

TMBA 61

CHAPTER 61 MAKE OUTS AND VIP CARDS

Debbie's eyes scanned across the dishes near her. Then she smirked a bit as she laid her eyes on the raw trout. She hummed lightly and picked up a pair of chopsticks. She took some trout, dipped it in mustard, and then aimed it towards his lips.

"Here, open up," she said in a singsong voice.

Her friends looked at her as if she were crazy. It was shocking enough that she was feeding Carlos, but that much mustard? "Is that even edible?" whispered Kasie. She was cringing along with Jared and Dixon while Kristina tried to keep to her composure.

"Will he eat it though?" Kristina asked.

Carlos studied the mustard-wrapped trout before opening his mouth to eat it. Before Debbie could pull out her hand, she felt a hand grabbing her by the head. Her hand dropped the chopsticks as she felt Carlos' mouth pressed down on hers.

'W-What the hell!?' she exclaimed in her mind.

"OH MY GOD!" Kasie shouted. "I gotta take a pic and put it on WeChat!"

Jared, Kristina, and Dixon cheered and whistled at the scene upon them. She felt his tongue probing the food towards her mouth. The excessive mustard was already making her face red. It even made her nose sore and her eyes started to water. She had this strong urge to punch him but not right now.

She wanted to spit it out! But this man kept pressing on, making sure he didn't let her go.

'This isn't a kiss! Damn it!' she screamed in her thoughts. 'I really want to crush his balls right now!'

Her tears started to fall. Her hands trembled as she gripped his jacket. 'Looks like I didn't see that coming.'

Hmph. Two can play this game!' Her grip loosened and she snaked her arms around his neck. A moment later, they were already making out passionately in front of their guests. She was gliding her fingers into his hair as his hand slipped from her head to waist.

The other four stared at the scene awkwardly.

Jared sighed, scratching his nape. When did Debbie get this soft?

Meanwhile, Dixon, who rarely cursed, spoke up. "Are we going to fucking eat or are they going to eat each other? I am so hungry as hell already! I want to eat! Can't they get a fucking room?"

Meanwhile, Kristina's eyes sparkled as she clasped her hands together like a fangirl. "Oh my! Our Debbie is actually kissing Carlos! How did she manage to unfreeze his cold heart?"

Kasie nodded, "I know right? Our Debbie has grown! She's now kissing a hot rich guy! Shouldn't we excuse ourselves? I mean, things are getting heated up."

A large growling sound filled the room but the two wouldn't stop making out. The rest looked at each other, shrugged, and then started to eat. After a while, Carlos finally released the struggling woman in his arms.

As soon as Debbie caught her breath, she immediately sat down. She picked up a cup of tea and drank it to calm herself down.

"Ugh." She poured herself another cup which brought her back to Earth.

Carlos, however, was calm as if nothing had happened. He fixed his collar and tie and started eating. As if to comfort Debbie, he put some of the Australian sirloin on her plate.

"Eat." He spoke, his tone remaining indifferent.

"Finally! Thank God!" Jared exclaimed in relief. "I thought you guys were going to fuck or something which is something I don't want to see!"

If this were somebody else, he would have flipped the table.

But this was his best friend, Debbie, and her husband, the powerful Carlos.

For the first time, Jared saw Debbie get soft. Usually she was rash and casual in manner. 'What the hell? Hmph, Debbie even isn't herself anymore around Carlos.' He drank some water to calm himself down. 'How much longer? This meal is frigging killing me, ' he fumed inwardly.

Meanwhile, Carlos wiped his hands and spoke to Tristan without looking at him. "Tristan, the cards."

Tristan took out a few cards from his breast pocket and presented them to Carlos. "Here they are, Sir."

"Good," Carlos only said, nodding.

With Carlos' permission, Tristan handed the four VIP cards for the fifth floor of Alioth Building one by one to Debbie's friends. He handed the first one to Jared.

Jared's eyes widened in delight when he took the gilt card. He cheered and gave it a kiss. Then a thought rang in Jared's head. 'With this card, I can come to this place whenever I want. But why do I have to stay longer, watching those two being sappy together?'

He assumed an air of composure and turned to Debbie. "Tomboy, take good care of Carlos. I'll see you guys later," he announced before leaving the table.

The other three followed Jared and stood up from the table too. Jared stood aside and waited for them to leave together. Next, Tristan went to Kasie. She grabbed the card and her purse and whispered to Debbie, "Girl, Carlos is a keeper. If you try to divorce him, I will punch your gut."

Debbie only looked at her coldly as her thoughts went, 'You traitor.'

Kristina actually intended not to accept the card. But it felt disrespectful if she refused it. Despite her reluctance, she still took the card and grabbed Dixon's hand before she said to Debbie, "Deb, now that we have this card, we can come here anytime. So we'll just leave you and Carlos alone now. Be nice to him, alright?"

'Another traitor, ' Debbie thought, as if making a hit list.

'Please don't ditch me, Dixon," Debbie thought hopefully, chewing her lip. She knew how honest and upright Dixon was. He was all she had!

'I can't just accept that, ' thought Dixon. His hesitance caused Debbie to feel relieved.

Tristan chuckled, "No need to worry about it. Think of it as a little token from Carlos. You have been always a good friend to Debbie and it means a lot to both Carlos and Debbie! Besides, I've heard that your brother is having some problems with transferring school. It's said that the new school's principal loves dining here."

'Damn. Tristan sure did his research well, ' Debbie thought, chewing her lip.

Dixon went silent and he was stunned. Unable to find any reason not to take the card, he rolled his eyes at Jared. 'Thanks a lot, stupid pants. This is all your fault. Now I have a debt of gratitude to Carlos! Ugh!'

"Thank you." Dixon finally took the card. He waved at Debbie and took Kristina's hand, ready to leave the place.

'Some friends!' Debbie shouted in her mind. 'They just told me that they wouldn't take the cards.

But by the look of it, it seems like Carlos has already bought their souls. Traitors.' Debbie was already fuming internally.

'Especially Jared. I'll make sure to crush his balls so he will never forget!'

"Jared." Carlos suddenly spoke up.

"Yes, sir?" Jared responded and felt shivers travelling down his spine.

Debbie rolled her eyes and sneered, "What happened to Jared the fearless? I didn't expect you to get this soft and weak in front of Carlos. "

Jared chuckled, embarrassed, "Um...well, he's your husband, after all. Of course, I should show some respect to him."

Carlos raised his hand to Tristan and the latter soon handed a bag to Jared. It was the underwear Jared had bought for Carlos.

Debbie felt so embarrassed when everyone saw what was in the bag. She wanted the floor to open up and swallow her so bad. After a giggle to her friends, she covered her face with one hand awkwardly and lowered her head to sip tea.

Carlos was aware that Jared and Debbie were just friends, but he just couldn't stand her being close to another man. "Young man, I can take care of my wife. You can just leave everything to me from now on, especially this kind of errand. You know, if you really care about my wife, you can give me a call if you think she needs somebody. Tristan, give him my phone number.

"

"Yes, Carlos," Tristan replied.

"My wife." Those words rang in Jared's head. He just wanted to puke upon hearing them.

CHAPTER 62 YOU ARE WORTH TEN BILLION

To prove Carlos meant it, Tristan took out his phone and sent him Carlos' phone number. "Jared, this is Carlos' number."

Everyone was surprised.

Debbie wondered why Carlos was so possessive. Obviously, he was trying to keep her from Jared. Worried about where this was leading, she raised her head and declared, "Jared and I are just good friends. How can you undermine our friendship like this? It's uncalled for."

Unexpectedly, Jared cut in before Carlos could respond. "Carlos, I'm so glad to hear what you just said. Before, Debbie, the naive girl, did so much for Hayden. But the moron didn't appreciate it at all. Now, finally, there is a man who cares about her. I'll do anything you say. If Tomboy needs help or anything, I'll be the first to call you."

Among Debbie's friends, Jared had known her for the longest time. He knew everything that happened between her and her ex-boyfriend Hayden. As far as he knew, Hayden was to blame for Debbie's

tomboy tendencies.

But right now, Debbie was surprised by something Jared had said. Since when did she become naive in Jared's eyes?

Carlos was quite pleased with what Jared had said. Yet the name Hayden made his eyes dim. "Tristan, send them home."

