

TMBA 401

[Chapter 401 Come Back](#)

Carlos fell in deep contemplation over his relationship problems. He came to realize that no matter how successful he was in business, when it came to love affairs, he still had a long way to go. His natural instincts about matters of the heart weren't as fine-tuned as his razor sharp analytical skills.

On the surface, everything looked like it was a good ending for everyone—he was engaged to Stephanie and Debbie was to get married to Ivan.

But for reasons unknown to him, deep in his heart, there were lingered feelings of unease. His instincts were telling him that he was on the verge of losing something very precious to him. He felt tortured by these thoughts and no matter how hard he tried to use his work to keep his mind occupied, he failed. Especially when he'd see her, the feelings would grow stronger in his heart, making him lose control over his emotions.

Just as what he was doing at the moment. Carlos knew it was wrong to have intimate thoughts about a woman who was soon to be married to another man.

However, despite his strong self-control and the special training he had received in the army, he still couldn't control his desire for Debbie. He longed to hug her, kiss her, and take her. So he decided to act on his thoughts.

While Debbie found herself lost in the depths of his eyes, even she couldn't tell what he was thinking about. After seeing the intense look in his eyes, she finally gave in.

"Okay, but this will be the last time we have sex," she whispered to him.

But Carlos stood by what he said, "Don't marry Ivan." He eagerly looked for signs of regret on her face.

"No way,"

she refused again.

This time, he didn't reply anything more and banged her a whole night.

The following day, Debbie left Y City with Piggy. Later that day, Carlos saw pictures of Debbie at the airport in the news. But Piggy wasn't in the picture with her because Ivan had arranged for someone to take care of the kid and take her through a different VIP passage.

Three days later, Carlos received his wedding invitation card from Debbie, coupled with a picture of their marriage license.

Debbie's picture of her smiling brightly on the marriage license was an indication of her happiness. Carlos felt as though the picture was fashioned into a knife solely for the purpose of stabbing him in the heart.

As if that weren't bad enough, just two days before the wedding, Carlos received a photo of Debbie dressed in a beautiful wedding gown.

But it was Xavier who had sent him the photo.

"Mr. Huo, see you in Z Country," he wrote.

Debbie was dressed in a white satin backless gown scattered with crystals

Ivan kissed the little girl's forehead and left the bedroom. After closing the door for them, he went to the bedroom next door.

Debbie put down the towel and insisted, "Baby, put away the toys and go to bed now."

Piggy obediently handed all the toys to her mother. When Debbie put the toys back to the drawer, the little girl climbed into bed by herself.

"Good girl. I need to dry my hair now. I'll be back soon, okay?"

Piggy stuck her head out of the blanket and nodded, "Okay." Then she closed her eyes at once.

Debbie was deeply moved. She was so happy to have such a lovely daughter.

With feelings of gratitude in her heart, she walked to the bathroom and took out the hair-dryer to blow her hair.

Every two minutes, she would come out and check up on the little girl.

She could hear Piggy playing by herself and mumbling something under the blanket, but a few minutes later, she was quiet and fast asleep.

The sight of her daughter's calm sleeping face gave her a sense of calmness inside her heart as well.

At the Orchid Private Club

In Carlos' VIP room, a group of wealthy men leisurely played mahjong amongst themselves. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Niles drew a mahjong tile from the wall. A big smile crept across his face as he laid his hand of tiles on the table. "Seven Pairs*, I win!" he exclaimed excitedly.

[Chapter 402 A Bad Mood](#)

Carlos kept losing to the other three men. His mood went from bad to worse faster than a cat lapping chain lightning.

His face contorted in displeasure as he finished up his red wine with one gulp and tossed the chips on the table.

Niles looked at him in utter disbelief. "Carlos, this is at least three hundred thousand dollars. Are you out of your mind?"

Carlos cast a cold glance at him and said, "What are you—a chicken?"

He tried to goad Niles into playing, and it worked. Without wasting another second, Niles tossed the chips on the table and said, "Count me in."

Damon rolled his eyes at them and complained, "Are you guys out of your minds? Carlos, you better be careful. What if Pepper Nian reports you to the authorities again for organizing a gambling session?"

Wesley kicked Damon's leg hard under the table almost immediately. Shrugging his shoulders, Damon gave him an embarrassed smile and shut his mouth.

