somebody else's seat," Debbie reminded Megan.

Megan responded casually, "Nobody else is coming. Uncle Carlos' assistant rented the entire theater."

Debbie was surprised. 'How come I didn't know that?'

"My assistant arranged that when you were in the bathroom," Carlos explained.

'Fine. I knew I shouldn't have gone to the bathroom. I needed to keep my eyes on Megan!' Debbie thought regretfully.

The movie started. It starred Ramona Loftus, a fantastic singer who became an actress. Her success as an actress proved that she could not only sing but also act. It was a period piece, and Megan had to stifle a groan. Megan hated those kinds of movies, where everyone wore robes and even funny headgear, and they had so many rules about the roles of women and society. Even more than today. She much preferred the more fantastic ones, with mighty magics and eye-popping special effects, but she was left with this. It was called "The Heart Abides"— about two star-crossed lovers. One a prince in exile, the other a palace servant. Of course, it was scandalous in the days of the Song dynasty. At least she was with Carlos. Debbie, of course, was delighted. She had been waiting for this since it went into production, and she heard that her favorite actress was starring in it.

Looking at the middle-aged woman on the screen, Carlos told Debbie, "Your idol is Curtis' sister."

"Huh? Mr. Loftus' sister? But they don't look anything alike. Is it because she is wearing makeup?"

"Nope. She's his half-sister, so odds are they wouldn't share any family features.

" Debbie remembered that Jared and Damon were half-brothers. 'It seems that there are a lot of half-siblings in rich families, ' she mused.

She popped a chip into her mouth and asked, "So Damon's dad married Jared's mom, but only after Damon's mom had passed away. What about Mr. Loftus' dad?"

Last time when she and Jared were at the Loftus family's cruiser party, they had seen very few Loftus family members.

"The Loftus family is complicated. Outsiders know little about it. Maybe next time you can ask Curtis to tell you about his family himself." Carlos assumed that Curtis actually was concerned about Debbie. He'd made some reference that made it sound like Debbie was related to him in some way. Thinking about that, Carlos glanced at Debbie, who was focused on the movie. He decided to do some investigation about the connection between Debbie and the Loftus family.

Having no chance to cut in, Megan took out a bottle of lemon-flavored C100 and handed it to Carlos. "Uncle Carlos, I can't open it. Please help me unscrew the lid."

Carlos looked at the beverage and handed it to Debbie, who seemed to be on the verge of going ballistic. "Honey, you open it."

Debbie tore her eyes away from the film, and had put her full attention on Megan and Carlos as soon as Megan opened her mouth. She wasn't going to let anything Megan did get between them. Debbie was surprised by Carlos' reaction, but she reflexively took the bottle. 'Why did he do that? Does he think I'm his servant or something?'

With the bottle in her hand, for a long moment, Debbie was too stunned to react. "Here, let me help you," Carlos said.

He quickly opened the bottle and gave it back to Megan.

Both Megan and Debbie were surprised.

Hence, Carlos was actually helping Debbie instead of Megan.

Megan was embarrassed. And not only that, she had created an opportunity for Carlos to express his affection for Debbie. He threw it right in her face. She had no one else to blame but herself.

When the movie was over and the end credits were rolling, they walked out of the cinema. They were caught by a gust of cold wind that blew on them right when they hit the streets. Megan crossed her arms over her chest and trembled. "It's so cold," she said.

"Are you cold?" Carlos asked Debbie.

She shook her head. She was wearing a down jacket while Megan was sporting a reversible cashmere overcoat with few buttons.

Carlos walked to the car and opened the door. "Get in the car first if you're cold," he told Megan.

After giving Debbie a look of triumphant satisfaction, Megan got in the car.

Just then, Carlos closed the door and said to the driver, "Megan is cold. Turn the heat up and drive her home."

The driver was hesitant. "What about you and Mrs. Hilton?"

"I'll ask my assistant to come and pick us up."

Megan was deeply disappointed.

Through the lowered passenger seat window, Debbie snickered at Megan.

After the car had driven away, Debbie wrapped her arms around Carlos' waist and sang and screamed. "I pray to be with you through rain and shiny days. I'll love you till I die. Deep as sea, wide as sky. The beauty of our love paints rainbows everywhere we go."

Carlos smiled and kissed her on the lips. "Love me that much, huh?"

"Of course," Debbie answered firmly.

With a wider smile, Carlos bent over and patted his back. "We might not have a car right now, but you have me. You gotta be tired. Come on. I'll give you a piggyback ride."

Debbie stared at Carlos' broad back. Warmth spread through her body. She raised her head to look at the sky as she tried to hold back her tears.

Carlos carried her easily.

Riding on his back, she called out, "Carlos."

"Yes?"

"Why are you so good to me?"

"Because you're my wife, silly."

Although Carlos' gentleness was nothing new to her, at this moment, Debbie was still intoxicated by his tenderness. The man was nothing short of amazing sometimes. She pressed her cheek against his back to feel his warmth. "Would you have done this for me if I weren't your wife?"

Carlos smiled. "No ifs, ands, or buts about it. You're my wife, my one and only. I'll treasure you forever. Remember that."

"Okay. If you go back on your word, I'll... I'll... I'll jump into the sea with you." Debbie laughed.

"No problem. If I ever break my promise, you can punish me however you want."

"Remember, a promise is a promise."

"Yeah."

It started raining as they approached the Hilton residence.

Worried that Carlos was tired, Debbie got off from his back. "You've worked all day. I don't want to wear you out in the evening too."

CHAPTER 192 DON'T BE SHY, GRANDMA

Carlos pulled her into his arms and whispered, "Don't worry about me. I can carry you home and still show you a good time. I can prove it to you."

"Stop it." Debbie covered his mouth with her hand.

Carlos pulled her hand away and kissed her on the lips. "What? Can't I say this stuff to my wife?"

"Maybe. And maybe you should be locked up for saying things like that."

"Just think about how lonely you'd get if I were put in prison. Not a good idea. You'd miss me way too much."

"You're so modest!" she giggled. He was right. She was getting a bit tired.

The rain was starting to come down in earnest. It was drizzling and their hair was starting to get wet. They ducked under an overhanging roof, trying to stay dry. Carlos took off his overcoat and spread it over her head.

Debbie pulled it off again. "No. This is your favorite overcoat. And very expensive. I can't let you do this. It'll get ruined." She knew how much Carlos liked that particular article of clothing.

Carlos put it back over her head. "I can always buy a new coat. I don't want you to get sick."

He was so considerate. Debbie was enormously moved. What was happening reminded her of a song which goes, "For the rest of my life, I want only you, for better or worse."

If Emmett knew Carlos had protected Debbie from the rain with his favorite overcoat, he would have marveled at how important Debbie was to Carlos. He already thought of Carlos as Debbie's slave, and that would have proven it even more. That was something new to Emmett, and he figured that bending over backwards for someone wasn't healthy. But then again, he had never been in love, at least not that kind of deep, enduring love, so he wouldn't know until he fell that deeply.

The rain was getting heavier. Worried that Debbie might be cold, Carlos called his assistant to ask him to pick them up.

The next day, Debbie didn't show up downstairs until eleven, still yawning.

The first thing she saw was Valerie's grim face. Standing next to Valerie was Megan, who waited on her like a maid.

"Grandma," Debbie said.

"So you still know to get up? Do you know what time it is?" Valerie berated her, pounding her cane on

the floor.

Debbie poured a glass of water for herself and took out her phone to check the time. It was eleven o'clock. "I'm sorry. I still haven't gotten over the jet lag."