"Yes, Carlos."

When the couple were left alone in the private booth, Carlos turned to Debbie.

Finding her in a daze, he pulled her into his arms and sat her on his lap. Unaccustomed to such intimacy, Debbie struggled to stand up.

But Carlos wrapped his arms around her tighter and whispered in her ear, "Hayden, huh?" That was the first time he had heard that name, but quickly he connected the dots and remembered the man who had called her Deb in the messages and said he missed her.

It must be the same guy.

"What?" Debbie didn't understand what he had meant by that, but Carlos didn't explain.

Instead, he kissed her.

Apparently, he was angry. The kiss was impudent and overbearing, and his hands were not gentle either. In his grip, she now felt trapped, and powerless, despite her many years of rigorous martial arts training.

Next, he threw her onto the table roughly. Fearing that she might fall, Debbie locked her arms around Carlos' neck while his hands were all over her.

After a long moment, the man said in a coarse voice, "I take back what I said."

"Huh?" Debbie, overwhelmed underneath his weight, muttered.

At that moment, she wasn't that reckless tomboy anymore. She was a woman, a seductive woman. Every time he kissed her, she blushed. Right now, looking her in the eye, Carlos could hardly control his urge.

"I said the other day that if you slept with me, I would set you free.

Now I want us to have another deal." Debbie hadn't expected a man of words like Carlos to take back his own offer.

His hands tenderly moved all over her body, her face, her hair. With every touch, his breathing got heavier and heavier. "God, you're such a femme fatale. A tormenting temptress."

'A femme fatale? Me?'

Among many nicknames people gave her, she never heard anyone call her a temptress or femme fatale before. For her rather boyish personality and less feminine figure, that was a misnomer. Couldn't Carlos see that? 'There must be something wrong with his eyes.' She wanted to laugh.

"The new deal is: if you sleep with me, I'll give you anything you

want." Anything she wanted? If he had said this earlier on, on the stormy days of their relationship, she'd have told him she wanted a divorce without hesitation.

But recently, she was beginning to have a change of mind.

After shelving her push for a divorce, she actually didn't know what she wanted.

When he saw her shaking her head, Carlos thought she didn't agree to his offer.

Suddenly Debbie remembered what he had said on the cruiser; how he had humiliated her, announcing that she wasn't worth a hundred million. Tightening her grip on him, she assumed an air of dejection and said, "I remember the other day you said I wasn't worth much. What should I expect to get from a man who thinks I'm not worth a penny? Have you forgotten the way you put me down, Mr. Handsome?"

Seeing that she was still holding a grudge, Carlos smiled, gave her a kiss on the lips and said, "Forget about that, dear. To be honest. I wouldn't say you're worth a hundred million..."

Just as he had expected, her eyes burned with anger. But he looked at her affectionately while stroking her hair. Of course, he was pulling her leg, but she didn't seem to get his drift. "Well, maybe you don't get the gist of it. You're worth far more than you seem to ask. A billion dollars or even more is what I'd peg on a girl special like you.

You misunderstood me." Debbie was left open-mouthed. 'Is he kidding me? Is he willing to give me that much, just to sleep with me? This guy must be a joke!' She brushed his words off.

"I'm for real! If it's money that you want, I'll give you whatever sum you name." For her love, Carlos couldn't care less about money.

Besides, they were husband and wife. What was his was hers too. It didn't make a difference who had the money.

However, Debbie misunderstood him again. 'What does he take me for? A gold digger?' The passion she had felt only a minute ago died out at once. In a huff, she pushed him off her abruptly.

Carlos' eyes were filled with puzzlement. Debbie held her head high and tried to defend her honor. "Mr. Handsome, not everyone loves money as much as you think. Maybe in your mind, you can buy me or even everything with your money. Unfortunately, that's not me. If I don't like you, I wouldn't sleep with you even if you gave me all the money in the world.

But as long as I love you, I'll sleep with you even if you are dead broke. Sorry to tell you, I'm not who you think I am. Maybe, you don't understand me, in which case I'd suggest we separate as soon as possible," she declared.

She felt insulted. If it was his money she was after, she wouldn't have only taken a little from her monthly allowance, nor would she have asked for a divorce.

Reading from a different script, however, Carlos found her charming at that moment. It was not because she didn't want his money. It was just that she looked so proud and confident when she told him what kind of person she was.

Watching the serious look on her face when she spoke, Carlos let out a chuckle.

However, that chuckle came across as a taunt. Debbie was too young to understand what he was thinking. "That's not funny!" she snapped. "Let's go to the Civil Affairs Department and get a divorce right now. I will never bother you again..."

In the midst of her rant, however, Carlos leaned close and kissed her fiercely.

Over the years, he might have had more than his fair share of women, but no one could come close to this special woman. No matter what her moods were, he always found her cute.

By now she had freed herself from his embrace. Angrily, she demanded, "Hey, what do you want?"

Regardless of her obvious irritation, Carlos grabbed her tight again. He patted her back and comforted her. "Don't worry. I won't force you into anything, unless it is what you want."

Somehow, that relieved her. But she wanted an apology, which he didn't seem ready to give directly. 'The ego problems,' Debbie thought.

Giving him an annoyed snort, she grabbed her backpack and was ready to leave.

CHAPTER 63 TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES

Watching her leave, Carlos wondered, 'I said I was sorry and I would like to make amends for my past mistakes. Why is she still mad?'

Dissatisfied with how things went, Carlos quickened his pace and caught up with Debbie in the hallway. He startled her when he held her by the hand all of a sudden. Forcefully, she tried to wrench her hand

free, but he tightly held on, until they were in the elevator. "You haven't done your part yet. Now, I'll hang around to give you company while you do it," he declared.

"Part? What part?" She was confused.

But Carlos didn't answer, as he quietly led her to the ground floor of Dubhe Building. When they came to a shop for men's fancy underwear, Debbie understood what he had meant by her part. She had passed by that shop without going in that morning. Now with Carlos at her side, she didn't have a choice but to enter.

Some shop assistants trotted over to them when they noticed Carlos. "Good afternoon, Carlos," they greeted in unison.

"Welcome, Carlos," added one of them, a lady, apparently in charge of her colleagues.

Carlos nodded at them before he took Debbie further inside. "Go find me something you like. I'll wait here," he urged. Then he turned around, found the nearest empty chair and sat down to wait for Debbie. Almost immediately, a shop assistant beaming a smile served him a cup of tea. Between sips, he kept himself busy, reading a catalog of products.

Lost in a sea of expensive men's underwear, Debbie smiled awkwardly at the shop assistants who were guiding her around. To put herself at ease, she wandered around briefly, pretending to be at home.

A pair of red briefs caught her eyes. The embarrassment on her face was gone. She snickered and went to Carlos. "Will you wear anything I buy?" she inquired.

Carlos raised his head from the catalog. Although Debbie tried to look calm, her eyes betrayed her. To the mischievous look in her eyes, he sighed. "Yes, I will," he agreed.

His affirmative reply almost made her jump with cheer. It took a bit of effort to restrain her emotions as she turned. But before she could take two steps, Carlos added, "Anything but briefs. Also, I hate red."

Bummer. His response was like a wet blanket. It was the red briefs that she was considering buying him. With her plan ruined, Debbie pouted sullenly. "OK, I got it," she said.

Then she went back and wandered from section to section until she saw a pair of black boxers. Briefly, she picked it up and looked at Carlos who was quietly seated on the sofa. 'Not good enough for him.' She pursed her lips and put it down.

Next, she picked up a gray pair, looked at the man, and shook her head again. 'Not good enough either.'

On careful observation of how Carlos and Debbie communicated, the shop assistants all wondered who the girl was. One of them was so curious she couldn't help asking Debbie, "What's your relationship with Carlos?"

Debbie gave her a friendly smile and lowering her voice almost to a whisper, said, "Why don't you ask him?"

Hands down, that scored the clincher for Debbie. The shop assistant was reduced to silence. 'If I could ask Carlos, I wouldn't have bothered you, madam, ' she thought sourly.

After a long time of wandering and comparison, finally, Debbie settled on three pairs of boxers which came at a good ten thousand dollars each. Standing at the cashier's desk, she winced at the price. Coming into the shop, she had not expected she'd end up spending such a ridiculous sum on a mere three goddamn boxers. 'What are these things made of? Gold?'