"Wait! Debbie reported that I organized a gambling session before?" Carlos asked curiously.

Damon put on a fake smile and answered, "Yeah! We were just hanging about like this, but then your ex-wife called the police on us for gambling."

"Wow! Debbie seems great! At least she was brave enough to treat the four richest young men in Y City with disrespect!" Niles exclaimed.

Wesley kicked him as well, and Niles fell silent unwillingly.

Carlos' eyes darkened, his disdainful expression frozen in place. Suddenly, he stood up from his seat and threw his glass to the wall with all his might as if trying to vent his frustration.

As soon as the glass hit the wall, it was shattered to pieces, scattering shards across the floor. No one dared to utter another word after that.

Niles stroked his hair to conceal his nervousness. He had known Carlos for many years, but this was the first time he had seen him like this.

Carlos had a long face even before he entered the private booth. And now, he looked like a ferocious lion about to tear its prey apart.

Wesley got off the phone and stopped Carlos from kicking the table in anger. "Carlos, calm down!"

Carlos shook off his arm, pulled out his tie and threw it onto the sofa. He then grabbed Curtis' glass and gulped it down in one go.

Curtis looked at his empty glass in Carlos' hand and thought, 'Carlos, aren't you a germophobe?'

He grabbed a bottle of liquor and waved it before Carlos

He shook his head at Curtis and said, "I don't know. Why are you asking me?"

"I'll call her and see. Just hold on," Curtis said.

No one responded to that.

Curtis pulled out his phone from his pocket and asked Niles, "Should I call her or send her a video-call request?"

Niles looked at the others as he felt even more confused. 'How am I supposed to know?' "Send a video-call request?" he stammered.

"I better call her. Maybe she's asleep," said Curtis as he scrolled down his contact list.

Niles suddenly noticed that Carlos' eyes were fixated on Curtis' phone this whole time, and he immediately understood where Curtis was going with this. "Why not call her first? If she's awake, you can send her a video-call request," he said.

Curtis nodded in agreement.

He dialed Debbie's number and put his phone on speaker mode. "Hi, Uncle Curtis!" Debbie greeted him from the other end of the line.

It was around 11 p.m., and she was still at work.

"Debbie, did you go to bed already?" Curtis stole a glance at Carlos, who wasn't drinking anymore.

"Not yet. I'm still at work. Why? What's up?" Curtis seldom called her at this hour.

"Do you mind if we have a video chat? I feel like I haven't seen you in ages. The guys are drinking. Niles and I are very bored."

Niles' jaw dropped to the floor faster than he could say Jack Robinson. 'Seriously? I can't believe he's using me as an excuse,' he thought to himself.

'A video chat? Uncle Curtis is really strange!' Debbie thought. However, she was too embarrassed to turn him down, so she agreed reluctantly. "Okay."

[Chapter 403 A Lamé Excuse](#)

Debbie changed her pajamas before accepting the video call. "Hey, Uncle Curtis," she greeted him. Sitting just behind Curtis was a familiar figure and a closer look revealed that it was none other than Carlos.

Judging by the way his eyes were narrowed, she wasn't sure whether he was staring right at her or sleeping.

Debbie started to feel a little nervous as she wasn't expecting to see Carlos. Tucking a loose strand of hair behind her ear, she said, "Uncle Curtis, what's going on?"

Curtis giggled and adjust his phone so that Debbie could only see him. "Carlos has been drinking all night. Damon's already passed out. Neither of Wesley and Niles is a heavy drinker. I guess I will be the next to get wasted. Debbie, you have to help me."

Both Niles and Debbie were rendered speechless.

'Wait. Carlos has been drinking?' Debbie furrowed her brows and said anxiously, "Carlos is still on his medication. He really shouldn't be drinking at all."

"I know! But he has already drunk four and a half bottles of liquor. And, guess what? He has already smoked three packets of cigarettes. Any sensible human being would think that he's probably trying to kill himself."

'What? Is Uncle Curtis joking or something? What will I do if Carlos dies? And Piggy?'

Debbie couldn't accept the thought of losing Carlos again and she raised her voice saying, "Uncle Curtis, could you please give your phone to Carlos?" She didn't know whether Carlos would speak to her, but she had to give it a shot.

