

TMBA 221

CHAPTER 221 STOP HER

"Mrs. Hilton... ran out of the hospital," Tristan stammered on the phone.

"How?!"

Watching the hospital surveillance footage, Tristan cleared his throat and answered, "Debbie asked me to grab some real food for her. After I left, she snatched a nurse's uniform, changed into it and ran off."

Carlos closed his eyes with resignation. He felt as if the old rebellious Debbie was back, always giving him a headache.

"Where did she go?" asked Carlos. His voice betrayed no emotion.

"The camera shows she hailed a cab at the entrance, and the cab drove towards Skyline Road. You know, she lost your wallet in the river. With no money on her, where do you think she went, Carlos?" Tristan wondered how Debbie paid the fare, since she didn't have a penny on her.

Carlos stood up from his seat and left the venue quietly.

Portia grabbed her handbag and followed.

The manager of the fashion show had kept an eye on Carlos the whole time. The moment he saw Carlos leave the show, he tagged along.

"Tell Emmett to call Kasie. Tell her to stay put until I get there!" Carlos ordered on the phone.

Portia trotted after him. She almost sprained her ankle, thanks to a strap on her heel coming loose, but she didn't dare complain. She followed him all the way to the parking lot. Seeing Carlos hang up the phone, she asked, "Taking off, Carlos?"

He glanced at her and said, "Yeah. Zelda will drive you home after the show."

Portia refused thoughtfully, "Thanks, Carlos. No worries. I'll call my brother."

Carlos got in the car. Without one more look at Portia, he ordered Zelda to start the car.

When the manager of the show came out to the parking lot, Carlos' car was already gone.

Cautiously, he asked the woman standing there with an awkward expression on her face, "Miss Gomez, Carlos left because..."

Portia regained her composure and answered, "He had to leave for work."

"I see," the man replied. Then he pried, "Miss Gomez, are you a close friend of Carlos'?"

Portia cast him a cold look. The manager grinned and shut up.

Since Carlos had left, Portia decided not to go back to the show. She called the driver and asked him to pick her up.

When Debbie arrived at the gate of Kasie's block of flats, she told the driver with embarrassment that she didn't have any money.

The cabbie was annoyed. "Are you screwing with me? Nurse, don't you know you have to pay for the ride?"

Debbie smiled awkwardly. "Just a minute. Can I borrow your phone? I'll call my friend and ask her to meet me here. She can pay you."

Left with no other option, the cabbie reluctantly handed Debbie his phone. It was either that, or risk not getting paid. At this point, he still wasn't sure if he would.

"Kasie, where are you?" she asked, once Kasie answered.

"Outside. Glad you're awake. What's up? Kristina and I went to the hospital to see you this afternoon, but you were snoozing, so we left without waking you up."

Hearing that Kasie wasn't home, Debbie was flustered. "You're outside? Where? I took a cab to your place, but I have no money to pay the fare. I'm at the entrance to your block."

"What? Emmett and I are having dinner outside," Kasie replied. Then Debbie heard her say to Emmett, "Emmett, don't answer your phone yet. Tomboy went to my place. Let's head back now." When Kasie answered Debbie's call, Emmett's phone started ringing too.

Debbie asked, "Have you eaten yet? If you're not finished, I can find you at the restaurant— if you don't mind me being the third wheel."

There was a moment of quiet on the phone. Then Emmett said on Kasie's phone, "Debbie, we're on our way back. Tell the cabbie we'll be right there."

Without giving it too much thought, Debbie said, "Okay, hurry please. Bye."

She gave the phone back to the driver and explained, "My friends are coming. You'll have to wait a moment. But I'll pay you double the fare."

At that, the anger disappeared from his face, and he visibly relaxed. He even chatted a little with Debbie.

He had quite a few questions, but she must have presented quite a sight. She didn't have time to gather up winter clothing, and some of her clothes were lost in the accident, anyway. Her scalp had stopped bleeding, but she still had the bandage on, which people's eyes were naturally drawn to. And of course, with nurse's scrubs, you couldn't really tell where she worked. Debbie had eschewed the name tag when she donned the nurse's outfit. "Which hospital do you work in? That looks like a nasty wound. It's freezing cold. Why are you not bundled up? Aren't you cold?"

Debbie looked at the clothes she was wearing and feigned embarrassment. "I spilled water on my own clothes. These clothes belong to my friend. And I came to borrow some clothes from another of my friends."

"Oh, you should be more careful. You could catch a cold dressed like that."

Ten minutes later, Debbie saw someone approaching. It wasn't Kasie, but Carlos.

When Zelda got out of the car and paid Debbie's fare, her first thought was, 'Holy Crap! Run!'

She opened the back door quickly and ran away from the Emperor like crazy.

Watching her fleeing figure, Carlos took out his phone and ordered, "Mrs. Hilton is running down Riverside Lane. Stop her!"

Soon enough, a Bentley pulled up in front of Debbie, blocking her path. She almost ran into it, and had to put her hands on the door to steady herself.

Two bodyguards walked out of the car and stood in her way. "Good evening, Mrs. Hilton," they greeted her respectfully.

'Good? Nothing good about this evening, ' Debbie thought in frustration.

She turned her head. The Emperor rolled up alongside her.

The car window was rolled down. Carlos looked at her and asked, "Where do you think you're going?"

Clad in only the nurse's outfit, Debbie trembled from the cold, but still, she rolled her eyes at Carlos and responded stubbornly, "None of your damn business."

'Gosh, why is it so cold? I'm freezing.'

Zelda stared at the shaking woman with mixed emotions. Recently, she had learned that Debbie was Carlos' wife.

She had seen Carlos with Megan. And word had it the Hilton family and the Elliot family were going to form a bond by marriage. So shouldn't Carlos marry Megan or Stephanie? Why did he marry Debbie?

Lifting her head high in defiance, Debbie walked past the Bentley and the Emperor and continued walking down the road towards Kasie's building.

Carlos opened the door and got out.

Even though her teeth were chattering from the cold, the stubborn girl didn't intend to yield.

Steady footsteps came from behind her. Suddenly, she was scooped up and fell into familiar arms. "Hey... Let...go of...me. Now..." 'So damn cold.'

"If you don't want to freeze to death, shut up!" Carlos scolded.

Debbie's anger flared. "You're the one...fooling around ...with another...ugh...woman while I was in the hospital suffering. You don't get to be mad, Mister. Put me down," she said, struggling with him, while he held her fast. Although she was furious, due to the cold, her words sounded weak. She felt as if her lips were not hers anymore. She had lost command over them.

Carlos was at a loss. He had only gone to a fashion show. Why was Debbie accusing him of fooling around with another woman? 'This woman is unbelievable!'

He came to the Emperor and put Debbie down. The woman, however, gave the car a heavy kick. "No, I won't g-get in. I'd rather f-f-freeze to d-death out here". Her teeth clattered as if they were composing a special symphony. She was far from shivering now. Great convulsions rocked her body.

CHAPTER 222 THE BIG PLAN

The innocent Emperor was the one to receive the kick. Zelda sat stiffly in the driver's seat, not daring to move. This was her boss' favorite car.

Carlos' aura got grimmer. "Debbie," he warned.

Debbie wasn't scared. Glaring at Carlos, she snapped, "What?"

Somehow, her angry tone made him laugh. "If you're angry about something I did, then be mad at me. Don't take it out on the innocent."

'The innocent?' "Carlos, by 'innocent', did you mean your car or Megan?"

Carlos' anger had worn out. He wondered since when he had become so patient. "For the last time, get in the damn car!"

Making sure nobody was around them, Debbie kicked Carlos in the shin while saying, "No problem. I'll take it out on you!"

Looking at the footprint on his suit pants, he asked, "Are you happy now?"

"Yes, I am," she replied. She could hardly stand the cold anymore. Besides, she had just nerved herself to kick Carlos. She had had enough.

Without waiting for Carlos' reply, she got into the warm car.

After she was driven back to the hospital, Debbie walked to the changing room silently and changed into her hospital clothing. She shoved the nurse's uniform at Carlos' arms, but the man just stood and stared at it.

Debbie glared at him stubbornly. Her bright wide eyes read, "Are you going to take it or not? If you're not, I'll be very mad."

Carlos looked at the uniform in disdain and said, "This is another woman's clothes. I don't want to touch it."

Debbie was lost for words.

Debbie grumpily walked to the next room and said to the nurse on duty, "Please return this to your co-worker and apologize for me. Thank you."

Then she ran back to the bed and slipped under the covers without another word.

Again, Carlos was neglected.

After some time, how long Debbie couldn't say, she was about to drift off when Carlos said to her, "Here, take this."

She didn't respond.

Carlos lifted the covers. Debbie opened her eyes and gave him a cold look.

In his hand was a new high-end phone developed by Hilton Group. "Your SIM card is already in it."

She grabbed the phone from him quickly without so much as a "thank you" and tucked herself in again.

The first thing she wanted to do was talk to her friends on WeChat.

She thought that she might have to log in first. To her surprise, when she opened WeChat, her account had already been logged in. She wondered if Carlos had logged into her WeChat account.

There was no chat log. And it didn't seem that anyone had browsed through her messages or her updates in Moments.

She opened the group chat with her closest friends and typed, "Jared, Kasie, Kristina, Dixon! Let's do something crazy after I am discharged from the hospital."

Jared didn't respond.