The shop assistants had recommended those boxers, claiming that the designer had several international accolades to his name. Even so, Debbie wouldn't have spent so much on them if Carlos hadn't been insisting on her buying him boxers.

After settling the bill, she came to Carlos with the bag. Without a word, he put down the catalog and stood up, looking pleased. He took the bag from Debbie with one hand and held her hand with the other. Together, they walked off to their car, arm in arm. A peaceful couple together.

Following after Carlos, Debbie asked, "Why did you ask me to buy these for you? How did you buy underwear before?"

"I used to have them delivered to the villa or send my secretaries. Now, since I have a wife, naturally I should leave this kind of thing to her."

Not in the mood for his endless witty banter, Debbie didn't say a word in return. Anyway, how was she supposed to respond to that?

Just as they were about to enter the elevator, they noticed a commotion in front of a shop. Intuitively, they both stopped and turned to see what was happening in the clamoring crowd.

A young couple were seen arguing with a cleaning lady, who was in tears.

The argument must have been going on for a while, but what irritated Debbie was that no one had cared enough to intervene.

"Let me check what's up with the group. I'll catch up with you later if you don't mind." She let go of his hand, and headed towards the ruckus.

As she approached, their voices became clearer. "I'm very sorry. I didn't do it intentionally." The cleaning lady kept apologizing, weeping.

"What's going on here?" Debbie asked, standing in front of the young couple with her hands in the

pockets of her coat.

The young man looked at her curtly and demanded, "Who the hell are you?"

"It doesn't matter who I am. Just tell me what this is about," she replied nonchalantly.

The cleaning lady sobbed, "Miss, I accidentally dirtied his shoes with a wet mop while I was cleaning."

"Dirtied? Look at what you did. My shoes are all wet. What if they start peeling? Can you even afford the compensation?" the young man demanded angrily.

Hearing compensation mentioned, the cleaning lady took two steps backward with fear and apologized again. "I'm sorry, son. I didn't see you. I'll...I'll wipe them clean for you right now."

The young man snorted contemptuously, "Wipe? Are you deaf? You soaked my shoes and ruined the leather. What's the point of wiping?"

Debbie stepped in front of the cleaning lady protectively and raised her head to face the young man. "She already apologized, but you still think it's not enough. What do you want?"

"What do I want? What do you think? Since my shoes are ruined, I have to get new ones. She should pay for them of course." "How much are your shoes?" Debbie asked with a sneer.

"Eight hundred and thirty dollars!" the young man answered proudly with his nose in the air as if it were such a moment of glory to flaunt the price. "I'm not leaving this place without the amount."

He glanced sideways at the cleaning lady, expecting to see her scared face. Indeed, the cleaning lady got flustered at the price.

But Debbie was amused by the stupid look on the young man's face. "I'll pay for her," she declared.

Shocked by what Debbie had said, the cleaning lady pulled her sleeve and said, "Miss, you don't have anything to do with this. I can't let you do this."

Debbie turned to look at her and smiled, "It's okay. Don't worry."

With the card Carlos had given her, a paltry eight hundred and thirty dollars was not a problem, but it was a lot for a cleaning lady who made only two or three thousand a month.

The members of the martial arts club at her university had submitted membership fees the day before. It happened that she was carrying some of the cash on her. Without hesitation, she decided to use it to help the lady out. There was an ATM around, from which she'd withdraw the same amount to reimburse the club.

With that thought, she took eight hundred and fifty from her purse and handed it to the brat. "Here, you have it. Keep the change."

The young man felt embarrassed, but took the money all the same.

He grabbed his girlfriend's hand and was ready to leave.

"Not so fast!" Debbie said calmly as she closed her purse.

The young couple looked back, puzzled.

Debbie pointed at the man's shoes and said, "I paid the price. Shouldn't the shoes you're wearing be mine now? You may go, but leave the shoes."

The young man's face turned livid, but he couldn't figure out a line to retort, because what she had said was right. The onlookers started whispering and exchanging surprised glances at the unfolding drama. Left with no choice, the man took his shoes off and tossed them on the floor.

The sight of the worn shoes sickened Debbie. She held one shoe by the laces between her thumb and index finger, and threw it in the air. Lifting her right leg, she kicked the stinky shoe into the green bin at the cleaning lady's side.

After she had done the same with the other, the crowd clapped at her uprightness and cool moves.

After the couple fled the scene with embarrassment, the cleaning lady thanked Debbie in tears. Since the matter was settled, Debbie turned around and left. Behind her the cleaning lady's emotional words and the crowd's clapping filled the air.

Debbie had thought Carlos had left, but there he was, waiting for her not far from the crowd, in sunglasses, with hands in his trouser pockets.

Apologetically, she trotted to him. "I thought you had left," she said, feeling like a young girl again. A very different feeling from the forceful woman she had been while confronting the little brat.

Carlos opened his arms and received her with an embrace. "I wouldn't have been able to see my wife's heroic acts if I had left. That would be a pity. I feel so honored to have you in my life."

CHAPTER 64 I'M MARRIED

A long time ago, Debbie was out shopping with Hayden when she saw something similar happening at another mall. Someone asked a beggar to pay over 100 dollars for a damaged battery charger. Debbie acted quickly, and paid the fine for him. As a reward, she got a tongue-lashing from Hayden, who blamed her for her stupidity and snooping. She wondered whether Carlos thought the same of her.

Unsure what he would say, she kept her head down, and wouldn't look him in the eye. But she was dying to know what he was thinking. "Um, I spent \$830 today. And for some poor woman who needed it more than me."

Carlos stopped in his tracks, looked at her, and replied, "Debbie, listen up. You can do what you want and buy what you want. What's mine is yours. We're married. No need to be so skittish." If Carlos had seen what was going on inside, he would have dealt with things in his own way.

But Debbie would still be the good guy. He wouldn't have let the couple leave hating her.

Debbie's heart felt warm when she heard what Carlos said. Whether it was because of the part of "You can do what you want," or "We're married. No need to be so skittish around me," she wasn't sure. When she was with Hayden, she had always been careful around him and his family. Debbie raised her head to look at him. As usual, his face was calm and expressionless, like still water.

'How could such a cool and distant-looking man be so gentle?'

Debbie stood on tiptoe to kiss him on the cheek. "Thank you," she said happily.

Her tender kiss made Carlos' heart sing with joy. With a smile, he took her hand and made his way to the parking lot.

"I haven't seen Emmett lately. How is he?" Debbie suddenly asked after they had gotten in the car.

Carlos looked at her and answered, "He's working in another city."

Debbie didn't sense anything strange, so she simply nodded.

The next morning, she received a phone call from Jared. "Hey tomboy! Remember that job offer my friend hooked you up with? I told him don't bother."

"What? Why?"

"You don't need a job."

"Yeah, I do. Call your friend and tell him you were kidding."

"Oh come on. You're Mrs. Hilton. Why do you even need a job?" Married to Carlos, Debbie had everything—not to mention more money than she could ever spend. And she still wanted to work. Jared wondered if there was something wrong with Debbie's head.

Actually, Debbie felt bad about spending Carlos' money.

She thought if she had a job, maybe she wouldn't feel as helpless.

"What kind of job is it? I want it back."

"You're looking for a part-time job, right? About the only thing we have is a barista. You'd probably have to really like coffee. Still want it? Hold that thought. I need to call your hubby and make sure it's okay. It's not your call anymore."

"Don't call him. He's uber-busy. You really think it's a good idea to bug him? I want that job."

"Okay, okay," Jared replied grudgingly.

A few days went by, and Debbie got the job. But her second day on the job was less than ideal.

The store manager called Jared and told him that Debbie had hit a customer. But Debbie was indignant. She thought the man deserved it. "He's a piece of crap! Cheating on his wife with two other women," she spat.

She was unrelenting—she insisted on working. And it fell upon Jared to find her another job. This time the position was a sales associate in a supermarket. However, within three days, Debbie was fired from that job as well. The manager didn't take kindly to the bruises she left on his face. Who knew? "He had it coming! He's a bully." Again, she didn't think she did anything wrong.