Curtis waved his phone before Carlos and said, "Debbie's on the line. She wants to talk to you."

Carlos cast a cold glance at Curtis to dismiss him at once. He knew Curtis was using Debbie to stop him from drinking. "No!" He turned Curtis down without hesitation.

Upon hearing that, Debbie felt both hurt and embarrassed. "Uncle Curtis, I have to get back to work now. You should just call Stephanie."

Before Curtis even had the chance to say something, Debbie ended the video call, without saying goodbye.

Almost immediately, an awkward silence permeated the private booth. None of them knew what to say or do.

After a while, Curtis stood up, walked to the wine cabinet and grabbed a bottle of wine. "This bottle of wine looks nice. Niles, get us some glasses."

Carlos? Ah, it must be Pepper Nian. Woman, since you are here, I have to talk to you. How could you betray my friend? I'm so disappointed in you. Jared and you are best friends, and I thought you were a good girl. Damn! Carlos has fallen for you again even after losing his memory. Are you a femme fatale or something? Ugh... You know what? I'm actually impressed by your influence on Carlos. He just can't seem to get you out of his mind, huh?"

Stephanie's smile froze and she said coldly, "Mr. Han, I'm Stephanie."

"Oh. Hi, Stephanie. Carlos is drunk. Please, take him back home. If Pepper Nian was here, he would have to stand barefoot on a porcupine. My brother is the CEO of ZL Group, and a proud man. How can he stand barefoot on a porcupine?"

Fuming, Stephanie decided to not talk to Damon anymore. She turned around and left without even saying goodbye.

The two men stared at each other, dumbfounded. When they saw the sly smirk on Damon's face, they realized that he had said all of that on purpose.

As Stephanie got inside her car, Damon threw his head left and right to the two men and said, "Carlos is my buddy. I need to be there for him all the time. Even though I don't like Debbie, I'm on her side now for Carlos' sake."

The two men's jaws fell to the ground simultaneously. Why was he telling them about private matters?

On the way to Niles' place, Carlos insisted on getting out of the car, so Niles had no choice but to ask the driver to take them to Champs Bay Apartments instead.

[Chapter 404 Congratulations](#)

Niles sat in his car and watched as Carlos went inside Building 2 of the Champs Bay Apartments. He was dumbfounded. 'He said he wasn't going home when Stephanie came to pick him up. Why is he going back home now?'

After Carlos entered the elevator, Niles called his brother. "Wesley, I really don't understand Carlos," he complained.

"What happened?"

"When we met Stephanie, Carlos told her that he was going to stay overnight at my place. But after we drove away from her, he asked me to drop him at his apartment. I really don't understand what's going on in that head of his," Niles explained quickly.

After a short pause, Wesley told his silly brother, "That's because Debbie lives in Building 2 as well. She's on the seventh floor."

It took Niles a few seconds to grasp what he had said. "What? Debbie lives right above Carlos and Stephanie's floor?" he yelled into the phone.

"Mmm hmm."

'Nice job, Debbie!' Niles praised her in his mind with a grin.

There was only one apartment on each floor of the building. If there were two, Debbie would have taken the other apartment on the same floor as Carlos.

'It looks like she will stop at nothing to get him back. Now, I really believe that she loves him a lot,' Niles thought.

'But if she loves him so much, why is she marrying another man? Is it because Carlos got engaged to Stephanie? Yeah, that must be it!'

On the seventh floor

The sheets and covers in the bedroom had already been removed. But Carlos remade the bed and slumped into it. He could somehow feel her unique fragrance in the room.

"Old man, I love you so much."

"Old man, will you kiss me?"

"Old man, rest assured. Harley will take responsibility for Millie."

When he closed his eyes, all he could think of was Debbie.

Her voice was so seductive when she called him, and her smile revealed how happy she was when she was with him.

But the woman was about to marry another man.

She might not call him "old man" anymore. Carlos closed his eyes in unbearable pain.

The day before Debbie's wedding, Carlos flew to Z Country. Ivan picked him up from the thought to herself miserably, 'Why isn't he asking me not to marry Ivan?

Does he no longer love me?'

Despite their mixed feelings, they kept their silence all the way.