The old lady snorted loudly, refusing her explanation. "You can't sleep in anymore. I won't allow it."

Debbie fluttered her eyelashes in disbelief. "You should discuss this with your grandson."

"Carlos went to work early this morning. How am I supposed to discuss this with him?" Valerie asked angrily.

Debbie yawned and explained helplessly, "Your grandson comes home late from work every day. And he usually brings some work home and doesn't go to bed until the small hours. I try to get some sleep, but every night, he kisses me until I wake up, and then has sex with me."

Not giving the other two any chance to interrupt her, she continued, "Normally, he falls asleep in the middle of the night, but sometimes, he won't leave me alone until the birds start chirping. So you see, Grandma, you have to talk to him about this. I used to practice martial arts, but even so, I can barely walk..."

"Enough!" Valerie's face turned red with embarrassment as she was listening to Debbie. "So rude!"

Megan blushed and kept her head bowed the whole time. "Aunt Debbie, maybe you should keep this kind of stuff to yourself in the future."

Megan supported Valerie with her hands as the old lady walked towards the door. Debbie watched them, confused. "That's my husband I was talking about. Isn't it normal for couples to have sex? Don't be shy, Grandma. We're all family here."

Valerie hadn't even made it to the living room yet when she turned back and reprimanded, "Shut up!"

Debbie picked up the glass of water and put it to her mouth. Valerie's red face made her want to laugh so much. She stifled her laughter and somehow thought the old lady was adorable at that moment.

Spending days in the Hilton's house was quite boring for Debbie. She was despised every day. The family always directed mean comments at her, and it didn't seem to matter if she clapped back or not. She wanted to have some fun outside, but it was very cold. It was snowing outside, and the flakes rested on the ground and blanketed the countryside in bright white. It probably wasn't the best idea to go out when you could see your breath in the air. Maybe she should have asked Carlos to assign her as his bodyguard.

After lunch, Debbie bundled up warmly, and decided to go outside and have some fun. But Valerie stopped her by saying, "The help has the day off. The first floor is dirty. Go clean it up."

Debbie was shocked to hear her say that. The first floor was at least two hundred square meters, which usually took a few servants to clean it. Now Valerie wanted her to do all the work by herself? This wasn't a reasonable expectation of work. This was a punishment.

Valerie cast her a disdainful look. "What? You have a problem with it? Or is it too hard for you? As the daughter-in-law of the Hilton family, you can't even handle something simple like this?"

'Huh! So you finally acknowledge that I'm the daughter-in-law,' Debbie sneered in her heart. "I can clean it. But I need her help." Debbie pointed at Megan who wore a smug smirk on her face. It was obvious she was enjoying this.

Megan didn't care, because she knew the old lady would help her out.

Sure enough, Valerie said, "Megan has better things to do. What you need to do is clean.

" For Carlos' sake, Debbie decided to put up with it, pretending that she was killing time.

She fetched the tools from the shed and started doing the work.

It had been a long time since the last time she did housework. She had been treated like a queen ever since she married Carlos. Soon after she had started, she began panting. Her shirt clung to her uncomfortably, and she started to perspire. It didn't take long before she got really tired. She wanted to take a break, but she wasn't sure that Valerie would allow even that.

Megan and Valerie, on the other hand, were chatting and laughing in the living room. 'So, Megan's job is to keep Valerie company while eating fruit and talking with her?' Debbie couldn't help but wonder inwardly.

Later, Connie saw Debbie doing the cleaning and tried to help her, but Valerie sent her away. When Lewis saw her mopping the floor, he held her hand and tried to take her away from the family, but he was scared away as his grandma hit the floor with her cane.

It took her three hours to finish all the work.

When she put the tools back in the shed and walked out, Valerie said, "You forgot the bathroom. Go clean it."

Debbie felt anger rise inside her, but once again, she chose to push it down deep inside her. 'Cleaning. No big deal!'

However, the size of the bathroom frustrated her as soon as she saw it. It was huge, with multiple sinks and a huge mirror running the length of the wall. It not only had many sinks, but also several stalls. There were store bathrooms that were smaller than this one.

'Why do they need such a big bathroom? Do they have to waste money like this just because they have it?'

"Call me and ask me out, now!" Debbie texted Carlos secretly.

She started waiting hopefully, but after a long while, Carlos still didn't reply to her message. Then the old lady came to check on her. "It's taking you forever! Give me your phone!"

'Am I really the daughter-in-law of the family, not a servant?' she thought.

She tried to talk the old lady out of it. "Grandma, I'll be more efficient if I watch a video while cleaning."

"You should be more focused. Hand it to me!"

Debbie wanted to toss the rag onto her old, wrinkled face. 'Calm down. This is Carlos' grandma. My dearest husband's grandma.' She tried to compose herself.

It was very late when Carlos came back. Exhausted, Debbie had gone to bed early after grabbing a bath.

When he came in, she looked at him and closed her eyes once more. She had been worked to the bone, and she definitely needed to rest.

## CHAPTER 193 ERUPTION

Carlos loosened his tie and sat on the edge of the bed. "Why did you call? Something happened? I was in a meeting. I called back later, but why did Megan answer your phone?" he asked as he touched her chubby cheek.

Debbie held his hand and asked casually, "What did she say to you?"

Carlos let her know what Megan had said. "She said you left your phone in the living room and you were upstairs, sleeping. She told me nothing happened."

Debbie adopted a conciliatory attitude. To avoid further trouble, she lied, "I missed you. It's New Year and you're still busy. I've always said you work too hard. I'm worried about you."

Carlos smiled and kissed her forehead. "Don't worry. I'm used to it. I'll ask someone to take you outside when you want, in case you get lost if you go on your own."

Debbie agreed to his suggestion readily.

The next day, when Debbie was about to leave the house with Carlos, Valerie suddenly piped up, "Debbie, you're young and have good eyesight. Come help me."



Carlos was still changing his shoes. Debbie looked at him, and his reply made her happy. "Ask Megan, Grandma. Debbie and I are taking off."

Debbie nodded to Valerie and felt her handsome husband was awesome.

Valerie sighed, "She's not feeling well. Besides, she's taken care of me every day. It's someone else's turn." After casting Debbie a disgusted glance, she asked Carlos, stone-faced, "Can't I ask your wife to do anything?" To prevent the matter from escalating, Debbie waved at Carlos and said, "Just go to work. Come home early. I'll go out after I help Grandma."

Carlos smiled and pressed a kiss on her forehead. "Okay. The driver's waiting for you outside. Call me if you need me."

"Okay, bye."

Carlos left, and the old lady guided Debbie to the storage room.

Standing at the entrance to the storage room, one hand holding her cane and the other twirling the beads, Valerie began, "Go find the string of Buddhist prayer beads of mine and clean this room."

'I knew it wouldn't be that simple with her. She really wanted me to clean this room, '

Debbie thought to herself. 'Cleaning again!' Cleaning had become her nightmare.

"Grandma, didn't you say that you lost that string of beads?"

"Yes, I lost it. That's why I asked you to find it. One of my ancestors came to me in a dream and told me it's in here. Go look for it."

'Her ancestor told her that in her dream? What a load of bullshit!'

But what could she say? For Carlos' sake, she decided to be stoic and do as she was told.

The storage room was dusty and crammed with all kinds of things. When she was finished, Debbie was on the brink of tears. But she didn't find the string of beads. When she emerged from the room, she was covered in dust from head to toe.