Kasie sent an emoji which had a face with a question mark.

Kristina sent an astonished face emoji.

Dixon said, "I heard you had an accident. I called you, but your phone was switched off. How are you?"

"I'm fine now, but I can't leave the hospital yet. Dixon, are you back in Alorith?"

"Not for another two days." Dixon had gone to visit his hometown for the New Year. They still had several days to go before the new semester began.

Debbie had slept a lot during the day, and since chatting with her friends was so much fun, she was still busy typing on her phone past midnight.

After his evening routine, Carlos came into her room. As soon as he lay on her bed, Debbie covered her phone with her hands, as if she was hiding something from him.

"What are you doing?" she asked warily, rolling her eyes.

"Sleeping," Carlos said, stone-faced. He knew what she was doing with her phone. He decided to ignore it. He had read her updates in Moments.

Just as he had anticipated, she had gone straight to WeChat and other social media as soon as she had gotten her hands on the phone.

She had posted an update in Moments. "I won't forgive you."

She didn't care whether Carlos saw it or not. Actually, she hoped he would. Then she wouldn't have to tell him again.

"Why don't you go home? How am I supposed to sleep if you stay here?" Debbie locked the phone screen and stared at him instead.

Carlos ignored her attitude. "I'm married. I'm supposed to sleep with my wife, and this bed is big enough for two people."

"We're having a fight."

"I didn't fight with you," he shrugged.

'If this isn't a fight, then what is it?' Debbie wanted to ask him. On second thoughts, if she chased Carlos away, she might get frightened at night to be alone in a hospital. So she dropped the topic.

Turning her back to him, she unlocked her phone screen again and continued replying to her friends' comments.

However, Carlos grabbed her phone from her clutches and said coldly, "It's late, and your wound hasn't healed yet. Go to sleep."

"I slept too much during the day. I'm not sleepy now. Give me back my phone. I have to reply to my friends' messages."

Carlos put the phone aside and pulled her into his arms. "Do it tomorrow."

"Hey! We're having a fight! You can't hug me like this. I'm mad at you. Carlos, You—" She was silenced by his kiss—a long, gentle kiss.

"You'll make me lose control over my urges. You're on your period. I don't want to be an inconsiderate asshole. So, stop moving," he warned in a husky voice.

In the darkness of the hospital room, Debbie smirked. 'Am I that sexy, turning a universally acclaimed good man into a horny asshole?'

Debbie wanted to talk to him, but she was afraid that the topic might become upsetting and that the conversation might go ugly.

She would end up sleeping alone in the hospital. She decided to silently fall asleep in Carlos' arms while listening to his steady heartbeat.

Debbie behaved well in the hospital the next day since she had her phone.

In the afternoon, Kasie, Kristina and Jared came to see her. They talked for the whole afternoon.

While Carlos and his secretaries were working outside her ward, Debbie and her friends were hatching a big plan.

Debbie began in a conspiratorial tone, "Wanna take someone out?"

The other three looked at each other and then shook their heads vigorously.

Debbie rolled her eyes. "You don't have to kill anyone."

"Then, don't say 'take someone out'," Kristina corrected her, sighing.

"Fine. How about doing something really crazy? Interested?"

Jared nodded. "Of course. How could I miss that?"

Since nobody needed to die in their little operation, Kasie and Kristina nodded too. "As long as it doesn't go against the law, count us in."

'Against the law...' Debbie thought about it. 'Does it?'

"It doesn't, I suppose," she said with a grin.

For a moment, her friends stared speechlessly at her.

Kristina finally said, "I doubt it."

CHAPTER 223 SHE LOOKS QUITE HAPPY

Debbie scratched her head in hesitation, mulling over her plan. "No. I don't think it's anything criminal, but we'll be stepping on Carlos' toes. Will you guys still do that for me?"

Her friends all looked perplexed at her words. Kasie couldn't bear hearing Debbie speak in riddles anymore, so she asked, "Okay, Tomboy, just lay it out. What are you planning?"

"Get this. I'm lying in a hospital bed, wearing these ugly patient clothes, and I've been put on a drip and had stitches in my forehead. This is all thanks to one woman! So I need your help to teach her a lesson!" Debbie said between gritted teeth.

'Her...' Even though Debbie didn't explicitly spell out the name, they all knew who she was talking about.

Familiar with upper-class circles, Jared and Kasie were both well aware of the consequences. They simultaneously shook their heads disapprovingly. Jared blurted out, "Don't do that. Carlos and Wesley are protecting her. She's the apple of their eye."

Kasie slapped Jared's shoulder to stop him. "Shut up! That was then and this is now. Tomboy is Carlos' wife!"

Jared noticed a dash of sadness flash through Debbie's eyes. Realizing that his words had hurt Debbie, he was full of remorse and hastily apologized, "Yeah. My bad. Tomboy, I'm in! Whatever you want. Okay?"

"Count me in. Anyway, Carlos will probably take your side. There's nothing to be afraid of! Look what that bitch has done to you. She needs a whooping," Kasie said. She knew most of the story. She couldn't swallow her anger over what Megan had done to her best friend.

Hearing them, Debbie slapped her leg and said resolutely, "Exactly! I'm tired of being a doormat. I never did anything to get back at her because I didn't want to hurt Carlos. But she's crossed the line. She's sabotaging our marriage. My husband and I are being driven apart because of her. I won't let her off the hook!"

'On top of that, I almost died thanks to Megan's phone call!' she thought angrily.

"Kasie, you can swim, right? I may need your help for this. And Jared, I just need you to do me a little favor. Kristina, you don't have to come with us. Just stay at home and wait for the good news." Then, Debbie told everyone her plan and assigned a task to each of them.

At last, Kristina looked at Debbie, embarrassed. "Debbie, I... I want to go with you too." She also was angry with Megan and wanted to watch this good show. However, she didn't have someone that had her back once things turned serious. Everyone else had wealthy parents that could pull some strings.

Touched by Kristina's gesture, Debbie patted her on the shoulder. "Kristina, don't follow bad examples. It'll make you a bad girl. I know your heart. Thank you. Just wait for us at home and prepare a big meal to celebrate our success. Okay?"

Kristina had no choice but to nod. "Okay. Take care, all. Especially now..."

When the three of them left Debbie's ward and saw Carlos sitting outside, they all bade farewell to him politely and formally. "Goodbye. Carlos!"

"Bye Carlos, see you!"

Carlos felt suspicious of them. His intuition told him these kids were planning something behind his back.

They had always been courteous to him, but this time, it was more than that. They seemed to want to butter him up, as if trying to get on his good side. Especially Jared. He had even clasped his hands in prayer when he left the ward.

With that thought in mind, Carlos turned to Emmett and instructed, "Go and get some information from your girlfriend."

Emmett understood what he meant. "Yes, Carlos!"

But... He suddenly felt baffled. Kasie was on Debbie's side, and so was he! Besides, Kasie was one of Debbie's best friends. Not exactly a reliable source, especially if she was part of the plan. No matter what information he had gotten wind of, he wouldn't betray Debbie. He liked the girl, though he was curious what she was up to.

As a protest against Carlos, Debbie was determined to endure a long, boring stay in the hospital rather than bow down and beg him to take her back home.

A week later, Debbie was finally discharged from the hospital.

Breathing in the fresh air outside, Debbie felt a surge of excitement coursing throughout her body. 'No more smell of disinfectant in the air! Amazing!' she exclaimed in her mind.

Truth was, if it weren't for the new semester starting in two days, Carlos wouldn't have allowed her to be discharged from hospital until the scar on her forehead vanished. So she felt really lucky.

After leaving the hospital, Carlos drove her back to the manor.

Much to her disappointment, he left for his office at once, even before she'd been properly settled there.

Watching him slowly disappear from sight, she could do nothing. She searched her brain, but found no excuses to make him stay a little longer.

The rhythm of an old song began to play in the back of her mind. She tried to recall the lyrics. 'Yeah, I remember now!' Then, she cleared her throat and began to sing. "I hide my tears from you to play cool. I give you a cold shoulder, however I care. Never thought you'd leave me along the way. My heart is dripping blood, but I have no courage to make you stay. I watch, you go to a world, far, far away..."

As she sang the sad song, Debbie felt much better. Sad songs sometimes had a way of doing that, curiously. They were cathartic, in a way, and sometimes more effective than all the anti-depressants a pharmacy had to offer. Then, she remembered Carlos told her to buy whatever she needed because her luggage had been lost. They weren't going to drag the river to find someone's dresses or makeup collection. Besides, she had stayed in the hospital for so many days. She needed to break out, hang out, and do some shopping.

"Your tenderness is nowhere to be found, and I lose all reasons to be strong..." Debbie continued to sing to herself as she slowly made her way upstairs. Funny enough, she suddenly sped up the rhythm, changing the sad melody to a cheery tune.

Meanwhile, Carlos had made a call to a housemaid before driving out of the manor. He asked the housemaid what Debbie was doing at the moment. With complicated feelings, the housemaid looked at the woman who was singing happily, and replied honestly, "Carlos... Debbie is singing."

Carlos was surprised. 'Singing? So she's quite happy even without me, ' he thought, upset.

Unsatisfied with the answer, he hung up the phone at once, his face darkened. He was as gloomy as ever, and the mood around him darkened as well.