Six posh cars were waiting outside the villa. The one in the front was a red Maserati—the wedding car.

Curtis opened the rear door and gave Debbie a warm smile. Carlos gently placed her in the back seat.

He straightened her wedding dress and then planted a gentle kiss on her forehead. "Congratulations," he said softly.

Tears welled up in her eyes. She didn't want to hear that from him. How she wished he would ask her to leave with him at that moment!

However, she couldn't find any trace of such emotions in his eyes. He was the same old aloof president. Her heart ached when she saw his indifferent expression. She tried her best to hold back the tears that were threatening to fall.

When Carlos retreated, she couldn't hold back her tears anymore. They flowed down her cheeks silently.

At that very moment, she felt that she and Carlos were really over and that they could never be back together again.

Carlos closed the door and walked to the car behind the Maserati. Debbie bit her lips hard to suppress her cries.

She did not look away until he was out of her sight.

In around ten minutes, they arrived at the church where the wedding was to be held. There were only about thirty people in attendance.

[Chapter 405 Megan Is Dead](#)

Among the wedding guests were Ivan's family members and the couple's friends, including Xavier, Yates, Hayden and his wife.

After Curtis and the others were finally seated, the ceremony began. The small church was packed full of people.

Ivan stood next to the priest, waiting for his bride.

Standing at the far end of the red carpet, Debbie held onto Carlos' arm. She was clad in a beautiful white wedding gown, with lace at the top, highlighted with pearls studding the upper part. Her waist was belted by a fine silk sash, on which were sewn fine flowers of satin and silk. She was truly stunning.

Pausing there at the entrance of the church, Carlos and Debbie looked like a match made in heaven, almost as if it were those two who were to be married today.

Ivan watched as Debbie approached him on Carlos' arm.

When she finally stood in front of Ivan, Carlos held her soft hand and was about to hand it to Ivan.

Suddenly, he saw tears streaming down her cheeks under the white veil. His heart skipped a beat and he held her hand even tighter.

He couldn't bear to give this woman to another man.

When the priest repeated his request, it brought him back to reality. Carlos took a deep breath and gently guided her hand to Ivan's. "Be nice to her," he said.

He put his right hand in his pocket then, so no one could see it ball into a fist.

Ivan gave Carlos a gentle smile and answered, "I will."

People watched as Carlos turned around.

"Carlos!" Debbie called out his name, choking back tears, her voice hoarse from a broken heart.

He wanted to turn around, to run to her, hold her tight and never let her go, but decided against it. After all, it was her wedding. Without stopping, he walked off the stage.

Debbie felt her eyes tingling and could hardly help shedding tears. They flowed freely down her face now, staining her veil and her lovely dress. How she wished he would turn around and take her away!

But he didn't.

He didn't even slow his pace, much less take her away.

The priest began, "Ivan Wen, do you take Debbie Nian to be your lawfully wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love, honor, comfort, and cherish her from this day forward, forsaking all others, keeping only unto her fo

ng temples, he answered, "Mom, what are you talking about? Of course I love her. Why would I marry her if I didn't?"

"Then why does she still talk to her ex?" When she saw Debbie's ex-husband giving her away, Elsie was both dumbfounded and angry. She grew suspicious of their relationship.

"Come on, Mom. You know Debbie's family. Her dad's dead and her mom's missing. So I asked Mr. Huo to give her away. It's no big deal." Ivan made sure he sounded as calm as possible.

Elsie frowned and said, "I love Piggy a lot. But I don't like Debbie staying in touch with Mr. Huo. Tell her to stop talking to him."

"Got it, Mom. I promise. We're headed to the police station. I have to go. Bye."

Elsie had to hang up.

She sighed helplessly. Logan, Elsie's husband, patted her shoulder and coaxed her, "We know Debbie. She might be divorced, but she's no cheater. She's no murderer, either. Ivan will fix this. He's good at that."

Elsie didn't respond.

She was too busy regretting how hard she pushed Ivan into getting married. Now he was forced into a marriage he might not have wanted, because of her prodding.

In Y City

The police had brought Debbie to an interrogation room. Several detectives observed the scene behind a two-way mirror.

"Where were you at approximately 8 p.m. four days ago? And who can prove it?"

"Four days ago... I was at home. My daughter can prove it. I was with her the whole time."