She walked into the living room to tell Valerie that she couldn't find the beads, only to see Megan and Valerie sitting on the sofa enjoying fruit, as well as each other's company. As soon as she showed her face in the living room, Megan ordered, "Hey, you, pour me some water. I need to take my medicine."

Containing her anger, Debbie shot her a cold glance and snapped, "Do it yourself."

Megan wondered in fake shock, "Aunt Debbie? Why do you look like that? Your hair's mussed and your face is dirty. I didn't even recognize you."

'Didn't recognize me? Lying bitch!' Debbie cursed. "Why do I look like this? Try cleaning the storage room for two hours." 'Even if your dead parents came out of the grave, they wouldn't recognize you!'

"Oh, Aunt Debbie, I didn't know you were cleaning. You must be tired. Come, sit down. You work so hard." Megan looked at her in a fawning manner.

Then she turned to Valerie. "Grandma Valerie, my aunt Debbie is so hard-working. She cleaned the living room and bathroom yesterday, and today she cleaned the storage room. But I...I can't do anything. I'm useless."

Valerie patted her hand and said lovingly, "What are you talking about? How is that possible? You're like a granddaughter to me. My precious granddaughter will never have to do this kind of work."

Valerie's words were like a needle piercing Debbie's heart. She threw the rag into the bin in frustration. "Grandma, from now on, if there's work to be done, just tell me. My husband will hire a dozen servants for you. Money is no object for him. As long as the pay is good, someone will clean, even at midnight on New Year's."

The smile on Valerie's face faded. With a stern stare, she asked Debbie, "What? Can't do a little cleaning? Telling your husband? That's my grandson! Who do you think he'll side with? Where are your manners? Didn't your parents teach you not to talk back to your elders?"

Megan shook Valerie's arm and reminded her, "Grandma Valerie, Aunt Debbie's dad died a few years ago and her mom ran away from home a long time ago."

Debbie's face darkened as soon as she heard her parents mentioned.

Valerie sneered, "No wonder she's so rude. It turns out that both of her parents were irresponsible and taught her nothing."

Debbie's eyes burned with rage. She stalked towards the two on the sofa. Megan and Valerie were scared when they saw her angry face. Yet the old lady managed to remain calm despite her fright. "What do you want?" she demanded.

"What do I want? Old lady, you're lucky that you're Carlos' grandma, so I won't do anything to you. However, Megan is not my elder..."

Debbie grabbed Megan's collar abruptly and pulled her up. "As her aunt, I'll teach her a lesson."

Since Debbie had just done the cleaning, her dirty fingers left black streaks on Megan's white collar. Megan screamed, "Yikes. Gross. Let go of me!"

"Gross?" Debbie sneered. "You think that's gross? You should be used to it. Why are you so condescending? My husband treats you well, so you think you're a princess? Listen up: you're trash! From now on, show some respect. I have a temper."

With that, she pushed Megan so forcefully the girl staggered and fell onto the sofa.

Furious, Valerie started panting for breath. Seeing Megan was thrown to the sofa, she trotted over to pull the girl up. "Dear, are you okay?" she asked in worry.

Megan trembled in the old lady's arms.

Watching the two, Debbie remarked indifferently, "I don't owe this family anything. Even though you treat me like shit, I'll still call you 'Grandma,' because you're Carlos' grandma and I love him. I don't want any problems between us, because he'll have to take sides."

After a short pause, not long enough for the old lady and the girl to respond, she continued talking.

#### CHAPTER 194 YOU MARRIED CARLOS

"But there's a line. I hope for your sake you don't cross that line again. As an elder, you should know better. I'll let Megan off the hook this time, but if she talks about my parents again, things won't be so easy for her, I swear."

After that, Debbie turned and went upstairs.

Valerie was too furious to say anything. If it were possible, steam would have poured from her ears.

Back in her room, Debbie decided to get comfortable. She drew a nice warm bath and washed the grime away. She had hardly put clean clothing on before her phone rang. She knew the number by heart, even though she didn't have him in her contact list. It was Hayden. 'Why's he calling?' she wondered.

In a bad mood, Debbie decided not to answer it, just let it go to voicemail. She wasn't very good company right now. Then she got a text message from him. "I'm in New York. I need to see you. It's important."

'Hayden is in New York?' Debbie was a little worried. "Why are you here? What's so important?" she asked in a text.

"I'll give you the details when we meet up. If you don't come and meet me, I'll go to the Hilton's residence to find you,"

he threatened. 'What the heck?' Debbie cursed inwardly. She figured she'd better do as he said. After all, it might cause a scandal inadvertently. She called Carlos to let him know.

"I went to go out for a while," she told him.

"Okay, I'll ask the driver to take you wherever you want to go."

"Okay. Carlos..." Debbie intended to tell him that she was going to meet Heyden, but remembering how jealous he could be, she decided not to.

"Yeah?"

"Oh, nothing. What time are you coming home tonight?"

Carlos smiled. "Since you miss me so much, I'll come home early."

To his surprise, Debbie didn't scold him this time for hitting on her. "Okay," she replied sweetly.

On Broadway Avenue

Debbie got out of the car at an intersection, sent the driver away, and walked to the coffee shop where she was supposed to meet up with Heyden.

When she got there, Heyden was already waiting for her. Seeing her walk in, he waved at her.

It was a very cold day. She could see her breath in the air. Debbie felt she could hardly stand the cold after stepping out of the Hilton's house. They kept that place hot like summer with the heat on all the time. She took off her hat and scarf, unzipped her down jacket, and sat opposite Heyden before ordering a latte for herself.

For a moment, neither of them spoke. Debbie's coffee came. "Thank you," she said to the barista who had just brought her the coffee. Heyden just leaned against the sofa and watched her.

It made Debbie feel uncomfortable. "Heyden, I'm here, so just say what you have to say."

"You married Carlos."

It was not a question but a statement.

Debbie nodded, "Yeah."

Though he knew the truth earlier, Heyden felt a pang in his heart when he heard her admit it in person.

He composed himself and stated, "I've heard that there's an arranged marriage in the works. The Hilton family and Elliot family. Carlos and the daughter of the Elliot family grew up together and make a perfect couple. Everyone thinks that they'll get married sooner or later. James told the press a few days ago that the daughter of the Elliot family would be his daughter-in-law."

Just now, Debbie finally understood why James didn't like her. She represented a threat to their business interests. It turned out that he had chosen the daughter-in-law a long time ago. Debbie was an unpleasant surprise to him. And his decision was based purely on the business advantages it would bring.

"I know. Not a problem. Carlos and I love each other. We'll convince his father to accept me." Carlos' family might have some problems with her right now, but that was no reason for her to give up.

"And Carlos' grandmother likes his niece, though she's not a blood relative." Hayden had done some research on Carlos. Although there wasn't much, he found out something about his family.

Debbie was not blind. She could see that Valerie liked Megan a lot. "It doesn't matter." She believed that the love between her and Carlos was strong enough to overcome any obstacle between them. They would pass this trial.

Hayden sighed, resigned to his fate. He still couldn't win her back. He said in a defeated tone, "Fine. Tell me why you lied to me."

Debbie held the coffee mug to warm her hands. "When did I lie to you?" she wondered.

Hayden smiled wryly. "I thought you were married to Emmett, and you didn't deny it." He felt played, felt that he made a fool of himself in front of Emmett and her. He didn't like that feeling, not one bit.

"You and I broke up. Remember? So I have to tell you who I married? None of your business!" Debbie retorted with a sneer.

Her brutal tone stung. Hayden felt his heart was bleeding. He leaned forward and grabbed her hand resting on the table. "Deb..."