Debbie went to the music studio and enjoyed herself there for a short while. She even got the inspiration to write a few lines for the song she was putting together. After that, she asked the driver to get her to the Shining International Plaza.

Debbie spotted a hair salon after getting out of the car. She touched her long hair. The idea of having a haircut came to mind. 'It is about time for a change. Maybe they can make me look like a million bucks.'

In the hair salon, a handsome man with grey-dyed hair greeted Debbie enthusiastically, "Hi, pretty girl! Welcome! What'll it be?"

Debbie scanned the spacious studio and replied casually, "My hair is a bit too long. I want it cut a little." She hadn't expected the interior of the salon was this luxurious. The price should be quite high.

"Okay, please come this way. Let me wash your hair first!"

Then, she followed the handsome man to another room to have her hair washed.

"So, just a haircut, or...? What about a dye job or perm too? Actually, you're lucky you came in today. We're running a special offer now. It'll be cost-effective if you buy a VIP card..."

Debbie paused. "Just a trim and perm the ends of my hair a little. And how do I get a VIP card?"

As the grey-hair man dried her hair, he gestured to another young man, asking him to come over. When Debbie saw another young man coming up to her, she couldn't help but marvel in her mind, 'Wow! Another handsome boy. Why are all the hairdressers here so handsome? Do they need to win a beauty contest before becoming a hairdresser?'

When Debbie knew that the price of a simple haircut was already 1, 200 dollars, she was taken aback. Her lips twitched. 'God! I'll never get a haircut in the Shining International Plaza again. That's way too expensive!

Are they hoodwinking the customers? How can Carlos allow such a hair salon to open here?' she wondered.

"But if you apply for a VIP card and save 10, 000 dollars in it, you'll get an extra 5, 000. And we have different bonuses at 30, 000, 50, 000 or 100, 000 dollars. Besides, we'll give you a coupon for one free hair dye and hair perm which is worth 3, 888 dollars... It's our 10th anniversary, so that's what we have for you. It's really a bargain. You look so beautiful, and to come here more often would only add to your beauty."

Debbie felt a little dizzy hearing the young man's endless prattling. They were doing the hard-sell here. It seemed that it would be a better deal to buy a VIP card. She would actually get a 50% discount, if her calculation was right. And moreover, she'd have a free dye and perm...

CHAPTER 224 IS SHE SAYING I'M OLD

"Okay, please help me apply for a 10,000-dollar VIP card," Debbie said to the young man. Deep down, she wondered if Carlos made her become bolder in spending money. This guy talked her into buying a 10,000-dollar card, and that was not chump change. He appeared to have done so easily, like he had a gift for fast talk. It only took three minutes for her to be 10,000 dollars poorer.

Even before Debbie's hair was dry, the handsome hairdressers had quickly fetched the VIP application form for her to fill in and sign.

They couldn't show more hospitality to Debbie by entertaining her with fresh fruits and beverages. In no time, a POS machine was put in front of her. So, without moving an inch from her seat, Debbie sealed the deal.

So, with her new hairdo, Debbie was warmly sent off by the handsome young men. Her hair was dyed brown, yet it looked black; it was trimmed, yet it looked as long as before. Well, the so-called new hairdo didn't seem that different at all.

In a daze, Debbie stepped out of the hair salon holding the Gold Card in her hand. This Gold Card was given to her by Carlos. She hadn't brought this bank card to New York and had kept it in another handbag.

She never expected to waste 10,000 dollars so soon.

She mourned a bit, feeling sad to waste money so impulsively.

Then, she opened the WeChat app and posted an update in the Moments. She wrote, "Wow, nowadays, hairdressers are all young and handsome, but with mad sales skills! They got me to buy a VIP card. Aww, poor me! My heart is aching, and so's my wallet. If I could turn back time, I would've never stepped into that store..."

She then put two Crying Face emojis below the words.

On the other hand, working in his office, Carlos heard his phone beep when Debbie posted her update. He had set her account as the Top Focus, so he would get her updates right away.

He immediately tapped Debbie's Moments. However, as he read the content, his frown deepened. 'Young and handsome? She always calls me old man. Is she saying I'm old?' he wondered.

'And why was she sad for buying a VIP card?' He was intrigued. How much money had Debbie put down on that card that made her so frustrated? He called Emmett in and asked, "Emmett, check how much money Debbie spent just now and where. All accounts."

Ten minutes later, Emmett reported, "Debbie spent 10,000 dollars on a VIP card in a hair salon at the Shining International Plaza."

'What? Just 10, 000 dollars? And she's sad?' Carlos couldn't help bursting into laughter.

"Go and upgrade the card. The highest amount they have," he demanded.

"Um...yes, Carlos," Emmett replied.

He hadn't made it to the office door yet when Carlos added, "Don't let her know."

Emmett nodded.

While she was hanging out at the shopping mall, Debbie chatted with her friends on WeChat. She complained, "I should've asked you guys along. You could have stopped me." It was just that she didn't want to bug her friends to keep her company all the time. So she decided to set out on her own, and do her shopping that way. It would give her time to think, at any rate.

Dixon sent a voice message. He said, "Bad idea. If Jared and Kasie were there with you, you would've spent 100, 000 dollars."

Dixon was right! Jared and Kasie led a more extravagant life than she did. But she didn't like squandering money, for the most part. Money was to get something you needed, not everything you ever wanted.

Kasie sent a Rolling Eyes emoji to Dixon and said, "You kidding? She's Mrs. Hilton. If anyone knew who she was, and that she was crying over 10, 000 dollars, they'd laugh at her! Tomboy, it's only 10, 000 dollars. Show off a little. Money's no big deal for your husband. Remember, Megan spent 80, 000 dollars for three shades of lipstick. She didn't even feel bad..."

They might be right! Debbie sent a Heart emoji to Kasie and wrote, "You're right. If I don't spend my husband's money, Megan will use it up sooner or later. I shouldn't give Carlos any chance to waste money on her!"

Seeing the two women's words, Dixon felt that he'd better zip his mouth.

Then, as Debbie walked into a cosmetics chain store, she tapped the comments in her WeChat Moments. There were already dozens of comments under the new post.

Gail's and Portia's comments caught her attention. Gail commented, "You bragging about something?"

Portia wrote, "I have a VIP card with 50, 000 dollars, for the largest hair salon at the Shining International Plaza. Go ahead and use my card."

Debbie could sense the sarcasm in Portia's comment.

Portia had become more and more aggressive against her. She seemed to smell blood, and like any shark, was attracted to it. Debbie didn't know why. 'I've been done with Hayden for a long time. Why is

she still pissed?' Debbie wondered.

"Thank you for your kindness, Portia. But I have..." Debbie was typing a reply. She paused and wondered what was the highest amount of the VIP card in that hair salon. She giggled mischievously. Anyway, Portia didn't know any better. Debbie decided to brag about it. She continued to write, "I have a VIP card with 200, 000 dollars in it. If your 50, 000-dollar VIP card isn't enough, you can call me and we can use mine together."

Portia didn't take the bait and reply instantly. Instead, she asked her man to confirm it.

Emmett had already upgraded the card of the hair salon by the time Portia's men called the receptionist there. The worker had already put the money into Debbie's VIP card five minutes before the call. After getting the answer, Portia's man reported to her, "Portia, Debbie's VIP card indeed has 200, 000 dollars, and together with the 50, 000-dollar bonus, she has 250, 000 in total."

Portia was dumbfounded, her mouth agape.

Clutching her phone tightly, she hung up quickly. She wondered, 'Why does Emmett have so much money to spend on Debbie? He's just an assistant. Maybe he takes bribes?'

Now, the thought of hitting on Carlos burned stronger inside Portia's heart.

She began to fantasize the day when she would be the new Mrs. Hilton. The first thing she would do was ask Carlos to investigate Emmett. If he was found out to have accepted any bribes, he'd be locked up. That way, Debbie would lose everything. She grinned broadly as she pictured the scene.

There was still no reply from Portia. Debbie didn't care, either. She closed the WeChat app and shifted her attention to the various lipsticks inside the lit glass counter. There were tons of shades, and accents on top of that. With exotic names like After Midnight, Love Bites, Everglow, and A Little Magic, there was a lipstick for practically every mood, if your mood was to attract a guy, of course. And with selections in matte, satin, or metallic finish, it was difficult for Debbie to make a choice.

'No, Debbie. You have more than enough lipsticks at home. Leave now and stop spending money!

But this color is so beautiful...' Debbie battled with herself in her mind. In the end, she couldn't resist the temptation and bought one more shade of lipstick. In the end, she decided on Moonlit Night, a mauve-ish shade that promised to give her a refined and elegant look.

Debbie had eaten dinner outside before coming back to the manor. Carlos hadn't come home from work yet, so she went to the yoga room. After doing a few poses, like Tree Pose and Downward Dog, she decided to head to the music room afterwards.

Carlos didn't come back until eleven o'clock at night. He found Debbie in the music studio and she was concentrating on writing a song.

He caught a glimpse of her scribbles on the paper. There were crosses or dots under most of the words. It seemed that she wasn't satisfied with the lyrics she had come up with.

Carlos stood behind her and patiently waited for a few moments. Yet, she didn't notice his presence. He stayed silent, even held his breath, trying to make himself as unobtrusive as possible.

"You..."

"Aargh!" Her high-pitched shriek interrupted his unspoken words.