But she was hell-bent and determined to work. And Jared was on the verge of having a nervous breakdown. Then one day, Kristina said to Debbie, "Deb, why don't you sing with me in the bar? You have a wonderful singing voice. I know the barflies will love you, and if anyone can bring the moola in, it's you."

"Okay, why not?" Debbie agreed. While the girls cheered excitedly, Jared was worried to death. As much as he wanted Debbie to have a job, he thought it was a lousy idea to let her work in a bar, considering that she already hit someone in both the supermarket and the cafe. It was not hard to predict what was going to happen to have Debbie working in a place as chaotic as a bar.

But Jared might catch a break this time. He was a little more easy-going, when he realized that one of his friends was a regular; he could go with him and watch over Debbie.

Debbie had a problem. She had to attend Carlos' lessons every evening, so she couldn't sing in the bar every night.

Of course, Jared came up with a solution. He told the manager that Debbie didn't have to work in the bar every day; she could come there when she could and be paid by the hour. Intimidated by Jared's status, the manager agreed.

Since Carlos was so busy, sometimes he would have to cancel the lesson, like tonight. Earlier, he texted Debbie, saying he couldn't make it tonight. Debbie was glad that she could go to the bar and make some

money.

The first two nights, Jared stayed in the bar to keep an eye on her. Some men confessed their love for Debbie, but except for that, nobody dared harass her.

On the third night, Debbie won everyone's heart with "Love Paradise." For half an hour the DJ used the widescreen in the bar to display the declaration of his love for Debbie. "Be my girlfriend, Debbie. I love you," he shouted passionately through the microphone.

Then the customers clamored excitedly. "I'm married. I have a husband," Debbie told the DJ.

But since she wasn't wearing a wedding ring, nobody believed her.

At length, she was able to pick up the mic, wait for the background music to start, and start singing once more.

Once she started singing "Pray for You", a man in the VIP area on the second floor sprang up from the sofa with a glass of liquor sloshing in his hand. The girl hadn't noticed, just singing beautifully, hypnotizing the throng with her siren-like voice. Standing by the French window, Carlos squinted at her gloomily. 'When did she start here? Why wasn't I told?'

He wouldn't have even come to such a place if he didn't have to deal with something important there that night.

Blissfully unaware that Carlos was watching her from above, Debbie continued singing. "I pray your birthday comes and nobody calls. I pray you are flying high when your engine stalls."

Debbie had sung this song to Carlos before, a cover of Jaron Lowenstein. He hadn't known Debbie was in the bar until he heard the song. Then he caught sight of the love declaration on the screen. Instantly his face darkened and he stiffened, looking like a living ice sculpture.

When the song was finished, the customers started screaming and whistling in excitement.

At that moment, someone came over to Carlos and reminded him he was there to sign a contract, so he walked away from the window. And that was when it all hit the fan.

After Debbie had stepped down from the stage, a man poured a glass of liquor. He held the liquor in one hand and walked towards her with a wad of notes in his other hand. "Come on, chica, down this glass of liquor and these notes are all yours."

Debbie glanced at the notes. There was less than two thousand there. For a glass of liquor. She thought it wasn't worth it, so she turned him down.

She could make as much in one hour just by singing, and singing didn't harm her body, yet drinking did.

Besides, alcohol is murder on the vocal chords. She wanted to be able to sing well, so she said no.

The contempt in her eyes made the man feel like doggy doo. Humiliated and irritated, he took out a thicker wad of notes and tossed it on the table. "Drink!" he demanded.

Now, there was a respectable amount. She grabbed the cash and the glass. Without a word or any hesitation, she put the glass to her lips and downed it.

The man was pleased and with a sinister sneer, he poured a second glass. Everyone started cheering when Debbie emptied the second glass. Kristina was singing when she saw what was happening to Debbie. She was worried about her. Then she remembered Jared was there too, but when she turned her head, she couldn't see any trace of him. He'd been making time with a girl, though, so it was possible they left together. So it was up to her to keep a bad situation from getting worse.

CHAPTER 65 BUSTED

After Debbie had downed three glasses of liquor, she'd earned more than 10,000 dollars.

Jared finally revealed himself. He was tipsy, and staggered out of the bathroom, slumping back into his seat. Since there was a throng surrounding Debbie at that moment, Jared couldn't see her, so he turned his attention to the girl he had met earlier.

By the time Kristina found him, Debbie had already drunk seven glasses of liquor. She let him know, and the news sobered him.

Jared rushed to Debbie, snatched the glass from her hand, and snarled, "What the hell do you think you're doing? How much have you had?" Noticing the thick wad of notes, Jared shivered. 'If Carlos finds out about this, I'm screwed.'

Debbie waved her hand and said, "Eh, relax. Look at the money I've made. Thousands of dollars a glass. And I'm not drunk yet."

She really could hold her liquor. After seven glasses, her face was red but she was only a bit tipsy.

She was in a good mood now. She figured she could drink more and make more money. The man in the bar poured another glass of liquor for her. Once again, she emptied the glass and took the wad of notes thrown on the table.

Her husband Carlos was rich and generous, but she considered it wise to have some private savings, just in case she and Carlos got divorced one day. She didn't want to end up homeless and penniless after the divorce. And she figured she'd found her calling.

Seeing that Debbie wouldn't listen to him, Jared cleared his throat and shouted at the man, "Go away! Do you have any clue who she is? You have some serious stones to get her drunk like this. You're playing with fire!"

Jared wasn't a regular. As a matter of fact, it was no short drive for him to get here. The only reason he was here was Debbie. So the man didn't know either of them. Jared's words didn't faze the man. He just shrugged and assumed an innocent tone. "You saw it. I didn't force her. She wanted to drink."

It frustrated Jared that what the man had said was true. He wanted to punch the man in the face, but he lacked a reason. Then he whispered in Debbie's ear, "Think about your husband. You forget what he did to us the last time we got drunk? And that was just beer. But you've put a lot of glasses away. What do you think he's going to do when he finds out?"

The thought of her husband made Debbie tremble. "Why didn't you tell me about this earlier?" she complained and belched.

At that moment, two men walked over and grabbed Jared's arms. "Are you blind? Bernard's having fun. Boss is rich enough to buy this whole damn bar, let alone a few drinks. Now, get lost!"

With that, one of the two men gave Jared a rough shove. Provoked, he grabbed an empty bottle from the table and smashed it against the table. "I don't care who the hell Bernard is. Go ahead, make her drink again! I'll kill you," he spat, pointing the remaining broken bottle at them.

Carlos' name completely cleared Debbie's head. Afraid of what he'd do, she put the money in her purse and was ready to leave the bar. However, Bernard grabbed her arm. "Since you took so much of my money, don't you think you owe me a song?"

"Maybe next time. I'm too drunk to sing," Debbie grinned and took a step forward.

"What's your hurry? If you're drunk, then sing drunk!" Bernard was not happy.

Sensing Bernard wasn't going to let her go, Jared smashed the broken bottle against his head. Blood gushed out and flowed down his face. Some of the customers screamed and fled the place, afraid of what might come next.

Bernard touched his head and soon his hand was covered with blood. His eyes went bloodshot with rage. He kicked away the chair in front of him furiously and yelled, "Asshole! You'll pay for that! I work for Oscar! You're so dead!"

"Oscar?" Jared repeated with a sneer.

Debbie felt the name sounded familiar, but she didn't remember where she had heard it.

"Yes, Oscar's my boss. You want to save your ass? Beat it. She took my money and she belongs to me tonight." Assuming that Jared was scared by the name Oscar, Bernard got cocky.

Jared didn't get angry. On the contrary, he calmed down rather quickly. He patted Bernard on the

shoulder, pointed his thumb at Debbie, and said to him, "Oscar was beaten to a pulp and sentenced to life in prison. Know why? He offended her. That what you want?"

Everyone in the underworld knew that Oscar was beaten up at Orchid Private Club and thrown out half dead. People said it was because he pissed off Damon. Soon enough, he was given a life sentence.

Bernard cast a weird, suspicious look at Debbie, who was a little tipsy. "So she's Damon's woman?" Thinking of the tens of thousands he had spent on the drinks tonight, he felt humiliated and furious if it was all for nothing. "You can go. I want my money," he said shamelessly.