"Get your hands off me!" Debbie said angrily, trying to pull her hand out.

Hayden didn't move his hands away. He held her hand tighter and pulled it close to his face to smell her scent. "Deb, don't cancel me. Please."

Debbie looked around the coffee shop and found that Hayden and she were all the customers the shop had. She raised her voice and demanded, "Let go of my hand! Don't push me. I'm getting pissed!"

Hayden looked up at her. "What's the worst that can happen? You already left me a long time ago anyway." Sensing her anger, Hayden conceded, "Fine. I'll let you go, but don't walk away, okay?"

Debbie gritted her teeth and nodded. As soon as he let go of her, she asked the barista to bring her a wet towel to wipe her hand.

Embarrassed, Hayden gave a bitter smile.

Debbie wiped her hand again and again before asking, "What's so important that you have to tell me in person? What are you up to?"

"Does Carlos treat you right? Why did you marry him? Did you two make a secret deal or something? How much is he paying you? Tell me, Deb. I've been worried about you ever since I found out you married him."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but he really treasures me. And there's no deal between us. We're in love. Got it? Oh, my mistake. I forgot you never loved anyone, so you might not know what it is."

When they were dating, Hayden always thought he was better than Debbie and despised her on every level. Soon after, he hooked up with some rich girl and often showed up as a happy couple in front of Debbie. That was when Debbie realized he had never loved her.

"Come on, Deb, our breakup was mutual. Don't act all innocent." Hayden sighed, trying to defend himself.

"What do you mean? I poured my heart into our relationship. Wasn't that enough?"

Hayden shook his head. "I didn't say you weren't good to me. You were great to me. But, in that time, we only held hands. We were a couple, but we didn't even kiss. Not fair."

That was something Hayden hated to mention. He had only kissed Debbie on the cheek. That was all.

Debbie replied, "I was too young." She hadn't even come of age yet when they started dating. She thought she was progressive and free-spirited enough to do that. But she had standards, and she wasn't going to violate those.

"But there's a line. I hope for your sake you don't cross that line again. As an elder, you should know better. I'll let Megan off the hook this time, but if she talks about my parents again, things won't be so easy for her, I swear."

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Debbie got out of the car at an intersection, sent the driver away, and walked to the coffee shop where she was supposed to meet up with Hayden.

When she got there, Hayden was already waiting for her. Seeing her walk in, he waved at her.

It was a very cold day. She could see her breath in the air. Debbie felt she could hardly stand the cold after stepping out of the Hilton's house. They kept that place hot like summer with the heat on all the time. She took off her hat and scarf, unzipped her down jacket, and sat opposite Hayden before ordering a latte for herself.

For a moment, neither of them spoke. Debbie's coffee came. "Thank you," she said to the barista who had just brought her the coffee. Hayden just leaned against the sofa and watched her.

It made Debbie feel uncomfortable. "Hayden, I'm here, so just say what you have to say."

"You married Carlos."

It was not a question but a statement.

Debbie nodded, "Yeah."

Though he knew the truth earlier, Hayden felt a pang in his heart when he heard her admit it in person.

He composed himself and stated, "I've heard that there's an arranged marriage in the works. The Hilton family and Elliot family. Carlos and the daughter of the Elliot family grew up together and make a perfect couple. Everyone thinks that they'll get married sooner or later. James told the press a few days ago that the daughter of the Elliot family would be his daughter-in-law."

Just now, Debbie finally understood why James didn't like her. She represented a threat to their business interests. It turned out that he had chosen a daughter-in-law a long time ago. Debbie was an unpleasant surprise to him. And his decision was based purely on the business advantages it would bring.

"I know. Not a problem. Carlos and I love each other. We'll convince his father to accept me." Carlos' family might have some problems with her right now, but that was no reason for her to give up.

"And Carlos' grandma likes his niece, though she's not a blood relative." Hayden had done some research on Carlos. Although there wasn't much, he found out something about his family.

Debbie was not blind. She could see that Valerie liked Megan a lot. "It doesn't matter." She believed that the love between her and Carlos was strong enough to overcome any obstacle between them. They would pass this trial.

Hayden sighed, resigned to his fate. He still couldn't win her back. He said in a defeated tone, "Fine. Tell me why you lied to me."

Debbie held the coffee mug to warm her hands. "When did I lie to you?" she wondered.

Hayden smiled wryly. "I thought you were married to Emmett, and you didn't deny it." He felt played, felt that he made a fool of himself in front of Emmett and her. He didn't like that feeling, not one bit.

"You and I broke up. Remember? So I have to tell you who I married? None of your business!" Debbie retorted with a sneer.

Her brutal tone stung. Hayden felt his heart was bleeding. He leaned forward and grabbed her hand resting on the table. "Deb..."

"Get your hands off me!" Debbie said angrily, trying to pull her hand out.

Hayden didn't move his hands away. He held her hand tighter and pulled it close to his face to smell her



scent. "Deb, don't cancel me. Please."

Debbie looked around the coffee shop and found that Hayden and she were all the customers the shop had. She raised her voice and demanded, "Let go of my hand! Don't push me. I'm getting pissed!"

Hayden looked up at her. "What's the worst that can happen? You already left me a long time ago anyway." Sensing her anger, Hayden conceded, "Fine. I'll let you go, but don't walk away, okay?"

Debbie gritted her teeth and nodded. As soon as he let go of her, she asked a barista to bring her a wet towel to wipe her hand.

Embarrassed, Hayden gave a bitter smile.

Debbie wiped her hand again and again before asking, "What's so important that you have to tell me in person? What are you up to?"

"Does Carlos treat you right? Why did you marry him? Did you two make a secret deal or something? How much is he paying you? Tell me, Deb. I've been worried about you ever since I found out you married him."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but he really treasures me. And there's no deal between us. We're in love. Got it? Oh, my mistake. I forgot you never loved anyone, so you might not know what it is."

When they were dating, Hayden always thought he was better than Debbie and despised her on every level. Soon after, he hooked up with some rich girl and often showed up as a happy couple in front of Debbie. That was when Debbie realized he had never loved her.

"Come on, Deb, our breakup was mutual. Don't act all innocent." Hayden sighed, trying to defend himself.

"What do you mean? I poured my heart into our relationship. Wasn't that enough?"

Hayden shook his head. "I didn't say you weren't good to me. You were great to me. But, in that time, we only held hands. We were a couple, but we didn't even kiss. Not fair."

That was something Hayden hated to mention. He had only kissed Debbie on the cheek. That was all.

Debbie replied, "I was too young." She hadn't even come of age yet when they started dating. She thought she was progressive and free-spirited enough to do that. But she had standards, and she wasn't going to violate those.

## CHAPTER 195 CATCHING UP

Debbie thought that kissing was only appropriate for adults, so she had rebuffed Hayden's requests all the time when they were dating.

Once, he attempted to forcibly kiss her on the lips and promptly found himself on his back with the wind knocked out of him. She had thrown him over her shoulder. Afterwards they gave each other the silent treatment for months.

It was Debbie who caved. She started to make up for what she did, but their relationship was a shadow of what it was previously.

"Deb, we live in the 21st century, for crying out loud." Hayden was at a loss for words.

Debbie felt she was maybe in the wrong about that, so she changed the subject. "That's in the past. We've been apart for a long time. And I've found my true love, so let's move on."

Hayden's heart ached when she said she had found the one. "If he really loved you, he would have announced your marriage and told everyone that you are his wife. But he didn't. He doesn't love you, Deb. Open your eyes!"