Debbie jerked around to stare at the man who had sprung up from nowhere, her face white as a sheet. His sudden voice startled her so much that she felt like she was having a heart attack. As it was, she was still trembling.

Carlos inhaled deeply and closed his eyes. "Am I that scary?"

Debbie nodded, but then shook in panic. "No, you're handsome..."

A dash of satisfaction flashed through his eyes, but soon it vanished into thin air as he heard her say, "As handsome as a vampire."

Carlos sighed.

He threw a cold glance at her and demanded, "Go to bed now. Don't stay up late!"

"That's none of your business. Anyway, I can use my husband's money to buy the most expensive eye cream. I can use my husband's money to keep healthy no matter how late I stay up!"

Her words made Carlos happy but also angry at the same time.

In the end, he grabbed hold of her wrist and dragged her out of the music studio to keep her from talking any more nonsense.

CHAPTER 225 THIS IS YOUR HOME

"Let go of me. My legs work just fine!" Debbie yelled as she struggled in an attempt to break his grip.

But Carlos didn't loosen his forceful grip on her hand until they reached the edge of the bed. With strength, he freed her hand, throwing her onto the soft bed.

Debbie awkwardly lay prone on the bed, bouncing a bit while shouting angrily, "Carlos! Are you nuts? If you don't want to see me, then don't come back home! Oh, well. This is your home, not mine. I'll get out."

As she said this, she got out of the bed and trotted toward the doorway.

"Stop!" Carlos ordered coldly.

With his authoritative voice, he always could assert power over everyone but Debbie. It occurred to him that she was the only person in this world who dared to go against him time and again.

The angry woman had disappeared from the bedroom after slamming the door loudly, leaving Carlos alone with himself. Why did she constantly get angry with him when he only wanted the best for her? It seemed to him that their relationship was a bit like a child and a parent. He would make a rule or redirect her, and she would throw a fit because she wasn't allowed to do what she wanted right then and there. Sometimes, she would bring him to the end of his rope.

She had only gotten a few steps away when Carlos caught up with her and carried her in his arms. Feeling her legs leave the ground all of a sudden, she yelled, "Let go! You jerk! I don't want to see you..." Her voice was suddenly muffled. The man had kicked the door closed and pressed her against it to kiss her blabbering lips.

Realizing his intent, Debbie took the chance to ridicule him while gasping for air, "You want to have sex with me? But aren't you angry with me for taking birth control pills? Aren't you worried I'll take them again?"

Thanks to this topic, Carlos flared up more. He glared at Debbie intently, warning, "Debbie, if you eat just one more pill, I won't let you have even one bite of food."

"Whatever, no sex anyway, then. Since you don't trust me, why sleep with me? Get lost! Get away from me... Aargh! Ouch! You're hurting me..."

Debbie stopped her attempt to wriggle out of his arms by his sudden gesture.

Carlos tightened his grip on her waist. "Why are you turning me down? For Hayden?"

Debbie really wanted to pop him in the face. Why was he talking about Hayden? What did he have to do with this? In a huff, she snapped, "Are you high right now? Hey, stop, stop! I was wrong... I didn't..."

Debbie was now shrieking, her deafening pleading sounds echoing through the house, even though their bedroom was well-insulated.

Until the wee hours in the morning, the pleading, moaning and heavy breathing sounds finally subsided and everything returned quiet again. Weakly lying prone on the sofa, Debbie felt really remorseful. She felt like a fool. She shouldn't have angered a night beast who hadn't tasted its prey for a long time. She had reaped the consequences herself now.

Some people say that fight sex of a couple is some of the best sex you can ever have. Your blood is already surging through you, your adrenaline is high, so why not? Angry sex can sometimes make you feel better. But not in this case. They had sex for a whole night, but Carlos wore a cold face the whole time. Even when they reached climax, he didn't affectionately call her "Deb" or "Honey" as he usually did. Thinking of it, Debbie felt even more frustrated. 'Whoever talked about fight sex never met my husband. It's not true at all!' she thought gloomily.

The next afternoon, Debbie woke up from her long sleep, and she slept even longer due to her exhaustion. Like usual, Carlos had already gone to work.

She raised her sore arm, grabbed her phone and texted Carlos. "Shouldn't you go visit my uncle and aunt during the New Year?"

When they were in New York, Lucinda had called Debbie, inviting her to have a meal together with Carlos. Debbie had promised to go.

She had intended to visit her aunt and uncle after coming back from New York. However, she'd had a fight with Carlos even before flying back and had even experienced a near fatal accident. So she hadn't had the chance to visit them. Since she had almost recovered now, it was time to show respect to her elders.

On the other hand, when Carlos received Debbie's message, he had just arrived at Megan's house.

He took a look at the message and put his phone away.

Megan put a cup of coffee in front of him and said happily, "Uncle Carlos, this is fresh-brewed coffee. I made it for you. Have a sip, please!"

As she said it, she suddenly noticed a love bite on his neck. Her face flushed bright red in an instant. She found it hard to take her eyes off it because it was... too obvious.

Sensing Megan fixing her eyes on him, Carlos already knew what she was looking at. The truth was, he had gotten a lot of curious and strange glances from his staff all morning.

He remembered Debbie did it on purpose last night. And she got what she wanted thanks to this little trick. Now everyone knew Carlos had spent a crazy and romantic night with a woman. They believed that the couple must have been so passionate that they gave each other love bites in the heat of the moment.

Thinking of Debbie, Carlos couldn't help but grin tenderly. He grabbed the coffee mug and took a sip, trying to hide the affectionate look in his eyes.

Then he put down the mug and nodded, "It's good."

Megan came back to her senses and smiled sweetly. "Thank you, Uncle Carlos. I'm glad you like it."

But the next second, what Carlos asked made her smile freeze on her face. "I'm curious...when and where did you see your aunt Debbie taking birth control pills?" That was his purpose of visiting Megan's house today.

"I... I already told you about it. In New York, in the Hilton family's house. Uncle Carlos, why do you ask?" Megan stammered.

Carlos cast her a sidelong glance and said in a very stern voice, "Megan, be honest with me. You know I hate liars!"

Megan was frightened by his stern tone. Carlos had never talked to her like this. Unable to take it, she felt hurt, her eyes reddened. "I...I'll tell you the truth. Your... your mom told me..."

'My mom?' Perplexed, Carlos continued to interrogate her, "What did she tell you?"

Bowing her head in fluster, Megan uneasily played with her fingers. She looked baffled. "Uncle Carlos... please stop asking me. I don't want to betray your mom."

Seeing the flustered expression on her face, Carlos did stop asking about it. He changed to another topic, which in fact, brought more unease to Megan's heart. "Did you call Debbie before her car accident?"

"N-no..." Megan replied, her lips trembling.

"Megan!" Carlos shouted, his tone becoming stern again. Unlike Debbie, Megan couldn't resist this man's powerful demeanor, and he broke her resolve.

This time, she couldn't hold back her tears. They flooded her eyes and poured down her cheeks. "Uncle Carlos, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do it. I didn't think she'd get in an accident. That day, I knew you had a fight with Aunt Debbie and that you were unhappy. I felt really guilty, so I went out to call her in order to soften her anger. At first, she didn't answer, then I used another phone to contact her. When the call finally went through, I apologized to her sincerely. Instead of accepting my apology, she confronted me about telling you about the pills. I admitted it, and then she hung up on me. I didn't think she'd have an accident after the call. Uncle Carlos, please don't get mad at me. Please?"

Stone-faced, Carlos stared at her and continued to ask, "What else did you talk about?"

"Aunt Debbie said... that you loved her the most. So she warned me to stay away from you. That I've been pestering you all the time, annoying you. I promised her. Uncle Carlos, I feel bad now. I know it's wrong to hang around with you so much since you're married. But I just can't get you out of my head. I'm sorry. It's all my fault..."

Megan sobbed, her breath becoming short. Carlos massaged the upper part of his nose near the eye-sockets, feeling his head pounding for the trouble. To avoid her asthma attack, he had no choice but to comfort her, "Don't cry. I didn't mean to blame you."

"Hmm... Uncle Carlos, I hear you. I won't cry as long as you don't get angry." She turned her tears into smiles as she went to get a tissue.

After leaving Megan's house, Carlos got in his car and called Tabitha. "Mom, it's me."

"Carlos, what a surprise! You're not busy now?"

"No. Mom, when did you see Debbie take birth control pills?" Carlos asked outright.

There was a moment of silence on the other end of the line. Tabitha figured that it must be Megan who told Carlos.

Carlos waited on the phone patiently. After a while, Tabitha finally opened her mouth. "I think it's good she took a contraceptive, since your grandma and dad don't like her. It'll be a problem divorcing her if she gets pregnant with your child..."

CHAPTER 226 LET'S HAVE A TALK

"Mom!" Carlos' powerful voice interrupted Tabitha's mumbling. "Whether they like Debbie or not has nothing to do with me. Just answer my question. When did you see Debbie taking birth control pills?"

"Carlos!" Tabitha raised her voice. His cold voice stung her heart. "You've never talked to me like this before! You've become distant from me because of Debbie. I'm heartbroken by your coldness."

Carlos remained silent. Suspicion rose in his heart. It wasn't a difficult question to answer if she had indeed seen it with her own eyes, but she kept jumping over this issue. It dawned on him that things were not as simple as he had thought it to be. "Sorry, Mom. I have work. I'll call you later. Bye!"