Debbie hadn't expected the man to be so cheap.

She put her hands on her hips and retorted, "Why should I? I drank so much liquor. At your request! I earned every penny. If you couldn't afford to lose it, why did you give it to me in the first place?"

The man's suspicion thickened at her words. "You said she's Damon's woman. Would Damon's woman care about a tiny amount like that?" Bernard knew that Damon was Carlos' good buddy. All Carlos' friends were rich and powerful, so he was pretty sure that the woman wasn't Damon's woman.

"I never said she was Damon's woman. That was all you," Jared said impatiently. Then he turned to Debbie. "Ignore him, Tomboy. Let's go." Jared took her by the arm and started to walk towards the entrance of the bar.

Finding out that Debbie wasn't Damon's woman, Bernard was relieved. Also since she was just a nobody, he was more reluctant to let her leave with his money. "You—"

At that point, the manager came over. He was obviously unnerved and sweating. When he saw Debbie, he frowned and said, "What are you doing here? Hurry. A big shot upstairs wants you to sing."

"I don't want to." Debbie refused crisply. She felt dizzy and just wanted to go home.

The manager was anxious. The person upstairs was too important to anger. "Do hurry. How about I raise your pay by 5, 000?"

'5, 000? Who's so important that he's willing to put up so much cash? You look up "cheap" in the dictionary and the manager's face is there, ' Debbie couldn't help but wonder.

"She wouldn't sing even if you paid her \$10, 000 an hour. She needs to go home," Jared shouted angrily. Carlos would kill him if he found out Debbie had gotten so drunk. He must get her back before Carlos got home so she could take a shower and go to bed. If she were asleep, Carlos wouldn't bother her.

The manager knew Jared as a rich kid. Although he wasn't as important as the man upstairs, the manager didn't dare to offend him either. "Jared, to be honest, even your brother wouldn't dare to mess with the guy upstairs. I think you better let her sing," he explained to Jared politely.

Few people could make the manager so afraid. Bernard looked at him and thought the person upstairs must be pretty important. "Who is his brother? And who is the person upstairs?" he asked, pointing at Jared.

"His brother is Damon and the name of the person upstairs is confidential," the manager answered impatiently.

Learning that Jared was Damon's brother, Bernard instantly shut up. For a moment, he couldn't feel his legs anymore. The money was forgotten and his head even didn't hurt so much anymore all of a sudden. All he could think of was running as fast as he could.

In fact, Jared didn't know Damon well. There were a lot of people that his brother wouldn't dare to offend. Therefore, he didn't think this was such a big deal. "I don't care who is upstairs. I intend to get her out of here. Move away!"

At that moment, he had forgotten that there was one person who made him care—Carlos. Later, when Jared saw the person upstairs, he wished he could take back what he had just said.

Debbie's eyelids were getting heavy. The liquor had a strong delayed effect. It was starting to go to her head. If they stayed any longer, she might pass out.

CHAPTER 66 APPEASE YOUR HUSBAND

The manager of the bar freaked out. He signaled the bodyguards and said to Jared apologetically, "I'm sorry, Jared, but I wouldn't dare to offend the person seated upstairs even if I had ten lives to gamble with. I'm afraid you will have to let Debbie go."

Receiving the signal, the bodyguards walked towards Jared and tried to force Debbie away from him. Jared wasn't as good at martial arts as Debbie was. Moreover, Debbie was drunk. Desperate to find a way to protect Debbie, he shouted as the bodyguards approached, "I'm going to find out who the hell this man is!" With that, he held Debbie's hand and began climbing the stairs.

The others made way for them. When he got to the private booth upstairs, Jared kicked the door open and yelled, "Who the hell is stopping my fri... C... C... Carlos?"

One single sight of Carlos' face, Jared almost fell to his knees out of fright. He spun around to look at the drunk person behind him, darted outside the room, and slammed the door shut hastily.

"Tomboy, run! Run for your life! It is Carlos inside!" he whispered in a trembling voice as his fingers shivered to find balance. By this point, Debbie was too drunk to stand straight, but Jared's last remark alerted her.

She stared at Jared with gaping eyes and nodded. Then, hand in hand, they dashed downstairs like a crazy couple running to save their lives.

Carlos had recognized who were outside when the door of the room had been kicked open. Also he noticed that Debbie wasn't fully standing erect indicating that she was drunk. He opened the door and stepped outside the booth.

"Stop them!" he ordered in the hallway.

Unaware of the cause, the manager quickly followed Carlos' orders and told the bodyguards to stop the two people running away.

"Move! Move!" Having grabbed her by the wrist, Jared led the way for Debbie.

However, the bar was so crowded Debbie couldn't run fast although her physique enabled her to. As soon as they reached downstairs, they were barred by the bodyguards.

But she hadn't forgotten to resist. She knocked down the first bodyguard that tried to lay his hand on her.

And then the second, and then the third... When she was going to handle the seventh, the bar suddenly became eerily quiet. Debbie had an ominous feeling when a chill crept up her spine. Jared, who was standing opposite Debbie, saw the man behind her. His face twisted with fear. 'Should I flee for my life? Debbie is his wife. Maybe he wouldn't harm her even if I left her alone here.'

After knocking the last bodyguard to the ground, Debbie pretended not to sense the person standing behind her and strode towards the entrance of the bar.

"Stop!" came the cold command in a stern voice. Upon hearing Carlos' voice, Debbie felt her limbs go numb.

The other customers all stepped back from the scene, mostly because they all wanted to keep a safe distance from Carlos, the man with an intimidating presence.

"What should we do?" Debbie whispered to Jared who was standing beside her.

'I wish I knew, ' Jared wailed inwardly. "How about I run and you go appease your husband? You're his wife after all. I suppose he won't be too hard on you."

"No way! Are you ditching me?" Debbie pinched his arm hard. Jared let out a painful scream and jumped in agony with one hand covering the pinched spot.

"Debbie, this man is your husband. He will let you pass after you play cute and sweet. Trust me, men are the same. I'm a man and I know it."

'Play cute and sweet? Me? Kill me, kill me right now, ' Debbie cursed internally. She felt that this would

be the most difficult thing she ever had to do.

While they were whispering, Carlos came down the stairs. "Hurry. Your husband is arriving. Our lives depend on you now, buddy," Jared told Debbie, tugging at her sleeve, nervous as ever.

Debbie closed her eyes. 'Okay, I'll do it. For my friend and myself. Just this once. It shouldn't be too difficult.' After calming herself down, she raised her head and turned around abruptly. She threw herself at Carlos, buried her face in his chest and said, "Mr. Handsome, I feel so dizzy. Who am I? Why am I here? What is this place?"

The onlookers all watched in shock. 'Ugh...is this playing cute or dumb?' Jared cried inside, feeling his end was near. 'What's happening?' Carlos wondered.

The thick stench of alcohol from Debbie made him wince in disgust. He shot a grim glance at Jared, who almost lowered his head to the floor, and demanded, "What's going on? Why is she like this?"

Jared didn't dare to lie to Carlos. He looked up and was going to tell him about Bernard, but when he looked around, he noticed that Bernard was long gone. 'Shit!' Jared cursed.

"Um, nothing. Tomboy just drank a little. Right, Tomboy?" Jared stressed on her name as a cue for her to respond something.

Taking the hint, Debbie nodded immediately and said, "Yes, yes, I... alas, my head, my head is spinning so fast. Mr. Handsome, can you take me home?"

Carlos didn't expose her trick. His face was as gloomy as ever. When he carried the woman in his arms, the crowd exclaimed in shock. "Who is that woman?" one man asked.

"Who knows? Why is Carlos carrying her?" another responded.

When he passed by Jared, Carlos kicked him in the sheen and said, "How dare you to let her drink so much! And on your watch!"

Jared howled in pain and blurted, "I couldn't stop her—" And then came another kick, this one more excruciating than the previous one. "Ouch! I'll stop! I'll stop talking! Just stop kicking. Gosh! It hurts."

While Jared was jabbering, Carlos gave him a stern look and he shut up so quickly as if there were an OFF button on his mouth which had just been pressed. 'Damn it, ' Jared cursed in his heart. He had never been in such a humiliating situation. The entire set of onlookers stared at him with pity.