"Wrong! I'm the one who wants it kept under wraps," she told him. Her face betrayed no emotion.

Hayden was so shocked he couldn't even speak. "Deb, you know I love you. But Carlos? In the circles I run in, he's known to be cold, distant, and calculating. Don't get taken in by him. There is no such thing as the modern Cinderella. So be realistic, okay?"

Debbie withdrew her gaze from outside the window to look at him. "You don't know me. You don't know us. How can you be so judgmental?"

Hayden was reduced to silence again. After a while, he stood up, came to her, pulled her to her feet, and embraced her tightly. "Did you know I was so worried about you when I learned you married Carlos I immediately booked a ticket to New York? Do you really think he can manage a big company like Hilton Group without being underhanded and scheming? Impossible. He's known as a ruthless businessman. Even if you don't love me, let me in. Don't push me away. I'll wait for you, until the day you finally figure out who he really is. You'll come back to me.

"Debbie was only human. When someone she had once loved whispered to her how much he cared about her, she froze and didn't know how to turn him down.

Hayden went on, "I won't get married to anyone else. I'll wait for you. When Carlos hurts you, I'll be waiting. My arms are your harbor. You loved me once, but I never stopped loving you.

Babe, I know it's too late, but I won't give up. My life is a dark place without you. I'm a walking zombie. I work my ass off at Gomez Group. I do it for you. I used to be a jerk, I know. That's why I want to make money, a lot of money. I want to give you everything."

Words like "no," "never," "can't" were on the tip of Debbie's tongue, but she didn't have a chance to cut

in. She was waiting for him to calm down and then to turn him down.

However...

"Hayden, I see you came to New York to declare your love for my wife. How touching!" a familiar and cold voice said. His voice was like a thunderbolt over Debbie's head.

She pushed Hayden away in a fluster. Nonetheless, when she turned around, she saw Carlos sitting comfortably in an armchair. He seemed to have been there for a while.

Her face went pale. She trotted over to Carlos and said, "Carlos—" Before she could continue, Carlos took her hand, stood up, and strode towards Hayden with her.

Hayden, however, wasn't nervous at all at Carlos' sudden appearance. He held out his right hand confidently to shake hands with him. "Carlos, what a coincidence!"

"Yeah, it is." They shook hands just as they had the other day in the restaurant. Debbie watched them, her mouth agape.

As if nothing had happened, Hayden invited them to sit with him. "Care for a cup of coffee?"

Carlos shook his head and wrapped his arm around Debbie's waist. After giving her an affectionate look, he replied, "No, thanks. My wife is kinda snacky, and I have another cafe in mind. If you'll excuse me. Bye, Hayden."

'When did I say I was hungry?' Debbie wondered.

But she was more confused by the weird interaction between the two men. She watched them, holding her breath, and didn't dare to say anything. She knew how this looked, and she knew Carlos' temper. Debbie was extremely surprised that her husband had found her here, much less was behaving quite cordially to Hayden. This man had practically proposed to her, bared his soul, and begged Debbie to ditch Carlos and come with him. As possessive as Carlos was, he didn't have any further reaction. That shocked her.

"I see. Then I'll leave you to it." Hayden looked at Debbie and continued, "Deb says that you two love each other very much. I can tell. You should spend more time with her. Did you know she loves to travel? Doesn't look like she gets out much, though."

Carlos tightened his hand around Debbie's waist. "Of course. We're planning to go to the Maldives in February, heading to Deplua in March, and Askor in April. I'll go wherever she wants."

Debbie pulled Carlos' arm and whispered in his ear on tiptoe, "I knew about the Maldives, but Deplua and Askor? When did you decide on those?"

He turned towards her, just a bit. "Just now," he answered.

Debbie was dumbstruck.

Seeing them together, Hayden smiled resignedly. "Awesome! Take care."

When Carlos passed by the cashier's desk, he released Debbie's hand and took care of the bill.

Before they walked out of the coffee house, he wrapped Debbie's scarf around her neck and zipped up her down jacket. Everything he did seemed so natural and gentle it worried Debbie even more. What was going on in his head?

She followed Carlos to a spacious, bright, and well-equipped minivan.

He sat on the couch, and then forcefully pulled Debbie into the seat next to him. "Drive," he told the driver.

Debbie sensed the coldness around him. She wrapped her arms around his neck and explained, "I... He... We were just catching up."

"Catching up?" She felt he was about to explode with rage. When he spoke, it felt as if the carriage were a missile silo.

Since Carlos had seen Hayden holding her in his arms, Debbie understood why he was mad. "I don't love him anymore. So tell me, Mr. Handsome, why were you there?"

#### CHAPTER 196 AT ARM'S LENGTH

Carlos rolled down the car window and cast a sideways glance at a building across the road. "Check that out," he said.

Confused, Debbie tried to look where he was looking, only to see the building towering into the clouds with the giant letters "Hilton Group." "So, you can see the cafe from your office?" she asked.

He gave her a cold look and said, "The Hilton family has eyes everywhere in this city." Debbie figured out how he knew.

It wasn't hard to figure this out. One of James' men had seen Debbie being with another man and told his boss. As a result, James had barged into Carlos' office and demanded his son divorce her. So it was only natural Carlos would be furious. Conversations with his father never went well under the best of circumstances, so with his dad in a confrontational mood only made matters worse. He had enough time to stew walking out of his office, waiting for the elevator, getting into the car, and getting to the cafe across the road. Steam was practically pouring out his ears by the time he got there.

On the way home, Carlos said nothing, his face sullen. Knowing that he was in a bad mood, Debbie

didn't dare to say a single word either.

As the car drove into the Hilton family's manor, she couldn't bear it anymore. "Don't you need to work?" she asked.

"Work? What for? My wife was about to fuck another man." His voice was as cold as ice.

Sighing with profound resignation, Debbie explained, "Come on, Carlos, listen to me. I know I shouldn't have gone to see Hayden. But I wasn't going to sleep with him. Damn, you're paranoid!"

Carlos said nothing, his face still livid.

The car came to a halt at the gates to the villa. Carlos got out and walked to the villa without even looking back. Without a word, he just left her there. He wanted her to do the walk of shame.

Seeing Carlos' figure receding, Debbie felt her heart break. If they weren't fighting, he would have scooped her up in his arms and carried her into the villa.

"Carlos!" she called out.

Carlos stopped, turned around and looked at her, still silent.

Debbie bit her lower lip and demanded, "Carry me into the house."

Carlos couldn't believe his ears. He was the one that was mad at her, yet she still acted like a little brat instead of apologizing.

His reply was simple and sharp. "No!" After saying that, he turned around and entered the villa.

How Debbie wished she could stop him and beat him up!

'Fine! You want me to make the first move? No way!' She picked up her phone and texted Carlos saying, "If you don't carry me into the villa, I won't get out of the car!"

She had made up her mind that she wouldn't move from this spot unless Carlos came back for her. 'His whole family loves Megan more than me. I guess they'll be happy if I freeze out here.'

The very thought made Debbie's heart ache.

She knew why Carlos was so angry; after all, she was caught with Hayden at a cafe. But she didn't think she was wrong. They were just friends. 'It was all Hayden's fault. He acted so messed up that I couldn't help but go soft on him.'

Thinking of it, she decided to send Hayden a text message.

"Get a clue, Hayden! You and I are not a thing. Even if I divorced Carlos, I still wouldn't go back to you."

Hayden, on the other hand, was still at the cafe. Debbie's message made him laugh. He could tell how angry she was now. "What happened? Did he get pissed at you for meeting me?" he replied.