"Carlos! Carlos..." Tabitha wanted to talk to her son for a while longer, but he had ended the call without waiting for her reply.

She sat staring blankly at her phone for a while before coming back to her senses. She stood up and walked to James' study.

James was talking to someone on the phone with a smile on his face when she pushed open the door and walked in. At the sight of her, he instantly pulled a long face and ended the call in haste. The smile had vanished from his face.

In a cold voice, he asked, "Anything?" He returned to his seat and randomly grabbed a file which was on his desk.

The expression on his face had changed so abruptly that it was impossible for Tabitha to not have noticed it. Her face went pale. "Carlos knows about Debbie taking contraceptives," she said, trying to sound calm.

James put aside the file and asked with a frown, "So soon?"

She merely nodded without saying anything. The truth was that she was the one who had blurted it out to Megan. But she couldn't dare tell James that, afraid of his ill-temper.

There was a moment of silence in the study. James lit a cigar, took a drag and slowly blew out a stream of smoke. Tabitha wanted to stop him from smoking for the sake of his health. Yet, the words were stuck to her throat. She dared not interfere with his business.

After a few moments, she vaguely heard him muttering, "It looks like it wouldn't be that easy to get rid of Debbie. I might have to finish her off for good."

Tabitha stared at the man in a daze. His face was emotionless as he said those devilish words. She wondered if she had heard it right...

In the manor

Debbie changed into a set of clean and casual sportswear, and was all set to go out.

Before she left, she called Emmett to inquire about Megan's new address.

Megan wasn't living in her previous residence anymore. Carlos had arranged another expensive house for her in a high-class neighborhood.

Debbie felt gloomy when she saw the beautiful houses flash by her as the car drove through the neighborhood. It was like her husband was keeping a mistress in broad daylight with no concerns.

Emmett had informed the entrance guards about their visit beforehand. So Debbie, Jared and Kasie were able to smoothly pass through the heavy security.

Jared, who was driving the car, stole a glance at the sumptuous houses in the neighborhood and marveled at their beauty. "Tsk, tsk," he clicked his tongue and shook his head. "Tomboy, your husband is so wealthy that he bought a house in this prime location for someone unrelated to him. I bet even the smallest house here occupies at least a hundred and fifty square meters, and it would be worth tens of millions of dollars!"

Debbie angrily hit his head. "I know that! No need to rub it in my face."

Of course she knew how expensive this area was. This was the center of Alorith. The average housing

price in Alorith was already high even for a standard middle class house, not to mention a house in this prime location.

Kasie, sitting in the back seat, rolled her eyes. 'Jared, you idiot!' she cursed in her mind. She quickly comforted Debbie, "Tomboy, Portia has bought you a villa in Esastin Villa. That one is much more pricey than any house here. And the manor you're staying in now is probably more expensive than this whole neighborhood. So, don't go too much into it. Your husband loves you far more than her."

Esastin Villa was well known as a brownstone district. Each of the villa there was valued at at least a hundred million. Everyone in the city knew about its sky-high price.

Debbie understood Kasie's intention to comfort her. She leaned against her seat, remaining silent.

When they reached building number eight, Debbie asked the other two to wait outside, and walked towards Megan's apartment by herself. She rang the door bell and waited.

She said to herself that she was strong enough to deal with a weak woman like Megan on her own.

As she waited for Megan to open the door, Debbie caught a glimpse of the two tall and sturdy bodyguards who were standing in front of the door and staring vigilantly at her. They were arranged by Wesley and Carlos to protect Megan. Debbie smiled ironically. They did treat Megan well.

If the bodyguards hadn't known Debbie's identity, they wouldn't have allowed her to come an inch close to the door.

Then again, she was confused. Carlos and Wesley spoiled Megan so much; why didn't either of them get engaged to her while they were still single? That way, things would have been simpler.

As Debbie was lost in her complicated thoughts, the door opened and Megan stood in front of her, wearing pink pajamas with bunny ears and a pair of pink slippers. She looked like a lovely young girl.

Megan was surprised to see Debbie at her door all of a sudden. But she returned to her usual self and greeted her with a sweet smile, "Well, if it isn't Aunt Debbie? What brings you here today?"

Debbie wasn't in the mood to pretend to be on good terms with her. She snorted coldly and cut to the chase. "I just happened to drop by. Come with me. I will buy you a drink and we can have a good talk."

Megan frowned upon hearing her invitation. But she hid her emotion and smiled again. "I'd love to. Please come in and wait till I get changed."

She stepped back from the doorway to allow Debbie to enter. Debbie had had no intentions of going into her house, but then she was curious to know if there would be any of Carlos' belongings in there, or if she might find some clue regarding their past. She decided to go in and find out.

At the hallway, Megan brought a new pair of slippers for Debbie to put on. After that, they walked into the living room.

"Wait here," Megan said indifferently and went straight to her bedroom without giving Debbie a second glance. The fake smile had faded away from her face the moment they had walked in and closed the door behind them. She dropped her pretense since there was nobody else here except the two of them.

Debbie didn't care about her cold attitude. She stood in the middle of the living room and scanned the space.

The decor was the sort of style most girls would have loved. The walls were painted in pastel hues and pink. Even the furniture was colored in either baby pink or light blue.

Exquisite and rare ornaments were placed on the tables and the cabinets. Everything looked pricey. But Debbie didn't find anything strange or special.

Suddenly, a photo frame on the table caught her attention. Curiously, Debbie walked towards it. She stood there and looked at the picture without touching it.

There were three people in the picture—Carlos, Wesley and Megan.

It must have been taken a few years back, judging from the complexion of Carlos' face. He looked tanned. Besides, he looked much younger in the picture.

Carlos and Wesley were both wearing a set of camouflage clothes. They had a thin smile on their usually calm faces. A short and young Megan stood in between them with a sweet smile, wearing the same camouflage uniform. In the background was a blue sea. It was a warm picture...

Debbie already knew how Carlos looked in camouflage uniform because he had a lot of group pictures of himself and other big shots hanging on the walls of his study in the manor. Those pictures were taken while he was serving in the Special Force.

"That picture was taken five years ago. Uncle Carlos had just fostered me and had been taking care of me for a while at the time." Megan's voice came from behind her.

Debbie turned around and saw her wearing a blue, long overcoat. In a sincere tone, Debbie praised as she turned back to look at the picture once again, "It's a nice photo. Two handsome men and a beautiful mixed girl. Breathtaking." Debbie couldn't help but think that if Megan hadn't fallen in love with Carlos, she would have been fond of this girl too.

CHAPTER 227 ANYTHING RASH

Megan remained emotionless even after hearing Debbie's praise. "I'm ready," she said flatly.

They went out together. Megan's bodyguards followed close behind them and got in another car.

It wasn't until Megan opened Debbie's car door that she was shocked to see the other two guys sitting there. After a pause, she climbed into the back seat without a word.

Kasie shot her a cold glance and moved over, and then looked back down at her phone. That showed Megan the proper amount of contempt and disdain Kasie was going for.

Jared was in the driver's seat, and he turned around to glare at Megan. "Well, you do have the guts to come along. You think Carlos will back you up so Tomboy won't do anything to you?" he remarked with sarcasm.

Debbie settled down in the passenger seat. After fastening her seat belt, she grabbed Jared's head and made him look at the road ahead. "Let's go!" she ordered.

"Hey! Watch the hair!" Jared protested. If it were someone else other than Debbie, who dared to lay a finger on his new hairdo, he would've kicked the guy away. Or at least he would've given him a good punch to remind him.

It wasn't easy to manage the new hairdo. He had spent more than an hour making it look just right before he went out today.

He anxiously looked at his reflection in the rear-view mirror and carefully smoothed the tousled hair, making sure he looked as handsome as usual. After two minutes, the flamboyant guy still hadn't started the car. Impatient, Kasie kicked the back of the driver's seat and yelled, "Are you going on a date? Quit messing with your hair. You already have a tons of pretty girls around you. Let's get going!"

Jared finally started the engine. He complained, "But it's you guys—not my Mrs. Right. I'm not looking for a friend or a girlfriend. I'm looking for a wife."

"A wife?" Debbie mocked. "You? The eternal bachelor? Dream on," she said, as she played on her phone.

Jared sighed helplessly. "Come on Tomboy. Have some respect."

On the other hand, Megan showed no interest in their bantering and secretly texted Carlos. "Uncle Carlos, are you free now?"

She waited awhile, but there was no reply. Megan assumed that Carlos was busy with his work at the moment, so she texted him again. "Aunt Debbie is taking me somewhere. She wanted to have a talk. But she's bringing a couple friends alone. Uncle Carlos, I'm scared..."

In no time, Carlos flat out called her. Seeing the caller ID on her phone screen, Megan instantly silenced the ringer. She didn't answer the call.

Shortly, Debbie's phone rang. Confused, she shot a glance at Megan, who was just sitting quietly with her phone in her lap. The screen was off, so she wasn't playing with it. After a little hesitation, Debbie decided to answer the call. "What's up?"

"Where are you now?"

Debbie's lips twitched. "Why do you ask?"

"Where are you taking her?" Carlos asked as he leaned back in his chair, massaging his aching temples.

"I just want to talk to her. What are you worried about?" Carlos could sense the irony in her tone.

"Don't do anything rash. Her health is bad."