"Your daughter is only two years old. She can't act as a witness on your behalf.

Anyone else?"

[Chapter 406 You Broke The Law](#)

Debbie tried her best to stay calm. "Officer, may I ask how Megan was murdered?" she asked.

The policeman looked at her warily and answered, "She was raped and then stabbed with a knife. She bled to death."

Debbie was confused. "She was raped. How could I have done that?"

"We've already caught the rapist. He had left the spot after raping her, but then returned after some time. He claims that he saw you stab Megan Lan multiple times."

Saying that, he produced a transparent plastic bag and placed it in front of her. "Is this yours?" he asked.

Inside the bag was a knife.

Debbie's eyes widened in horror. "This is mine! But I was getting married today. Do you really think I would go out and kill someone several days before my wedding?"

The policeman stopped taking notes and lifted the pen from the notepad. He looked her in the eye and asked, "How was your relationship with Megan Lan? Did you get along?"

Debbie wondered how she could explain her relationship with Megan without making it sound like she had always wanted to murder her. "I admit that Megan and I were not getting along well, but I had never thought of killing her."

"Why weren't you two getting along?"

The interrogation lasted a long time.

Debbie was on the brink of a meltdown. She kept repeating the same words—"I didn't kill Megan. I need my lawyer. I will find evidence to prove my innocence."

Three-odd hours later, another policeman entered the interrogation room. "Debbie Nian, your lawyer is here."

She saw Xavier and Ivan walk in.

Ivan was acting somewhat strange. Xavier said, "Debbie, things have become a bit complicated. The surveillance video from that night shows that Megan was taken out of the city in your car."

Debbie's breathing hitched. A cold shiver ran down her spine. Someone was deliberately framing her!

'Who did this? Who raped and killed her? Why?' she wondered.

Xavier told her more about the case. It was an engineer who had raped Megan. The man had already been caught by the police. He admitted shamelessly that he had raped her because she was pretty and he couldn't hold back his desires.

Ivan retorted, "No, he's lying. Someone must have hired him to rape her." He had a hunch as to who might have hired the man to rape Megan.

Xavier cast a sidelong glance at Iv

me back and to take vengeance on Dad. Plus, it's impossible that she would go and kill Megan right before her wedding!' he thought.

What he needed to do now was find evidence to prove her innocence.

Although Carlos had done a good job in quashing those rumors about her arrest, many netizens still left comments under some posts of Star Empire and Debbie on Weibo, asking her to prove that she was not in the police station.

That evening, Debbie took a video of herself and posted it on Weibo with the words, "I'm still working, even at this late hour. Look at these dark circles! Gosh! My eyes are killing me."

It was like a slap in the face to those media outlets that were trying to defame her.

And rumors associated with the incident were deleted in the blink of an eye.

Debbie's loyal fans expressed their heartache for her being the target of cyber-bullying again. They even said that they would support her no matter what happened.

At East District Manor

Debbie was standing next to the bedroom window, reading her fans' comments. She was deeply touched by their love. She swore to herself that she would work harder and write more songs for them.

The bedroom door creaked open.

Carlos stood at the door with a serious look on his face.

She turned around to look at him, but said nothing.

He didn't say a word either. After a few seconds, he turned around and left for the study.

She was safe and sound; he was relieved.

Debbie was surprised by his silence. 'Should I go and thank him?' she wondered.

[Chapter 407 I Ate Everything](#)

Xavier told Debbie that the police hadn't granted her bail. Many of her friends tried to bail her out, including Ivan, Curtis and Jared, but they failed. Law enforcement wasn't budging on this. She was a superstar, and traveled too much. They considered her a flight risk.

Finally, Ivan was left with no choice. He called Carlos. Carlos' assistant went forthwith to the police station, trying to talk the bail bondswoman into letting Debbie go. He even tried subtle intimidation, but she wasn't budging. Carlos himself confronted an officer on vacation in a suburban resort area. They had spent several hours drinking tea and chatting before the officer finally granted Debbie's bail.

Debbie guessed that James was probably behind it. It was possible he used his influence to make sure the cops didn't make it easy for them. A corrupt cop could potentially deny someone bail and refuse payment.