Debbie's reply came soon. "None of your business. Just leave me alone. I don't want to see you again. Got it?"

Hayden giggled and thought, 'Deb is getting more and more adorable.'

Now that Debbie refused to get out of the car, the driver could only wait quietly.

More than ten minutes had passed, but Carlos still didn't come back for her. Debbie was sad and dejected.

'What should I do?' she mused.

'I guess I'd better get out of the car and get inside. Carlos has always been nice to me. I get why he's mad. If I were him and saw my wife with her ex, I would get mad too.' She took a deep breath and got out of the car.

She pushed the gate to the villa open and changed into her slippers. Just past the entryway, she saw something she couldn't accept.

Carlos was having a talk with Valerie. Megan went down the stairs and ran towards him.

She had already changed into clean clothes.

Carlos caught and steadied Megan, and the latter held his waist tight. "Uncle Carlos, you're back! I was so bored here."

'Dammit! You call him Uncle Carlos and act like his wife! Show some restraint!' Debbie thought angrily.

Instead of pushing Megan away, Carlos stroked her hair and offered, "There's a party this evening. If you're bored, you can go."

Megan raised her head and looked at Carlos asking, "Are you going too?"

Sensing Megan had no intention of letting go of him, Carlos pulled her away from him and answered, "I need to work. You can ask Connie to go with you."

Megan stole a defiant glance at Debbie, but Carlos didn't notice. Then she held his arm intimately and said, "Uncle Carlos, I want you to come with me. But if you are busy, then I will stay home as well."

Hayden told Debbie that Valerie wanted Megan to be Carlos' wife, and it looked like he wasn't wrong. Valerie acted like Megan and Carlos were the most natural thing. Worse, she tried to create more opportunities for the two. "Carlos, don't work yourself to death. You should spend more time with Megan. Just play hookey and go to the party with her."

'I thought Valerie and Megan would tell Carlos about my "rude" behavior. But they act as if nothing happened. That's really weird!' Debbie thought to herself.

"I have a dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Smith this evening," said Carlos. He pulled his arm away from Megan and was about to walk back out to the car when he saw his wife standing at the entryway. "Come here," he said coldly.

Obediently, Debbie came over to Carlos and stood before Megan. "Megan, do you remember what I said before?" she asked.

Since Valerie and Megan didn't mention what she had done earlier, Debbie wouldn't bring it up either.

Megan was confused, and had no idea what Debbie was talking about.

With a tiny smile, Debbie began, "Since you are Carlos' niece, you should keep him at arm's length. You shouldn't hug my husband tight like that. I might get angry. You get it?"

Debbie had made up her mind—since they didn't care about her feelings at all, why should she care about theirs?

Megan's face paled at Debbie's words. With red eyes, she lowered her head and apologized in a sad voice, "Aunt Debbie, I'm so sorry. I didn't know...I'll keep that in mind and stay away from Uncle Carlos. Please don't be mad at me."

She put herself in such a low position anyone would think she was intimidated by Debbie.

Valerie banged the table and shouted, "Debbie, this is how you treated Megan in Alorith? Bullying her?"

'Bullying her?' Debbie couldn't believe her ears. She thought she needed to explain it. She took a deep breath and said calmly, "Don't get me wrong. I know Megan's parents saved my husband's life. I take care of her like Carlos does. But Carlos is a married man. Don't you think she's being too flirty?"

#### CHAPTER 197 LEAVE ME ALONE

"Megan is family. Why should she not be so close to Carlos?" Valerie snapped.

Before Debbie could respond, Carlos held her hands and told her in a calm voice, "Deb, Megan is just a kid with a lot of enthusiasm. You're overreacting. Let's go upstairs."

'An 18-year-old kid? With a lot of enthusiasm? She has a thing for you. Why can't you see it?' Debbie retorted in her mind.

With red eyes, Megan apologized again, "Aunt Debbie, please don't be mad at me. If you're not happy, I will keep that in mind and stay away from Uncle Carlos."

Debbie was fuming with rage. 'So you all think I'm the bad guy here? Fine! I'll be the black sheep.'

Debbie shook Carlos' hands off and walked up the stairs. He started after her. She suddenly turned around and shouted at him, "Don't follow me. Leave me alone."

Before Carlos could say anything, Megan stepped backwards as if she were intimidated by Debbie, and Valerie stood up from the couch. "Debbie Nelson!" she shouted imperiously. "Don't talk to my grandson that way! He's your husband! The husband is always right!"

'The husband is always right?' Debbie rolled her eyes secretly. 'This woman is positively medieval!'

She wanted to say something back. But on second thought, Valerie was Carlos' grandma, so she bit back the words she would like to have said.

Putting his hands in his pockets, Carlos chimed in, "Grandma, you're wrong. It's the 21st century, and a wife has as much power as her husband when it comes to family. Please stay out of it, Grandma. Megan, keep Grandma company."

After saying that, he grabbed Debbie's hand and walked up the stairs.

Although Debbie had lost her temper at him in front of his family, Carlos made his stand clear and defended her. Valerie couldn't believe her ears. 'Carlos used to be a proud man. I didn't expect him to defend such a rude woman.'

She grabbed her walking stick tighter. "Women have as much power?" she retorted. "Only when she's from a family of equal social rank. What kind of family does she come from? A rich and powerful one?"

" 'Ah, that's why no one in his family likes me, ' Debbie mused. Bitterness flooded her as she lowered her head to hold back her tears.

Carlos was angered by Valerie's words. Despite the fact that he was still mad at his wife, he felt he should defend her against his own grandma. And he also felt he shouldn't have to. Debbie was his wife. He chose to love her, marry her, and spend his life with her. This was his choice, not his family's. And it was ridiculous to think that he didn't have a say in this. Why did they think they had a say, anyway?

Carlos looked Valerie in the eye and said in a serious tone, "You know what? I don't care if she has money or power; I love her. We had dated for a long time before she finally agreed to be with me. My wife is hot, and doesn't love me for my money. If it weren't for the marriage certificate, she might have



been another man's wife. Grandma, will you please stop poking your nose in my business? If Deb leaves me because of you, it will cost me a lot of time and energy to get her back. She's my one and only."

Carlos just wanted his grandma to stay away from Debbie. He wanted to remind Valerie that even if she succeeded in driving Debbie away, he would by no means accept another woman as she wished.

Valerie was exasperated. Pointing at Debbie with a shaking hand, she yelled, "What's so good about her that you had to date her for a long time? Do you know what she did to me and Megan? She bullied us, and then went out on a date with another man. She's nothing but a ho! She even has a lover in New York. How could you be so blind?"

She banged her stick on the floor; the sound reverberated in the living room.

'Bullied Grandma and Megan? Impossible!' thought Carlos. His eyes darkened as he said, "Grandma, Debbie has always respected you. Bully you? Ha! And Megan, you just held my waist, right? Your aunt Debbie just overreacted. She doesn't hate you. Grandma, please don't mess with my family."

Debbie's anger vanished when she saw Carlos defend her like this. His words touched her heart deeply.

Carlos felt Debbie brush his hand away, and got confused.

Before he could respond, Debbie walked towards Valerie, took a deep breath and said in a soft voice, "I'm sorry, Grandma. Maybe I'm not the granddaughter-in-law you want. But I can assure you I love Carlos. A lot. I would never cheat on him. What's more, we've been married for more than three years. If you really hate to see us together, I'll try to not show any public displays of affection. Okay?"