"Haw-haw!" Debbie chuckled ironically. "Let me guess. You're worried that I'll hit her?"

'Since her health is bad, why can't she just behave and stop pissing me off?' Debbie thought to herself.

A bad feeling rose in Carlos' heart. He knew Debbie too well. There was a good chance she wouldn't let Megan off the hook easily this time. He tried his hardest to control his emotions and did his level best to calm her down. "Debbie, listen—she's innocent." What caused this mess was that Debbie was accused of taking birth control pills. Megan was the one who told Carlos about it, but he already knew that there was something more complicated behind the accusation. Megan might have been a pawn in a game that someone else was playing, trying to get rid of Debbie. He had asked Emmett to investigate the truth.

"She's innocent? Then what about me?" Hearing him defend Megan disappointed Debbie. She felt she was owed at least the same amount of respect, and he definitely wasn't showing it. He just grew enraged and colder when he found out the result of the blood test, and didn't even listen to her side of it. True, with the steroidal compounds showing up in her blood, it didn't look good for her, but there had to be some other explanation. Maybe someone had ground it up in her food, or something else. But Carlos had jumped to conclusions immediately. She was his wife, dammit! He should believe her over Megan.

'Have I done anything to her that deserved all the pain she put me through?' Debbie thought sadly. Whatever he said, she couldn't swallow her anger this time. She had almost died because of Megan's call.

"I won't let her go this time." As she finished this sentence, she hung up at once. She wasn't interested in hearing any more excuses.

Everyone in the car remained silent and held their breath the whole time. They were all well aware who Debbie was talking to.

Debbie's phone rang a few more times but every time, she rejected the call as soon as it rang.

Carlos called one of Megan's bodyguards and figured out where they were going. Realizing her intent, he hurriedly drove out with Emmett, tracing their routes.

But a few minutes later, the bodyguard called again, reporting to Carlos that they had lost track of their car.

Carlos immediately called Tristan and asked him to check Debbie's GPS position.

Jared finally stopped the car by the side of a river. This location was carefully selected by Debbie. She had personally come to study the surroundings beforehand. It was quiet here with no cars passing by. No one to see what was going on. No one to call for help.

Megan was forced to get out of the car. At the sight of the surging waves of the river, she was frightened, feeling the colors drain from her face. 'This was how Debbie almost lost her life,' she thought. 'Does she have a similar fate in mind for me?' She was hoping to rely on Carlos, but she wasn't sure he'd be able to find Debbie, or get here in time if something drastic happened.

She tried to compose herself. "You wanted to talk, so talk now." But Debbie remained silent. "Why did you bring me here? It's so cold outside," Megan said, hoping to break the awkward silence.

Debbie grabbed her by her wrist, dragging her closer to the riverbank.

Megan's legs were trembling. "What are you doing? If Carlos and Wesley hear about this..."

When Carlos was mentioned, Debbie chuckled. "Carlos will love me like he always has. Only this time, you won't be in the way."

Flustered, Megan quickly looked around, hoping to find anyone to turn to for help. But there was nobody else except the four of them. She didn't even see her bodyguards.

She inhaled sharply and shouted to the three surrounding her, "This is a crime!"

Debbie found a block of stone and sat on it. Squinting at Megan, she said casually, "I know my husband cares for you, but don't forget, he cares for me more. Do you think my husband would lock me up if I killed you? Worst case scenario, I still have someone else to save me like Mr. Loftus, Hayden..."

Of course, Debbie just brought up these two names to brag. She didn't really think that Curtis and Hayden would get themselves in trouble for her sake, had she been locked up in jail. But Megan didn't know that, and it was possible they might be able to pull some strings and get her out. Of course, she might lose Carlos in the deal, and she wasn't willing to bank on that.

Megan got even more frightened, her face now white as a sheet. "Just calm down!" she said in a shaky voice.

"Calm down?" Debbie snorted. She stood up, drew closer to her and looked into her eyes as she whispered with resentment, "When I fell into the river with my car, I was really calm. You know why? Because I felt despair. I was ready to give up and quietly waited for my last breath!"

Overwhelmed by the great fear, Megan slowly stepped backward with each word Debbie said. "Why did I bring you here? I want you to feel the same way I did. Megan, do you want to have a talk with death?"

Debbie said as she backed her to the edge of the river where there was no guardrail. A one-meter tall warning sign was visible on one side with the words: DANGER! DEEP WATER!

Megan tightly clutched a branch of a small tree, her heart pounding. Taking a deep breath, she apologized. "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. Please, I didn't want you to get into an accident..." 'No. I don't want to die now...' she exclaimed in her mind.

"You're sorry?" Suddenly, Debbie heard a car squeal to a halt behind her. Somebody came. If her guess was right, it should be Carlos who had come to save Megan.

And she was certain of her guess when she saw Megan shed crocodile tears again. Debbie had threatened her for a bit now, but she didn't even shed a tear. Now, as soon as her Prince Charming came, she began to cry...

The next second, a familiar voice came to Debbie's ears, "Debbie, get over here now!"

CHAPTER 228 JUST BEING REBELLIOUS

Debbie turned her head around to glance at Carlos. The sullen man stood on higher ground some distance away, glaring at her with his sharp and piercing eyes, his face serious.

Emmett, worry written all over his face, also tried to persuade her. "Tomboy, cool your jets. It's not..." He wanted to say it wasn't worth risking her future just to get revenge on Megan. But he swallowed his words as Carlos was right next to him. He didn't think much of Megan, but Carlos did. And it wasn't worth letting his boss know. His personal feelings weren't necessary for him to do his job, and he knew that. He also knew that he could be replaced at a moment's whim, and he'd been on thin ice more than a few times where Carlos was concerned.

He hurriedly tagged along with Carlos, rushing towards the group.

Seeing Carlos darting towards her like an arrow flown from a bow, Debbie got anxious. She lost her composure and glared at Megan with resentment. "I meant what I said."

"Aargh—"

Splash!

Following a shriek, Megan fell into the river, making a loud splash.

By the time Carlos reached them, Debbie had already pushed Megan into the river. He glared at Debbie angrily, eyes burning with rage. "I thought you were just being rebellious. I never knew you could be this evil," he scolded.

Debbie stared at him without uttering a word.

Seeing that Carlos was about to take off his coat, she got flustered, demanding, "What are you doing? Don't save her!"

Her words added fuel to the fire. His body radiated a frozen aura, which made Jared, Kasie and Emmett all hold their collective breath.

Without taking his eyes off Debbie, Carlos decisively barked orders to the group. "All of you. Jump in now. Save her!"

In fact, the reason why Debbie had to include Kasie and Jared in her plan was that they could save Megan at the last moment. Kasie was a good swimmer and Jared was a strong guy who could easily carry another person. She didn't truly intend to kill Megan, so she had people back her up in case Megan couldn't easily save herself. She wasn't going to kill her, but she was sure going to put the fear of God into Megan.

So Kasie had already been on standby from the moment Megan fell into the river. Now as soon as Carlos gave his order, she instantly jumped in. It wasn't wise to disobey Carlos, despite the fact that she might not be entirely ready. She steadied her strokes, and angled her body so that the currents might not carry her away too. She had no intention of drowning today.

Seeing Kasie jump, Emmett followed her. He had to obey Carlos. Moreover, he wanted to make sure Kasie was safe. He didn't care too much about Megan, but Kasie was his girlfriend. While they hooked up over a few bribes, God helped him, he was starting to have feelings for the girl. He could see why Debbie liked her.

Megan kept struggling after falling into the river. She finally surfaced, but was only able to stay afloat for a second or two, coughing up water. Then, she went under again, dragged down by the strong undertow. She wasn't a strong swimmer to begin with, and being wet, cold, and suddenly dragged into the water really didn't help things.

The very second she surfaced, Emmett spotted her and swam towards her. His sleek body cut through the darkened, menacing waves. He knew this was a life-or-death situation, and one slip meant he'd be in danger too.

On the riverbank, Carlos grabbed hold of Debbie's wrist. "You crossed the line this time!" he yelled angrily. He held her hand tightly, so it hurt. He was beginning to lose control of his anger, and it bubbled

to the surface now that Megan was in danger.

Surprisingly, Debbie broke his grip. "She just fell into the river, and now you're worried? What about me? I could have died! I nearly did!"

Carlos' face became livid. Feeling the tension between the couple which was like the calm before the storm, Jared felt like a tornado was on its way to come and destroy everything.

As Carlos responded with silence, Debbie continued to mock him, "Aren't you always so composed? I remember you being quite calm when you had me tossed overboard."

Carlos coldly cast her a sidelong glance and took off his coat while roaring, "It's a life-or-death matter. I can't just sit back and watch!"

"Then why did you just sit back and watch when I was in danger? Huh? Carlos, if you jump down to save her now... you...marry her." Debbie didn't dare to spit out the phrase "we divorce."

"You trying to piss me off?" He flung his coat to one side and grabbed hold of her wrist, pulling her closer to the edge. "Then we go down together!"

He was determined to teach her a lesson. Otherwise, he was afraid she might kick Megan off a skyscraper next time.

Before Debbie got what he meant, he had dragged her down to the river with him...

Everything happened in a split second. Jared was completely taken aback, his jaw dropped. There were six people who had come here, and four of them had jumped down to save one woman. What in the world was going on?