Through the window, Debbie saw the myriad security guards patrolling the area. She sighed and went downstairs to the kitchen. Carlos had helped her a lot this time, saving her from jail and worse, and she needed to thank him.

She made a cup of chrysanthemum tea and headed for the study.

The CEO had told her she didn't need to knock. But that was three years ago, and he had amnesia now. He might not remember ever granting her that privilege. So she knocked on the door instead.

She didn't open the door until he responded. It was weird, hanging back like this, acting as though they were strangers. But she could do little else.

Carlos was hunching over his laptop, the light from the screen illuminating his face. She placed the cup on the desk and said, "Drink some tea first. It'll help your eyes."

"Thanks," he answered simply.

Debbie took a deep breath and began, "I need to thank you. If it—"

However, Carlos' ringtone saw to it that she couldn't continue. She stole a glance at the screen and saw the caller ID—Stephanie.

"Hello?" he said coldly.

After Stephanie said something, he suddenly raised his head to look at Debbie.

Debbie thought he was implying she should leave, so she turned around. But she heard him say, "I'm too busy to make it there. Go to bed early. Get some rest."

Debbie was at a loss whether she should leave.

Carlos hung up the phone, took a sip of tea, and said, "That hit the spot." He th

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So Carlos still remembered what she said.

She blinked her eyes and told Carlos, who was going upstairs, "I think your fiancée might want some company."

"She's fine."

"Can I sleep in your bedroom? I don't want Megan's ghost coming after me."

Carlos was rendered speechless.

After a while, he said, "Feeling guilty? Don't."

"I don't feel guilty. But I'm afraid of ghosts," Debbie said pitifully.

"You can call Ivan over. I don't mind you two staying in the guest room." Suddenly, he turned around and warned her expressionless, "But no sex."

Debbie's jaw dropped.

Ivan wasn't really on her mind. He was busy with something, though she didn't know what. Besides, she wanted to work on Carlos without anyone else around.

After saying good night, Carlos went to his bedroom, while Debbie went to the guest room.

At a high-class villa zone in Z Country

Ivan pushed the car door open, got out and slammed the door. Then he walked towards a villa. Many posh cars were parked out in front.

The music was quite loud. So loud you couldn't talk to another person without yelling. When Ivan entered, he saw more than ten men and women dancing and making out.

When she saw Ivan, a woman turned off the music. Silence befell the house.

With a long face, Ivan looked at a man who was sitting on the sofa and hugging another guy. The man looked up, and then moved away from his friend. He stood up, came over to Ivan and hugged him tightly. "Ivan, you're finally back!"

Ivan pushed him away and shouted angrily, "Fuck off! All of you!"

[Chapter 408 Im Married Now](#)

The guests in the villa decided to gather up their stuff and leave quickly. They didn't want to be dragged into this.

Finally, everyone was gone, and the two were left alone. Ivan looked around, his eyes filled with nothing but disgust. "I told you before. Don't bring your punk-ass friends here!" he shouted at Aldrich Yuan furiously.

With his arms crossed over his chest, Aldrich Yuan sneered and retorted indifferently, "Well, you certainly weren't there for me. My friends were."

Ivan didn't bother belaboring the point. Instead, he asked bluntly, "So why Megan Lan? Why did one of your men rape and kill her?"

"What are you talking about? Better yet, who are you talking about? Megan Lan?" Aldrich Yuan admitted to nothing.

"The engineer who raped her worked for you. I'm not stupid. Why?" Ivan stared at him with a fierce look; he was so disappointed in Aldrich Yuan. He thought he knew the man in front of him, but it turned out he didn't.

"Dammit Ivan! I'm your boyfriend. Why don't you trust me?" Aldrich Yuan complained bitterly.

Upon hearing the word "boyfriend," Ivan pulled a long face and snapped, "Boyfriend? I never agreed to that!"

Aldrich Yuan hugged Ivan tightly and clutched his shirt. He gave him a pitiful look. "Ivan, we've been together for five years. You dumping me?"

Ivan pushed him away. Aldrich Yuan fell and only through last-minute maneuvering hit the couch. Ivan stared down at him and said in a cold voice, "Quit it! I'm married now." He pulled out a bank card from his wallet and handed it to him. "Here you are. Three million dollars. Enjoy. Don't call me again!"