Debbie decided to make peace with Valerie for Carlos' sake. He had done a lot for her, and she should do something in return.

'Maybe we got off on the wrong foot. When I first knew the Hilton family didn't like me, I should've tried to make them like me instead of standing up to them, ' Debbie mused.

Now that Debbie had already made a concession, Valerie didn't think she should press her luck. Otherwise, Carlos would think she was crazy. She decided to let Debbie go for now, and she would find a new way to deal with her. Sitting back on the couch, she snorted, saying nothing more.

Debbie gave Valerie a smile and went back to Carlos. They went up the stairs, hand in hand.

After they entered the bedroom, Carlos shut the door behind them and then walked to the study adjoining the bedroom. He opened his laptop and began to work, without saying a word to Debbie.

'What?! I thought he wasn't mad anymore.

Turns out I was wrong, and he's still angry, ' Debbie thought.

She sat on the bedside, wondering what she should do to cool him down. Suddenly, a light bulb went off in her mind. She entered the study quietly and sat on the couch.

All of a sudden, she held her back with her right hand and cried, "Aaaargh! It hurts! My back!"

Carlos stopped typing and stood up. He strode towards her and asked anxiously, "What's wrong? Your back hurts? Let me take you to the hospital."

"No... No... No need for that. I can handle it."

"No! I must take you to the hospital." He scooped her up in his arms and was about to leave.

Debbie cuddled his neck and said quickly, "Don't take me to the hospital! I just feel like I'm sprouting wings."

Carlos stopped and looked at her in disbelief.

His reaction amused Debbie, and she wanted to laugh out loud. But she knew he would get angry again if she did. So she said playfully, "Honey, I've developing wings."

Instead of putting her down, Carlos took her to the bed and threw her onto it. He began to strip off her clothes while saying, "Well, I'd like to check how your wings are coming along. What kind of bird are you, anyway? Never mind, let's have fun finding it out."

#### CHAPTER 199 I KNOW MY WOMAN WELL

Pride was written all over Debbie's face. Not until now did she realize that Carlos had given a lot to her, and she felt so grateful.

With knitted eyebrows, Carlos stared at his grandmother and said angrily, "Debbie may be a bad student, Grandma, but she's better than that. Quit trying to frame her."

Valerie scowled at him and snapped back, "I'm not lying! Before she came here, we never lost anything. She must be the thief! Besides, she always tries to bully Megan. If I hadn't been with Megan, this woman would've probably beaten her. She eats too much. She's lazy, and doesn't respect her elders. She doesn't wake up until noon. What's worse, she even cheated on you. Carlos, I won't accept this woman as my granddaughter-in-law."

Debbie was shocked at Valerie's words—she never imagined she thought so low of her. Bitterness flooded her at this moment.

She had done so much housework to please Valerie, but she thanked her by calling her a thief.

'I don't give a rat's ass what they think of me. But I do care about... Carlos' opinion. Does he think of me

like that too?' she thought to herself.

She didn't dare to look Carlos in the eye, as she was afraid that she would see disappointment glinting there.

Carlos leaned against the couch, his face deadpan. When he heard Valerie's accusations against his wife, he held Debbie's hand and began to play with it.

Debbie was left speechless. 'What's he doing? I thought we weren't on speaking terms. Is he trying to defend me?

Or is he only doing this to save face?'

Just when Debbie was lost in her own thoughts, Carlos spoke in a cold voice. "I don't know why you think of her that way, Grandma. But she's a good girl. You just won't give her a chance. You said she had bullied Megan. If she really wanted to do that, she would have beaten her up whether you were there or not. See any bruises? No. So you just overreacted."

Valerie's face turned livid. Ignoring her, Carlos continued after a short pause, "You said she didn't respect her elders. In my eyes, she always treats our family members with the utmost respect. You guys, on the other hand, are shitty to her. She doesn't wake up until noon? Well, she suffers from jet lag. And it's my fault. She's up until the small hours because of me. If you do mind that, I'll try to let her get to sleep earlier. She cheated on me? I already explained it, and I don't want to talk about it anymore. You said she stole things? Haha! You must be kidding. My wife would never want your cheap things."

Disdain could be seen in Carlos' eyes.

A myriad of emotions flooded Debbie at this moment. She was so moved by Carlos she wanted to cry. She didn't think she was good enough to catch his eye, but he treated her like the most precious thing in his life.

Valerie was too angry to utter a single word. After a long time, she finally cooled down a little and asked in a sad voice, "Carlos, how did she bewitch you? Why are you going on like this?"

"Because she's my wife," Carlos replied.

"Don't you think you're focused on the wrong person? How about Megan or Stephanie? But why Debbie? She's a thief and a cheater!" James thundered, as he couldn't bear Carlos' attitude any longer.

'Stephanie? Who's that?' Debbie thought to herself.

Carlos stood up from the couch and dragged Debbie along with him. "Don't call me out of work again and then run this...this circus! I'm super busy, and I don't have the time to deal with stupid shit. As for your lost things, I'll have my people look into it. And you, Grandma, you need to apologize to her once

the air is clear."

Then he and Debbie went up the stairs, hand in hand. No one dared to stop them.

Valerie hadn't expected things to go down like this. She thought once she said Debbie was a thief, Carlos would get angry and hate Debbie. But it turned out she was wrong.

The moment they entered the bedroom, Carlos told Debbie, "I still have work in New York, and we can't go back to Alorith now. If you don't feel happy here, how about we move out?"

After she thought about it a bit, Debbie shook her head. "We're going back to Alorith in a few days. Why go to the trouble? I'll go out for the day while you're at work." She decided to keep herself away from Valerie as much as possible.

Then she fell into his strong arms, and she could smell his cologne. With dark eyes, Carlos asked, "Go out? Is Hayden still around?"

Debbie got a headache thanks to Carlos' words. 'I thought he forgot about Hayden. Turns out I was wrong.' "I don't know whether he's still here or not. It has nothing to do with me. I'm not going out to see him. Let me guess, you don't want me to go out, do you? You want to ground me?"

With a snort, Carlos released her and warned, "I don't want to find out that you pulled something like you did with Hayden again."

Sticking out her tongue, Debbie teased, "Fine! I won't tell you."

The next moment, she was scooped up and thrown onto the bed.

"Trying to piss me off?" he asked in a hoarse voice as his hand began to stroke her waist.

Debbie went rigid. "It was just a joke. I'm sorry, honey," she apologized immediately.

Carlos stood up, adjusted his clothes, took out his phone and dialed a number. "It's me, Carlos. A number of things have gone missing in the Hilton family's manor. I trust you can look into this."

Debbie turned over on her stomach on the bed, looking at Carlos with pitiful eyes. After he hung up the phone, she asked in a low voice, "Carlos, do you really believe I didn't do it?"

Carlos undid his tie and cast a sidelong glance at her. "I know my woman well," he said shortly.

Debbie was so touched that she stood up and jumped at Carlos. He caught her and held her tight. She kissed him repeatedly on both his cheeks. "I love you so much, honey."

His heart softened, but he managed to maintain a poker face. "Don't try to fool me. I will always

remember what you did behind my back."

'Why does he sound like I cheated on him?' Debbie cursed in her mind.

"What a petty man!" she grumbled, pouting her lips.

"Petty?" he repeated.

"No, no, no! You misheard me. You're so handsome that I— Aargh! Don't bite me. I was wrong. My husband is the most wonderful man in the world!"

Deep inside, she began to curse, 'Carlos! I swear I'll make you stand barefoot on a porcupine.'