The icy-cold water pierced Debbie to her bone, but that was not why she was cold. It was not her body, so much as her heart. She struggled to break Carlos' forceful grip on her wrist. In a muffled and weak voice, she said sadly, "Carlos, I'm so cold. It's not my body... but my heart..."

After spitting out a mouthful of water, she tried to speak again. "You said... you had my back...no matter what. But now, wig snatched!"

As Debbie kept surfacing and sinking, her words were lost in the flurry of activity. "Dammit...this is how you back me up?"

Carlos, did you lie? Do you really love me?" Her voice trailed off. She felt drained of energy and didn't want to swim anymore. The cold water closed around her throat, suffocating her, which brought back the horrible memory of her sinking into the river last time. All of a sudden, she felt like she was drowning in an ocean of fear and loneliness. Why was Carlos choosing Megan over her? Didn't she have a claim to him, too?

Carlos had initially wanted to swim toward Megan, but now regretted having done such an impulsive thing. Debbie looked like she'd lost the will to do anything.

He immediately approached Debbie, wrapped his arm around her waist and swam towards the bank.

After getting Debbie onto dry ground, he quickly took off her wet clothes and wrapped her in his overcoat. At the same time, he ordered Jared, "Turn on the heater in the car!"

Snapping back to his senses, Jared rushed towards his car, started the engine and turned the heater on high. He hoped that the heat rushing through the vent could warm up the pair. This was getting too weird. It was just supposed to be a prank they played on Megan.

Right as Carlos carried Debbie to the car, Emmett also pulled Megan from the water.

At the hospital

With a dark face, Carlos leaned against the wall of the corridor, deep in thought. Curtis and Damon soon arrived there in a rush.

"What's going on? Is Megan okay?" Curtis asked, confused.

Carlos looked at him. A single word left his lips. "Debbie."

Curtis was more confused. He ventured a guess. "Did Debbie push Megan into the river?"

Carlos made no response this time. Curtis dropped into silence and even the talkative Damon kept his mouth shut. Pin-drop silence filled the air around them.

Since Megan was still in a coma, they couldn't visit her now. Then, Curtis asked Carlos about Debbie's ward number and found out it was just a few steps away.

When he pushed open the door of Debbie's ward, he saw the girl lying in bed, looking rather annoyed. Hearing the footsteps, she instantly sat up. "Hello, Mr. Loftus," she said by way of greeting.

Curtis nodded to her.

Debbie flashed an awkward smile. "Mr. Loftus, let me guess. Is this about me pushing Megan into the river?"

The four most respected men in Alorith had always spoiled Megan, so Debbie had already mentally prepared for any blame from them before she carried out her plan.

Unexpectedly, Curtis touched her head and smiled to her tenderly. "What are you talking about?"

Debbie, you have a far more important place in my heart than Megan."

'What? Wait, wait. What's that affectionate look in his eyes? Does he...!' In a fluster, Debbie moved away to avoid his touch and stared at him. "Are you...you...a two-timer?" she stammered.

Curtis was amused by her question. He slightly patted her head and said, "Wow, you definitely took that wrong. You aren't scared of Carlos, but I'm scared of Colleen throwing me out of the house!"

Debbie wanted to laugh, but with Carlos' name being mentioned, she suddenly pulled a long face.

Seeing the gloom on her face, Curtis sat down next to her and pulled the corner of the quilt. He said helplessly, "Didn't Colleen tell you not to fight with Carlos over Megan? Why can't you get that through your head?"

Debbie smiled bitterly. "Megan went too far this time. There wouldn't have been so many fights if it weren't for her."

Their relationship was worsening these days because of Megan stirring up trouble all the time, and besides, Carlos seeing her and Hayden stay in the villa together also made things worse.

"Carlos has been in a pickle because of you two girls. But he already knew you and Megan were like water and fire, so he granted guardianship of Megan to Wesley, asking him to spend more time taking care of her. I'm sure you're much more important to Carlos than Megan," Curtis said, patiently comforting her. There were a lot of things that Debbie didn't know. But Curtis had seen with his own eyes how much Carlos cared about her. So he thought he should at least tell her that much.

Before Debbie came into Carlos' life, Carlos had almost devoted all his spare time to Megan.

But after he fell in love with Debbie, Megan was no longer his top priority. Especially knowing that Debbie didn't like Megan, Carlos had always tried his best to keep his distance from Megan. Curtis saw all of this. He knew for that to happen, the cold, proud man must care deeply for her.

CHAPTER 229 CARLOS, KETTLE, BLACK

Besides, Curtis had never heard Carlos trash Debbie in front of them, and likewise, no one was allowed to speak badly of Debbie.

"Mr. Loftus, did you come to defend Carlos?" Debbie smiled helplessly. Curtis was indeed Carlos' loyal friend. She still remembered when they had a fight the other day, Curtis did the same thing and kept putting in a good word for Carlos. He would go to the mattresses for him, and wasn't likely to abandon him even in difficult circumstances. Which was exactly what a good friend was supposed to do.

Curtis shook his head. "No, I'm telling the truth."

"Can you get me out of here?" she asked expectantly. She was safe and sound without any injury this

time after being saved from the river. But much to her frustration, Carlos stuck her in the hospital again. She couldn't bear another boring stay in the hospital. She was tired of inhaling disinfectant.

Curtis raised his eyebrows. "You don't want to stay here?"

"No, not another second!" More importantly, she also didn't want to see Carlos for the time being.

Moments later, Debbie blatantly stepped out of the ward, tagging along with Curtis.

Carlos and Damon were busy chatting in the corridor. They stopped talking all of a sudden when they heard the footsteps.

Curtis walked up to Carlos and said, "Hey Carlos, Colleen has something to say to Debbie. You'll get her back later."

Carlos didn't say anything, nor did he look back at Curtis. He had kept his eyes glued on Debbie the moment she walked out of the ward. Debbie, of course, had sensed his intent gaze, but she just looked away, trying to avoid eye contact with him.

Curtis looked between the silently bickering couple and laughed. He shook his head helplessly while patting Carlos on the shoulder. "She's still young, so childlike. Do you have to be so serious with her?"

Carlos finally broke the silence. In a cold voice, he snapped, "Childlike? Have you seen any of your students do something like this?" 'Beyond all her bad habits and outrageous behavior, she's gone overboard. She tried to kill Megan... in broad daylight!' Carlos thought angrily.

Curtis wasn't able to find the best words to defend Debbie.

Hearing his reply, Debbie finally shifted her gaze to Carlos. She sneered and taunted him, "Carlos, Kettle, Black. You had the guts to have your wife thrown to the sea to feed the sharks. I was lucky to survive, but then you wanted to bury me alive. Again, I was blessed by God and escaped your deadly grasp. But then you dragged me into the river to drown me. Am I your wife, or your enemy?"

Carlos lost control of his temper and darted toward Debbie to grab her. "Calm down," Curtis said. He hastily moved and blocked Carlos standing in between the couple to stop things from escalating.

Debbie stuck her head out from behind Curtis and smiled at the angry man. "Oh wait, Carlos. I almost forgot. Congratulations on marrying Megan. Granted, if I'm your ex, then it makes sense that you did this... So now we see who you really are. Resorting to violence?"

"Debbie!" Curtis stopped her. He had been signalling her with his eyes the whole time.

Carlos, who was controlled by Curtis, slowly shut his eyes, bearing his anger. A moment later, without parting his eyelids, he accurately pointed at Debbie and ordered between gritted teeth, "Get her out of

here, now!"

He didn't know how far he'd go if she didn't disappear from sight as soon as possible.

"Fine. I know how to follow orders. I should get going now! Just leave me alone!" As she was finished, she turned around and headed for the elevator.

Thanks to her parting words, Carlos was now overwhelmed by an urge to tie Debbie to a bed and punish her good. She always knew how to push his buttons and get his blood boiling in seconds. He wondered why he put up with her sometimes, but he also knew that the moments where he felt deep affection for her made it all worth it. She was his one and only, but sometimes she pushed him to his limits. Finally, he broke free of Curtis' grip, and shouted to Debbie, "You, stop there!"

Hearing the heavy footsteps coming from behind her, Debbie picked up her pace to rush toward the elevator.

When she began to run, the usually mature man also started to run after her. They looked like two kids playing cat-and-mouse in the corridor.

Curtis and Damon were both dumbfounded by the funny scene. Fortunately, this was the VVIP floor of the hospital, so there was no one else here.

Debbie quickly slipped into the elevator and pressed the button. The door closed at the very moment Carlos reached it.

Carlos quickly moved to another elevator, but it was still going up. This was the 18th floor. He couldn't catch up with Debbie if he chose to descend the staircase on foot.

Left with no choice, he called one of the bodyguards on the ground floor, asking them to head to the elevator and stop in Debbie's tracks.

However, two minutes later, the bodyguard called him and reported, "Carlos, Debbie got away..."

Still waiting for the elevator, Carlos asked in a cold voice, "How?"

"Um... She ran too fast and we couldn't overtake her..." the bodyguard stammered, embarrassed.

Carlos tried his hardest to hold back his anger. "So get in a car."

Gasping for air, the bodyguard looked in the direction where Debbie had disappeared and replied, "Debbie ran into the garden as soon as she saw us. Then she stopped a car on the road and jumped inside."

"Stopped a car?"

"Yes... Unless I miss my guess, that was Gus' car."