When Carlos was carrying her out of the bar, Debbie slightly raised her head from Carlos' shoulder and mouthed, "Sorry," to Jared.

The boy snorted and turned his head away. He didn't seem to care anymore. 'It's all because of her. I

told her not to drink. Ow, my leg. Ow, my groin. It damn hurts. Even my old man has never kicked me this hard.

Carlos, if I ever get a chance to hold you in the palm of my hand, I'll make you grovel and call me grandpa. Mind you! Hahaha, that would be fantastic!

As Jared was immersed in his fantasy, Carlos suddenly turned and looked at him suspiciously. The smirk on the boy's face disappeared instantly and he ran away like a deer escaping a lion in one piece.

Tristan had been waiting for Carlos by the car outside the bar all the while. When he saw him coming out of the bar with a woman in his arms, he was surprised. But after a careful stare, he opened the door of the backseat respectfully.

Debbie started pretending to be asleep the moment she was carried into the car, but after a while, she actually dozed off. The car got filled with the stink of liquor. It didn't take a genius to figure out how much Debbie had drunk.

Debbie was so deep asleep she didn't even realize when they arrived at the villa. Suddenly, she was frozen to her core. She woke up to find herself in the tub and cold water was being sprayed on her body. She shuddered.

"Carlos, this is uncalled for!" she shouted angrily.

"Awake?" Carlos tried to contain his anger with great difficulty.

Debbie wiped the remaining drops of water off her face. When she opened her eyes, she noticed that there were tens of dollars scattered on the floor. She felt disgusted seeing hard-earned money being dumped. Carlos might not care but she did. She stood up and walked out of the tub in her drenched clothes.

It might not be a lot of money, but it meant something for her. Especially, considering the murderous glares Carlos had been shooting at her repeatedly, it wouldn't be exaggerated to say that she had earned that money with her life.

Watching her pick up the notes one by one, Carlos didn't stop her. When she was done, he said, "Go get changed."

"Huh?"

"We're going somewhere."

Debbie tried to deduce something from the man's face, but frustrated at his poker face, she had to nod.

When she got dressed and walked out of her bedroom, Carlos was already waiting downstairs.

Once she hopped in, the car drove away from the house slowly. Debbie was fidgety. When she looked out the window, the memories from the last time when Carlos had taken her to the martyrs' park all came flooding back. "Where're we going?" she asked warily.

"Shining International Plaza."

Debbie was relieved to hear that soothing response. But why was he taking her there at this late hour?

The car finally came to a halt. Debbie staggered out and followed Carlos into the elevator. Only after the elevator had stopped on the top floor did she realize what his real intentions were.

CHAPTER 67 AT THE CINEMA

"Boo...hoo... Carlos, Mr. Carlos, Mr. Handsome, I'm sorry. I made a mistake." Debbie held on to a holding bar near the elevator and cried, refusing to take another step forward.

Carlos ignored her pleas and dragged her into the cinema nonchalantly.

The moment they were inside, the cinema was bustling with moviegoers, but the manager received Carlos as soon as he appeared at the entrance and ushered them towards the biggest theater.

When the manager left, Debbie held Carlos by the waist and pleaded again, "Mr. Handsome, I realized that I was wrong and I won't do it again. Please, can we go now? It's creepy to watch horror movies at night. It may kill me. Let's go home. Please, please."

Carlos was unmoved and still acted indifferent. After dragging her to the center of the theater, he made her sit next to him.

The movie started soon. A scene of a dark graveyard first came into view. It made Debbie's blood run cold. "Carlos, I have apologized. Why are you still doing this? I won't drink again, okay? Can you just forgive me, please?"

Debbie shifted her eyes away from the screen to Carlos. But the sound effects of the movie made her heartbeat quicken. She covered her ears tightly with her hands. For a while, it helped, but soon her hands and wrists went sore. Phobia and horror were driving her crazy. She had begged and pleaded, but the man seemed heartless to ignore her. "Carlos, you are a freak! I'm fed up with you! I will divorce you! I will! Let's go get a divorce now!" She lost her temper.

"Sit well," the man said after giving her a cold glance.

Debbie stood up defiantly from her seat and tried to shut out the horrible sounds. "If you want to stay, fine! Stay! I'm leaving!" She threw the 8D glasses far enough out of sheer anger.

'I hate him! I hate his evil guts! I'll divorce him, no matter what!' Debbie thought as she stormed towards

the exit of the theater.

To her dismay, the door was locked from outside. She slammed the door anxiously for a long while, but no one came to her rescue.

Frustrated, she stomped angrily on the floor, covered her ears, closed her eyes, and shouted at the top of her lungs, "Carlos, you asshole! Let me out! Let me out now!"

She yelled and cursed. However, all her efforts were futile as if none of her words came across. Carlos remained nonchalant, sitting there, eyes on the screen.

Finally, Debbie had enough and started crying. "I want to get out... I don't want to be here... Hoo...hoo... I said I am sorry. Why are you so mean?" He had taken her to a cemetery one evening and scared the life out of her. Now he was forcing her to watch a horror movie in the middle of the night. She hated him with all her soul.

Before she knew it, Carlos was already standing in front of her. "Will you ever drink again?" he asked the sobbing girl who sat on the floor.

As long as she could get out of the cinema, for now, she would just say whatever he wanted to hear. "No, I won't. I promise, not ever," she replied, while what she actually thought was, 'Carlos is a son of a bitch.'

"Will you get yourself into trouble again?"

"No, never again." 'If I get a chance, I'll have Carlos' guts for garters.'

"Go to study overseas next year."

This time, no response.

"Go or not?"

"Okay, I'll go."

Then the door was opened soon. Carlos and Debbie walked out of the theater one after the other.

Back at the villa, Debbie, without turning back, ran to her bedroom and slammed the door shut behind her.

She threw herself onto the bed and cried. When she got tired from crying, she took out her phone and clicked on the Moments on WeChat and posted an update. "God damn it! It's torture when someone takes advantage of your weaknesses. I'll get my revenge sooner or later."

That night, she didn't intend to sleep. After a refreshing bath, she called Jared and whined about Carlos over the phone for an hour. Jared was so tired of hearing it he almost fell asleep. "I'm going on a trip tomorrow." Finally, she changed the subject.

She had promised Carlos she would stay out of trouble, but she didn't say that she would stop skipping classes.

"Where to?"

"Deplua. Are you going with me?"

Jared shook his head. "No. Maybe Kasie will go with you." He and Debbie had traveled together many times. He was kind of sick of it.

"Okay, go to sleep then. If you don't see me at school tomorrow, it means I have gone to Deplua. Don't mention a word to Carlos."

Debbie's last remark made Jared nervous. "You are going on a trip and you're keeping it from Carlos? Are you looking for trouble?"

"It doesn't matter anymore. I am going to get a divorce when I come back. I can't stand that jerk anymore."

Sleep didn't come to Debbie until the wee hours of the night.

However, when Debbie felt drowsy and was about to fall asleep, a knock on the door alerted her. Cold sweats dripped from her forehead as she was totally frightened. She snapped her eyes open and asked, "Who is it?"

Her voice was trembling.

"Open the door." It was Carlos. Debbie bit her lips and didn't answer.

When no response came from inside, Carlos knocked again and demanded, "Open the door."

"No!"

"Look outside the window, there's a..."

He was cut short and wasn't able to finish his sentence because Debbie already rushed to the door and opened it. Seeing her red eyes, Carlos realized that she had been crying. He felt bad about it but said nothing. He walked past her and lay in her bed.

"What are you doing?" she asked angrily.

"Sleeping," he simply replied.

"Get out!"

For the first time in his entire life, someone told Carlos to leave. He didn't say anything. Nor did he leave.

Before he came to her bedroom, he had been pretending to be asleep and waiting her Debbie to come to his bedroom. After what had happened in the cinema, he had thought Debbie would be so frightened as to come to his bedroom and climb into his bed again. He had waited for more than an hour, but she didn't come, so he had to come to her bedroom instead. Thinking about it, he felt it was childish and lame for him to pretend to be asleep in his room.

"Come and sleep," he said, but Debbie didn't move, and he wouldn't get out of her bed. They had reached a deadlock. Carlos ran out of patience. He got up, strode towards her, carried her to the bed, and tucked her in.