In the Gomez family's house of Alorith

Portia was on a phone call on the balcony of the living room, taking in the snow-covered landscape.

"Tell me why all my activities have been cancelled! It took me a long time to set them up. And now, you're telling me that all of them have been cancelled! What on earth is going on?" she shouted angrily into the phone.

#### CHAPTER 200 I'M GOING TO BE CARLOS' WOMAN

"What? I thought Light Shade Entertainment was going to sign me after the New Year. Why did they decide against it all of a sudden? Who replaced me?" Portia yelled into her phone.

"What? Don't tell me you don't know! Emmett? Emmett! Could he be behind this?" Portia suddenly stopped shouting when the person on the other end of the line said something. "I didn't expect a little assistant to be so resourceful..." she murmured in disbelief.

All her commercials and modeling contracts had been cancelled. What was more, Light Shade Entertainment also decided not to sign her.

After hanging up, Portia went back into the living room and threw her phone onto the couch. It bounced obligingly among the cushions before landing again, finally still.

Hayden had just come back from New York and entered the house, overcoat in hand. Portia trotted up to him and asked anxiously, "Hayden, you're friends with the CEO of Light Shade Entertainment, right?"

Hayden was about to take a warm bath after a long journey. He didn't miss a beat and asked in reply, "Yeah, I am. What's up?"

"Then call your friend and ask him why he didn't sign me." Light Shade Entertainment was the leading international company in the entertainment industry in Alorith. It was Portia's dream to be an entertainer of that company.

With Hayden's help, the CEO of Light Shade Entertainment had agreed to sign Portia after the New Year celebrations were done. But Portia's assistant had just called, and told her that all her commercials and modeling contracts had been cancelled and Light Shade Entertainment had decided not to sign her.

"Really?" Hayden asked, as he stopped and turned to look at Portia. "But why?"

Portia's eyes reddened. She took a deep breath and said in a choked voice, "I don't know either."

"Don't worry. I'm calling my friend now." Hayden took out his phone and dialed a number.

He hung up inside two minutes. He stared at his sister and was lost in his own thoughts, saying nothing.

Portia was impatient. "Hayden, what did he say?"

"Have you seen Debbie recently?" he asked.

Before Portia could respond, a sharp voice chipped in, "Hayden, why talk about that bitch? Are you really that hung up on her? You want to piss me off, don't you? Why did you suddenly go to New York? You should've stayed and celebrated the New Year with us."

Hayden turned around to see Blanche walking down the stairs, clad in a night gown. Fury was written all over her face.

Ignoring her questions, Hayden repeated his question. "Have you seen her?"

"Yes," Portia nodded, and wondered whether it had something to do with Emmett.

Hayden had long known that Portia couldn't stand Debbie, but he hadn't taken it seriously before. He didn't want to be caught between his sister and his beloved woman. But maybe he should have. A niggling doubt tickled the back of his brain. He wondered if it wasn't so much about Portia, but instead his last liaison with Debbie. Carlos seemed like he was okay with it, but what if he wasn't?

Now that Hayden knew that Debbie was Carlos' wife, he thought he'd better remind his sister. "Portia, Debbie isn't a doormat now. Don't mess with her. Just be nice to her for my sake, okay?"

Of course, Portia would not listen—there was no way she'd buy this. "Why should I be nice to her? Hayden, I don't care if you still like her or not. You've gone too far," she said in a cold voice.

'Yes, her husband is Carlos' assistant. So what? I don't give a damn about that, ' she thought.

Blanche pointed at Hayden and yelled at the top of her lungs, "Debbie! Debbie! What's so good about her that you've carried a torch for her for so many years? Hayden, you are now the CEO of the Gomez Group. You need to marry a woman from a family of equal status. That bitch doesn't deserve you!"

"Mom is right, Hayden. Just forget that woman," Portia echoed. She never liked Debbie, and she would do everything to make Hayden hate her. Her efforts came to naught, of course. While Debbie was a perfect vision, the woman of his dreams, these women just came off as hateful and wrong. They just didn't know Debbie like he did. She was a delicate flower, a gleaming jewel to be plucked, and the best thing that ever happened to him. They just couldn't accept that.

Unable to stand it anymore, Hayden said to Portia, "You pissed Debbie off the last time you saw her, and now her husband is avenging her." After saying that, he turned around and walked up the stairs.

Although Portia had thought of this possibility before, she still couldn't believe her ears. 'Emmett is just an assistant. How was he able to do that to me? Ah, I see. Maybe he mentioned this to Carlos, and Carlos did all of this...'

Blanche then noticed something was not right with her daughter. She held Portia's hands and asked anxiously, "What happened? Your face is so pale."

After a long time, Portia finally came back to her senses. She looked at Blanche in the eye and murmured, "Mom, all my commercials and modeling contracts have been cancelled. And Light Shade Entertainment decided not to sign me..."

"Why?" Blanche raised her voice, and her face changed dramatically. The commercials and modeling contracts were very important to Portia, and determined her future in the entertainment circle. Blanche had even flaunted her daughter's achievements before other rich ladies at a tea party the other day.

If Portia was unable to sign with Light Shade Entertainment, Blanche would have made a fool of herself.

"Emmett is avenging Debbie," Portia said through gritted teeth. 'Debbie! You thought you were something after marrying Emmett, huh? How could you do this to me?' Portia cursed inwardly.

Blanche's face twitched with anger. "What?! That bitch again? How dare she! She thinks she can do anything she wants just because of Emmett?! He's only an assistant! Bah! I swear I will beat her to a pulp."

A light bulb went off in Portia's head. "Mom, please get me in touch with Carlos," she said.

"What for?" Blanche asked in confusion.

Looking Blanche in the eye, Portia said with determination, "I'm going to be his woman." That was the only way she could step on Debbie and teach her a hard lesson that she would never forget.

"NO! Don't you know Carlos is married? You're not going to be anyone's mistress," Blanche snapped. There was no way that would end well. Men made endless promises to their mistresses about how they'd divorce their wives and marry them. They rarely did, and if the mistresses got pregnant, well, that

was all over.

Portia was not willing to be an ordinary man's mistress. However, Carlos was not an ordinary man. Being his mistress was much better than being an ordinary man's wife. Portia said in a calm voice, "Mom, I don't think Carlos loves his wife. Otherwise, he wouldn't have kept her a secret from the public. He has gone to parties with Olga a couple times. Besides, he walked out of the hotel with a college girl last time, and I'm sure that wasn't Olga. See? He has so many women. Men are all unfaithful. And Carlos is no exception. Have you ever heard of the daughters of the prominent families in Alorith getting married? No! Of course, Carlos' wife is not from a powerful family. Do you think I can't drive Mrs. Hilton out of the Hilton family and replace her?"

"Um..." Blanche hesitated. She had to admit that Portia had a point, but she was afraid that people might gossip behind her back. After all, it would be disgraceful if Portia was a mistress.

Portia knew what was on her mother's mind. "Mom, don't worry. I don't think people would gossip about me. Carlos is so rich and powerful, nobody will trash talk him or his woman. After I become his woman, our family will be more respected."

'After I become Mrs. Hilton, I'll ask him to fire Emmett!' she swore to herself.

Blanche had been thinking of marrying her daughter to Carlos instead of Lewis. Despite being the general manager of Hilton Group's New York branch, Lewis wielded little power in the company. But the truth was, Carlos had turned this offer down without hesitation. Left with no other option, she then decided to marry Portia to Lewis. After all, Lewis was Carlos' cousin. The Gomez family could still benefit from an association with Carlos.