Instantly, Aldrich Yuan's eyes brimmed with tears. Without sparing a single glance at the card, he yelled in a sobbing voice, "Ivan, do you remember your promise? Five years ago, you said we'd be together, that you'd take care of me for the rest of my life. You're throwing all that away over a woman? So what happened to the fake marriage? That's what you told me it was. To make your mom happy. But now you're dumping me because of her. So tell me—do you love her?"

But Ivan wasn't stupid. He was afraid Aldrich Yuan might go after Debbie. So he tried to explain, "The marriage is fake. She's like my own sister, for Christ's sa

o this..."

Upon hearing that, Debbie coaxed him softly, "It's not your fault. I married you to make Carlos jealous, you know. We both had our reasons."

Ivan heaved a sigh of relief. "Don't worry. If the cops can't find the murderer, I'll turn him in. Focus on what you came here to do. And leave everything to me..." His voice trailed off as he thought with a self-mocking smile, 'Well, I can't fix everything. Carlos bailed Debbie out. I might need to call on him again.'

"Thanks a lot, Ivan. Get some sleep."

"Sure. Good night."

The two of them were lost in their own thoughts at that moment.

Because of the charges pending against her, Debbie found it hard to work. Several collaborators warned her that if she didn't get back to work, they'd terminate their contracts.

Left with no choice, Debbie had to leave the manor with a mask, a baseball cap and sunglasses so no one would recognize her. There were even several bodyguards accompanying her to protect her.

Apart from work, she also had to pay attention to the investigation.

That afternoon, she got a call from a private detective she hired. "You're right, Miss Nian. Someone forced the police to not grant your bail. And he even tipped off the media and paid them to run stories about it. But then someone had all the news posts handled."

"Is it James Huo who bought off the news outlets?" Debbie asked. 'Is it Carlos who had all the news posts handled?' she thought to herself.

"Yes," confirmed the detective.

[Chapter 409 Kasie Was Abducted](#)

Debbie sneered. She had expected that answer. "What else did he do?" she asked the man on the other end of the line.

"After he was discharged from the hospital, James visited the Li family several times. And he was acting very secretive. Our men are still following him," he replied.

James was close to the Li family. That was why he had insisted that Carlos marry Stephanie. So, Debbie didn't think it was odd of him to visit the family. "Okay. Have you found anything about the people who had kidnapped Sasha three years ago?"

"Not yet. Those men had left the city right after they were paid. Nobody knows their whereabouts."

Debbie nodded resignedly. "I see. Thanks. Keep following James and let me know if you find something."

"Okay."

That evening, when Debbie arrived at East District Manor, the house was only lit up by the lights in the hallway. Carlos wasn't back home yet.

Debbie busied herself in the kitchen preparing dinner as she waited for him. A few moments later, she heard a noise at the door. It had to be Carlos. She walked out of the kitchen, carrying a tureen of soup to the table. Carlos walked in. "Did you have dinner?" she asked.

He looked at the dishes on the table and replied, "No."

He had anticipated that she would cook dinner for him, so he had come back from work on an empty stomach.

"All right. Wash your hands. Dinner will be ready in a minute. I'm just finishing up the last dish." Debbie was relieved that he had come back for dinner. Or she would have wasted all that time in the kitchen for nothing.

She had thought about calling him before she started cooking. But then she had changed her mind, considering that it was a sensitive period for both of them.

"Carlos," she called as they sat at the table, having dinner. But the rest of her words froze on her lips. Her mouth formed a thin straight line and she lowered her eyes. She poked the rice in her bowl, preoccupied with her thoughts.

Carlos looked at her but since she didn't say anything further, he didn't ask what was on her mind. They ate silently until Carlos was about to finish his rice.

"I can't prove my innocence. There were no cameras in that suburban area. Things are looking really bad for me right now. It's a dead end. If I can't provide an alibi soon, I will be arrested again," she blurted out
e suburb within two minutes. Hence, she couldn't have murdered Megan.

There was only one possibility now—someone, who looked like Debbie after plastic surgery, had grabbed her knife and had killed Megan with it.

It would be time-consuming to find out who had committed the crime.

But at least the footage proved that it wasn't Debbie. Now that she had been ruled out as a suspect, she had her freedom back. All she needed to do now was help the police find the real murderer.