She struggled and punched him. "If you move again, I'll get rough," he warned.

That worked. Debbie became quiet instantly, lying in bed with her back to Carlos.

'Carlos, you brazen, lewd, despicable, old man!'

She kept cursing in her head and slowly drifted into sleep.

The next morning, when she woke up, Carlos was gone. She packed her things and got ready to leave.

It was such a sudden decision Kasie wasn't prepared. She was occupied with some family matter and couldn't go with her.

At last, Debbie went to the airport alone.

The busy streets of Alorith were filled with people going to and fro, minding their own private businesses. Debbie waited patiently for her flight bound for Jork

It was a long and tiring flight. Getting off the plane, she hailed a taxi and found the hotel she had booked online. The moment she tucked her bag inside the closet, she changed into a white casual outfit, put on sneakers, took her purse, and went outside to have some fun.

She treated herself to a share of stuffed tofu with spicy sauce and strolled along holding her food in her hands. When she spotted an interesting widget in a shop by the street, she stopped to appreciate it. As she was taking a bite of the tofu, her phone rang.

She glanced at the caller ID, swallowed the tofu in her mouth, and hung up. It was Carlos. She wouldn't

take his call.

However, he seemed quite persistent. Her phone rang again and again and again. Every time she hung up, he would call again. When her phone rang for the 12th time, she picked it up impatiently and said, "Old man, enough already. Is your company going out of business or something? Don't you have work to do? Why do you keep calling me? It's annoying!"

"Deb, it's me." The strange yet familiar voice sent her freezing on the spot. Debbie looked at her phone screen to check the number. It was indeed not Carlos. It was Hayden who was calling her this time.

"Oh, what's up?" Her tone softened. She threw the tofu box into the bin, wiped her mouth dry, and listened to him attentively.

CHAPTER 68 A BROKEN HEART

"Who is the 'old man' you referred to?" Hayden asked as he was surprised by Debbie's response when she answered his call.

"Never mind, I was referring to no one in particular," Debbie replied casually. "What made you call?"

"I've been in Alorith for a couple of days now. I have no plans tonight, so I'm thinking maybe we can have dinner together."

"Oh, sorry. I'm out of town. I'm on a trip."

Hayden hadn't expected her response. For a moment, he was in a daze but soon realized that Debbie was such a travel gal. He remembered how much she enjoyed going to places. She had visited different tourist destinations, more than he ever had. He envied her determination and her free spirit.

"Oh! I see. It's okay. Anyways, my schedule will be cleared out early next month. How about I take you to England for a vacation then?"

"No, thanks." Debbie turned him down immediately. "I've been busy lately. I have all these different classes every day. I had to make time for this trip."

Debbie was telling the truth. When her trip was over, she would once again be occupied with dance, yoga, English, and other classes.

"Debbie, don't lie to me. I know you. You always hate studying. You're just trying to blow me off by making up those classes."

"No, I'm not. That's the old me. People change. Now I have yoga, dance, English, Advanced Mathematics, and so on, but I don't learn martial arts anymore."

For a moment, there was only silence at the other end of the line. "You used to say you will never quit

martial arts. My mom and I once asked you to quit, but you refused. Why now?"

Hayden knew how much she used to hate those classes she just mentioned.

Debbie smiled and said, "Because I don't have to protect you anymore." One of the reasons why she had worked hard on martial arts was to protect Hayden and his sister, Portia Gomez, who was frail like a willow leaf.

Debbie and Hayden started dating when she was 16 and their relationship lasted for two years. Just a few days before her 18th birthday, for some unknown reasons they broke up. During those two years, being his girlfriend, Debbie was the one who had protected Hayden and his sister, although she herself was a little girl.

In return for her bravery, she got ridiculed by Hayden himself. "You are not womanly at all," Hayden had said to her.

Debbie's reply on the phone made his heart tighten. "I'm sorry, Deb. I didn't treat you well before. I didn't treasure what we had. I've regretted it. I've missed you for the past three years. Can we start over?" Hayden apologized, his voice full of remorse.

He had been involved with dozens of women after Debbie had left him, but none of them truly loved him as Debbie had.

She was so thoughtful in a way that, even though she didn't know how to cook, to make sure he ate well, she used to bring takeouts to his workplace.

Moreover, she changed her character for him. She was perky, but when she learned that Hayden's mom liked quiet girls, she had always reminded herself to be quiet in front of his mom, just to get her approval.

On ordinary days because Hayden's family was wealthy, he got kidnapped or blackmailed a lot, or sometimes into some other kinds of trouble. All those times, Debbie tried her best to protect him, no matter how dangerous the situation was.

She used to get drunk easily, but every time Hayden had to drink at a dinner party, she drank his alcohol for him, just because drinking was bad for his health and she wanted him to stay healthy. Thus, at first she could only handle 50 grams of alcohol, but gradually, she could handle more than 1 kilogram of alcohol.

She had done so many things for him.

But now it was over. Hayden had lost her, that girl who had loved him like a fool. Now he was back, and he wanted her back. He promised himself that he would never let her go this time.

"Hayden, it's too late." Every time Debbie mentioned his name, it hurt. She was the one who gave and gave in their relationship, but in the end, all she got was a broken heart.

It still pained her when she reminisced about their past, but she was over him now. She had moved on. Except for the pain, she didn't have other feelings for him.

Debbie ended the phone call and continued roaming the streets as if nothing had happened. When she passed by a dessert bar, the delicate desserts in the glass cupboards drew her attention. There was cake, icy pudding, and multi-layer steamed bread. Durian flavor was her favorite. She remembered how Hayden hated it. Every time Debbie ate a durian snack in front of him, he would say it smelled disgusting and that she would get fat from eating too many snacks. He had even told her not to eat durian snacks in his presence.

Out of nowhere, Debbie suddenly recalled that night when she was with Carlos. She could tell that Carlos hated durian's smell too. But he had eaten the snack with her even though he despised it. She knew by the look on his face that he was just forcing himself to eat the durian snack.

Carlos had specifically ordered crispy durian cakes and durian pancakes for Debbie the other day when they were eating on the fifth floor of Alioth Building.

Maybe it was because he was several years older than Debbie, Carlos was thoughtful in many things. He would ask Julie to make durian dishes or desserts at the villa now and then.

When Debbie sneaked into Carlos' room for the first time, he had caught her immediately. After that, she had tried to sneak into his room again, but he never busted her. To think about it, Debbie thought maybe it was not that he didn't know that she was sneaking in. Maybe he had let her in on purpose.

Ever since she was young, Debbie was afraid of thunder and lightning. She had come to Portia's bedroom in the middle of the night before when she and Hayden were still dating.

It was on Hayden's birthday. It was too late when the party was over, so Debbie stayed in Hayden's house. When she was sleeping alone in the guest room that night, suddenly thunder roared and lightning flashed. She was too scared to sleep. But she couldn't go to Hayden's room. That would be inappropriate. So she knocked on the door of Portia Gu's room and told her that she was afraid to sleep alone.

To her dismay, however, Portia pushed her out of her room impatiently and locked the door. "Don't interrupt my sleep again!" she had warned her. She remembered how scared she was that night. She had to bear with the thunder and lightning and sleep alone while covered with three layers of blankets.

Recalling all this, all of sudden, Debbie missed Carlos, that overbearing, arrogant, hateful man.

Debbie stared at her phone screen. There was one missed call from Carlos. She made up her mind that if he called again, she would pick up the phone.

Two days had passed. Carlos still didn't call.

On the third day, Debbie had a big dinner that evening. She had eaten so much that after dinner she rubbed her stuffed belly and decided to stroll down the streets to hasten the digestion of the food. Then she came across an emerald store. She walked in and looked around. In the dim light, a lucky peace buckle caught her eyes. "I'd like to have a look at that one," she said to the bald, fat storekeeper.

"Sure. Miss, all the pieces in our store are genuine. This lucky peace buckle is exquisitely polished," the keeper grinned.

"How much is it?"

"\$28, 000. A good price."

Debbie's eyes widened. That was way too pricey for a lucky peace buckle. She knew a little about emerald. To appraise its quality, she looked at the buckle against the light and found that it was not transparent at all. It definitely wasn't worth \$28, 000.

So Debbie put the lucky peace buckle back and said, "I'll look at some more."