Carlos turned to stare at Curtis, his face fell. After a while, he said, "Okay, I see. Just report to your post and stand by for more orders."

Confused by his stare, Curtis asked with doubt, "What happened?"

Carlos put his phone away and tidied up his clothes, returning to his stoic and imperious self. He said calmly, "Gus... Curtis, why did you come here? Are you and your brother trying to make trouble, or..."

'My brother? Gus?' Curtis suddenly realized that Gus had come to the hospital for another checkup today. He chuckled under his breath. "Gus didn't mean anything by doing this. He had the stomach flu two days ago. He's recovered, but the doctor asked him to come back to make sure..."

'So Deb got lucky!' Curtis laughed in his mind.

Damon had been silently watching the show the whole time. He was laughing, because the situation was so absurd. Debbie was definitely giving Carlos a taste of his own medicine. Now he walked up to Carlos and rested his hands on Carlos' shoulders, looking into his eyes. A moment later, under the stoic man's cold glance, Damon finally said, "I'm sorry."

As amused as he was, he did feel sorry for Carlos. Debbie was such a troublemaker. Meanwhile, he felt lucky that his own wife was mature, composed and charming.

Outside the hospital

In the driver's seat, while driving the car, a young man took a glance at the cars behind them in the rear-view mirror. When he confirmed that there was no suspicious car following them, he finally let his guard down. Glaring at the panting woman in the passenger seat, he confronted her, "Hey, Debbie, you running from someone?"

Debbie patted her chest to steady her breath. "Yeah." 'My husband!' she exclaimed in her mind.

Gus snorted. He wouldn't believe her words. He didn't bother saying anything more about it. Instead, he said outright, "Get out of my car at the next intersection. And remember the fare."

"You're charging me for the ride? Should I call Mr. Loftus now?" As she said this, she pulled out her phone from her pocket.

Gus shouted with anger, "Hey! If it weren't for me, those guys would have caught you! Is this how you thank me?"

Debbie relaxed her whole body and leaned back weakly in her seat. "Can I ride a little while longer? Long

enough for a few phone calls?"

Then, she called Jared first. "Hey, Jared, drinks tonight!"

Unexpectedly, it was Jared's dad who answered the phone. "Debbie? It's Jasper."

"Oh...hello, Jasper!" Debbie said politely.

Jasper smiled and replied in a more formal and courteous voice, "Hello Debbie. I'm afraid Jared isn't free tonight. Take a rain check?"

Debbie felt that something was strange. But she couldn't put her finger on it. "Okay, doesn't matter. Jasper, I shouldn't take up more of your time. Goodbye now."

"Hmm. Don't be a stranger. Come to our house to have fun next time. I'll have Jared's mom make your favorite desserts," Jasper said.

CHAPTER 230 BANNED FROM DRINKING

Debbie had been to Jared's house a couple of times. Faye Jones, Jared's mother and Damon's stepmother, had been very nice to her, as she thought Debbie was Jared's girlfriend. They corrected her, and she was somewhat embarrassed by her mistake. Nonetheless, she still treated Debbie very well.

"Okay. Thank you, Jasper. Goodbye," said Debbie.

"Bye, Debbie.

" After hanging up, Debbie called Kasie. But unfortunately, her phone was off.

She sighed and then tried to contact Kristina. But before she could do that, her phone rang. It was Colleen.

"Hi, Colleen," Debbie called out in a depressed voice.

Colleen could tell that she was in low spirits. "Hey Debbie! What are you doing now? You free? How about we go out for drinks?"

This was exactly what Debbie wanted! She slapped her thigh and agreed cheerfully, "Sure. Why not?"

She was trying to find someone to hang out with when Colleen called.

"I'll book a place and send you the location on WeChat," said Colleen.

"Mm-hmm. I'll be waiting for you."

Debbie heaved a sigh of relief as she could drown her sorrows this evening.

"I thought you weren't allowed to drink," Gus said to Debbie in confusion.

Puzzled, Debbie asked in reply, "What? Who told you that?"

"Curtis. He told me your husband banned you from drinking," he answered honestly. His brother also told him that if he saw Debbie drinking, he should not only pay her tab, but also get her to a safe place so that Carlos couldn't lecture her.

Debbie was left speechless. 'Really? Ban me from drinking? Well, he might be someone else's husband soon. And he has no right to tell me what to do anymore.' She was more convinced than ever she was right about that. Carlos chose to defend Megan over her, so as far as she was concerned, they were done. Besides, she thought it was a stupid rule that she couldn't go out and drown her sorrows in alcohol. How else was she supposed to bleed off stress? Meditate?

Not knowing where else to go, Debbie asked Gus to drop her at a shopping mall.

She had originally planned to visit her aunt and uncle with Carlos. But now it seemed impossible. The stubborn girl didn't want to even think about her errant husband right now.

Debbie went on a shopping spree, walking past all the things the mall had to offer. Movie theaters with the latest releases, karaoke lounges, lively gaming arcades, tranquil beauty spas, indoor ice rinks, not to mention the hottest restaurants in town. It seemed a great place to kill some time, but she knew what she had her heart set on. She took a cab to the Murphy family's house with loads of shopping bags. Only Lucinda and Sasha were home.

Lucinda opened the gate and got confused when she saw Debbie's haul. "Why all the bags?" she asked.

With an embarrassed smile, Debbie told a lie. "I...wanted to visit you and Uncle...with Carlos, but...he's too busy to make it. So I came here alone."

"Really?" Lucinda was still not convinced. "Carlos called me and said he was too busy to visit. He already sent us gifts. Why did you buy more?" Debbie was shocked. "Gifts? When did he send them?"

Lucinda helped Debbie put the bags in a corner and led her to the living room while saying, "Yesterday. Emmett dropped by and left gifts, along with Carlos' apologies. Your husband said you guys would come by when he wasn't busy. You didn't know?"

Sasha was lying on the couch, a facial mask covering her face. She greeted Debbie in a mumble, "Deb!"

Debbie nodded at her, and then said to Lucinda, "He didn't tell me. Forget it. I can still bring you gifts, even if he already did. The more, the merrier!" Carlos didn't reply to her message, so she thought he didn't want to visit Lucinda with her.

Lucinda rolled her eyes at Debbie. "Come on! Don't say it like that. You're husband and wife, and you should behave like a couple. Come here. Have some fruit. Emmett brought all kinds of fruit—flown from overseas. So sweet!"

Debbie was again speechless. She was still mad at Carlos, and didn't want to eat anything he sent.

However, she didn't want her aunt to worry about her. So she picked up a slice of mango with a fork, pretending to enjoy it. She couldn't deny that it was succulent and delicious.

In a few minutes, Debbie got Colleen's WeChat message along with a location. It said, "6 o'clock. We'll grab some dinner first. Then clubbing. Cool?"

Debbie replied, "Cool. See you then."

She didn't have other plans, so she stayed there until nearly 5 p.m. She then bade Lucinda and Sasha goodbye.

At the Hampton family's house

As soon as Damon got home, he went upstairs to find Jared.

The door to Jared's bedroom was open. Damon could hear Jasper lecturing Jared. "What? You thought you were 3 years old? Do you know what you did? How dare you offend Carlos!"

Covering his head, Jared tried to avoid his father's strikes. "Just stop, okay? You grounded me and took my phone. I just wanted to get some sleep, yet you came in and started hitting me."

Faye was standing off to one side, looking anxious.

When she saw Damon, she grabbed his hand and said, "Stop your dad and cool him down."

Damon rolled his eyes and leaned against the wall, thinking, 'They can't pay me enough to do that.' Watching the scene, he said casually, "Why not enjoy the show? Dad should teach him a lesson so that he won't mess around with Debbie again."

"Hey, what? I didn't mess around. You messed around! Your whole family messed— Aaaargh!" Jasper caught him off guard and gave him a heavy blow with his duster.

He stared fiercely at Jared and said through gritted teeth, "Your whole family? Are you cursing me? You ungrateful cur!"

Damon laughed out loud at his father's words. "Jared, listen to Dad. Mom, don't worry about it. Do you know what he did today? He pushed a young girl into the water. Ten-meter-deep water! That girl was

Megan, Carlos' niece. See, Carlos would probably stick up for Debbie. But a prick like Jared? Hah!"

"Watch your language. Megan deserved it. She caused Tomboy's car accident," Jared retorted angrily.

Damon rolled his eyes. "You believe whatever Pepper Debbie says, don't you? Megan wasn't there when she had the car accident, anyway. How could she have caused it? Come on. Pepper Debbie was just jealous and tried to frame her."

Jared fumed with rage when he heard Damon. He pushed Jasper away, who was about to hit him again with the duster. Jasper staggered and fell onto the bed.

Jared grasped Damon's collar and shouted, "You said Debbie framed Megan? Don't talk about her like that!"

"Dude, I've known Megan for more than five years. She wouldn't do anything like that," said Damon angrily.

"Dammit! I've known Debbie for seven. She wouldn't do that, either." As he said this, Jared raised his arm and threw a punch towards Damon's face.

Damon was quick enough to dodge the attack. Now that Jared started a fight, he wouldn't take it lying down. He aimed a hammerfist at his brother.

Jared blocked it. Then, the brothers began to fight in earnest. Fists flew and tempers flared.

Jasper and his wife stared at the two, mouth agape. The brothers fought over girls. The funny thing was, those girls weren't even their girlfriends.