Yet, her life was far from being peaceful.

Just as her life was getting back to normal, Kasie's mom called her out of the blue. "Debbie, where are you?" asked Mia in a rush.

There was anxiety in her tone. Debbie didn't miss it. "I'm at work. What is it?" She was preparing for her next concert. Moreover, Ruby had arranged a lot of ads and shows for her. She was super busy.

"Ka- Kasie has been abducted."

"What?" Debbie stood up abruptly from the chair. "What happened?!"

Mia said in a choked voice, "They said that it was because of you, and if you want Kasie to live, you will have to go to a recycling center, alone."

Those words sounded so familiar to Debbie. She recalled that three years ago, when Sasha was kidnapped, James' men had said the same thing.

Had James finally resorted to his old schemes again? "Did they say why they were doing this?"

"No. They only said that you had to go there alone. If you take anybody else with you, they will kill her."

The same trick and the same words. Debbie was almost sure that this was James' play.

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Since she hadn't met these people yet, Debbie wasn't sure who was behind the kidnapping. "Aunt Mia, where's the recycling center? I'll go."

"It's too dangerous. Call the police. These guys are too well-organized, and your martial arts might not help you," Mia reminded her. The older lady was so frightened that she couldn't have come up with something so rational.

It was Kasie's father, Mason, who first floated that idea. Mia was just parroting it.

Debbie contemplated the risks and decided to go. "Don't call the cops yet. I'll figure it out."

Before she set off, Debbie had a wild idea and called James. She got straight to the point. "This is your doing, isn't it?" she blurted out.

"What are you babbling about, Miss Nian?" James asked calmly, telling himself to maintain his composure. Before he got nervous, he needed to figure out what she was talking about.

Debbie also collected herself a bit. "Did you kidnap Kasie?"

The man let out a sigh of relief. "So that's why you're calling. Let me guess: they asked you to trade yourself as a hostage," he said in a weird tone.

Debbie fell into silence.

Then James announced through clenched teeth, "Hey, I'm not the only one who wants you dead. I hate you as much as someone ever could, but it's not me this time."

The too proud man would never admit he'd done anything wrong, much less take the blame for something someone else did.

He was right. Too many people wanted her dead right now. And it could be anyone. James, for one, whoever killed Megan, and whoever it was that made off with Kasie.

Now that she knew it wasn't James, she hung up on him without another word.

But none of this was helpful. She was back to square one, totally clueless who she was dealing with. But she couldn't back down. She had to go to the recycling center to face her enemy alone.

She called Mia first before making her way there. "If I don't walk out ten minutes after I walk inside, call the cops."

And this time, she wasn't pregnant. Nothing was going to slow her down. Besides, she was carrying her secret weapons. She would punish these jerks and feel good about it.

Of course, they were ready for her. A group of rather huge men stood at the entrance to the recycling center.

They led her inside the main building. The walls were fashioned

! Then you'll come back to me!"

Without waiting for Ivan's response, he hung up angrily.

"Tie her up! Burn the place to the ground!" he ordered with smoldering eyes.

'Aw hell! This son of a bitch wants to kill me!' Debbie realized.

Before the bodyguards could get to her, she ran over to Kasie. She roundhouse kicked the man standing beside Kasie, sending him rolling painfully on the floor, covering his face.

A second man dashed towards her and went sprawling after she kicked him in the knee. Debbie pulled out her dagger and was about to cut Kasie's bonds when three more men popped up. 'More of them!' she thought.

She had to use the dagger for self-defense. Even with the threat of the blade, the bodyguards were able to hold her off. Some of them grabbed for her arm, trying for a joint lock. While they couldn't get her to drop the knife, she couldn't stop them, either.

She had to think of something else.

One of the bodyguards kicked at her but missed. Debbie rolled backward to put some distance between them. Now was her chance! She plucked a hairpin out of her hair, pressed it twice to shoot a silver needle at him. It buried itself in his body.

The man didn't feel a thing at first. In less than two seconds, he staggered and went to his knees, weak as pudding.

Aldrich saw this. A sinking feeling filled him. This would be harder than he thought.

Quickly, Debbie had tackled two bodyguards. By now, the third knew she was armed. He fought more swiftly so that she wouldn't have a chance to reach her weapon.