Seeing her turn around, the storekeeper put on a hideous look on his face and snapped, "How can you not buy it after you looked at it?"

Debbie was confused. "What do you mean? Do I have to buy it after I looked at it? Why? I don't like it. Of course, I won't buy it." She thought the storekeeper was being ridiculous.

The storekeeper hit the table hard with his fat hand and announced, "Why did you look at it if you didn't intend to buy it? You must buy it!"

"How can you force your customers to buy things they don't want?" Debbie stopped to observe the circumstances of the store. Four sinister-looking men were playing mahjong seated around a square table near the entrance of the store. Hearing the conversation between the storekeeper and Debbie, they turned around and gave Debbie an ominous look.

"I'm forcing you to buy it. So what? Give me the money! \$28, 000. Not a penny less!" From the way Debbie dressed, the bald man could tell that she was rich, and he was going to rip her off before he let her leave.

Debbie wanted to leave the store as soon as she could, so she ignored the storekeeper and turned around to walk towards the door.

However, the storekeeper grabbed a remote and locked the automatic door. "You can't leave without buying it!"

Debbie's blood was up. "He keeps pushing me! This pig is looking for trouble!" She darted towards the bald man and clutched his collar. "Open the damn door!" she warned angrily.

CHAPTER 69 COMING FOR HER

Hearing the commotion, the four men who were at the table stopped playing mahjong and stood up from their seats. With quick strides, they surrounded Debbie. The four of them looked sternly at her like dogs fighting over some bones.

Debbie was left with no choice. She had to fight her way out.

She knocked the storekeeper to the ground and sent him howling. She cracked her neck and was prepared to strike her next target. By now, the other four men could see that she was not an easy one to handle. One of them whipped out his phone and called someone. "There's a chick who knows Kung Fu. Send Herb and Ron over."

Hearing that more foes were coming, Debbie planned to run away.

She let go of the man she was grabbing, took an opportunity, and ran to the back of the store. She looked desperately for a backdoor. But there was no backdoor!

It was a bedroom that she recklessly ran into. When she realized where she was, she wanted to run out, but the door of the room was locked then by those men.

"Stay there. You can come out when you have decided to pay the money," a man said outside.

Debbie took her phone out of her pocket and wanted to call the police. Then another man's voice called out, "Call the police if you want. Nobody dares to mess with us, not even the police. I'm letting you keep your phone because I'm not worried about you calling the police."

She didn't buy it and called the police anyway. The police told her that they were on their way and would be there soon, but no one came even an hour later. "So these jerks were not joking when they said that the police didn't mess with them," Debbie muttered to herself in a hushed voice.

A minute or two passed and the men outside eventually lost their patience. They opened the door and two odd-looking, bulky men who were more than two meters tall walked in and stood in front of her. One of them was chewing a betel nut. "Beetch, geewe me your purth!" the Betel Nut yelled.

But his pronunciation was so bad that Debbie couldn't make out what he had just said. 'Huh? What kind of language is that? What is he barking?' It took her a long moment to figure out that he was asking for her purse. Fumbling around her backpack, she took out her purse and handed it to the Betel Nut. "Here you go. See? I'm very poor. It was not that I didn't want that lucky peace buckle. The truth is that I couldn't afford it. I only have 300 bucks. Go on, you can open my purse and see it for yourself."

The Betel Nut sneered, "Who are you kidding? Open your mobile payment app and geewe me your fone!"

'Although he talks as if he had two tongues fighting, he isn't stupid after all, ' Debbie thought to herself.

She clutched her phone tightly. It was her only hope. She would never give it up to them.

Then an idea struck her. She clicked the Contacts button on her phone and tried desperately to intimidate her captors. "I have a very powerful background. The people I know will kick your asses if you dare hurt me."

However, the Betel Nut didn't seem frightened at all. "Call whoever you want. I weell wait and see whoo weell come. If one perthon comes, we meke \$28, 000. If two come, we meke...er... it's..."

"\$56, 000. If two people come, you make \$56, 000," prompted Debbie. It was hard for her to watch the man being tortured by Math. Nonetheless, she found it silly and hid a wicked smile. "Gosh! I thought I was bad at Math."

She scrolled the call log back and forth, while her eyes wandered around the room. She was looking for an escape route. She had no intention of calling anyone, but her finger accidentally touched Hayden's number. When she realized it, the phone had already been connected.

The call was soon answered, but what he said was really disappointing. "Deb, an important conference is about to commence. Do you have something urgent to say? If you don't, then I have to go."

Somehow, Debbie wanted to see how he would react when he knew what was happening to her. "Yes, I do. Hayden, some people are trying to—"

"To what?" He didn't even wait to hear her out. "Deb, the conference has begun. I have to go. I'll have my secretary call you back later, okay?" Actually, Hayden indeed had a meeting, but it hadn't begun yet when Debbie called. He had lied because he was angry at Debbie hanging up on him earlier.

So he ended her call in a hurry.

It never occurred to him that since she had called at this really late hour, something awful might have happened to her.

The two men in the room grew more impatient. When the call ended, they snatched away Debbie's phone and said, "I don't believe that you don't have money on your phone or in your card. Come. I'll swipe your card and you'll input the code."

Then they searched out from her purse the card Carlos had given her. It was a premium Gold Edition Visa Card.

Before they could swipe it, Debbie's phone rang again. The caller ID said, Old Man.

Her hopes were renewed. After being disappointed in Hayden, she started expecting rescue from Carlos.

"I have to take that call."

The two men refused. "Hell with the call! Hurry and input the code now!" the other man demanded.

The man holding her phone ended the call with one slight push.

Debbie was provoked and didn't want to play games with them anymore. 'Why should I throw away \$28, 000? There's only one way to find out whether it will work or not. I guess I'll just have to try.' As soon as they were out of the room, Debbie took several steps back and charged towards one of the men.

She jumped onto the man's back, strangled him with her right arm, and kicked him in the back of his knee. The man sank to his knees painfully.

The Betel Nut stretched himself a little and then swung his fist towards Debbie.

Debbie blocked his arm with her leg. It caused her excruciating pain.

The man on his knees stretched out his right leg to give her a sweep. Busy with handling the Betel Nut, Debbie failed to see the other man's leg coming. She fell hard on her back.

She got to her feet wincing, straightened her clothes, jumped in the air stretching her legs and gave the two men both a hard kick in the chest.

Then with the support of a table, she jumped up and swung her fist towards the Betel Nut's eye.

Nonetheless, she missed.

The Betel Nut grabbed her by the wrist and twisted her arm behind her back.

He then slapped Debbie across the face. When he was about to kick her, there was a knock, rather, a pound, on the door of the store.

The storekeeper, who was sitting in a chair while smoking, signaled the Betel Nut to keep the girl out of sight.

He obediently dragged Debbie towards the bedroom, holding her with a tight clench.

When the door was opened, a dozen fierce-looking men were standing outside the store. The head of

them glimpsed the fallen chairs and broken showcases. His face darkened.

The storekeeper was overwhelmed and scared at the sight of such men at his store. Especially by their leader, whose presence was as intimidating as a demon's. In Jork, few people were as distinguished as this man. "How can I help you?" the storekeeper asked politely with a smile.

Nobody responded. The man in charge walked into the store haughtily in his brand-new leather shoes.

The GPS on Debbie's phone showed that she was here at this store. 'Where is she?'

Carlos took out his phone and dialed Debbie's number again. Just as he had expected, her phone was heard ringing in the bedroom.

Right now, Debbie's mouth was covered. Through the gap in the door, she could see Carlos outside the room. She was so excited that she wanted to scream, but all she could make were grunts. The Betel Nut was covering her mouth so tight that she couldn't even breathe.

Her phone was still ringing on the floor. When she saw the caller ID 'Old Man' on the screen, she almost cried with joy.

He had come. For her!

Carlos glanced at the storekeeper, walked to the door of the bedroom at a steady pace, and kicked it open.

What he saw inside the room made his heart tighten into a knot. His face purpled in rage.

The girl was held on the floor by two men. Her clothes were a mess. Her face was pressed against the floor, her mouth covered. Her hands had been twisted behind her back.

CHAPTER 70 SMASH THE DAMN STORE

The way Debbie was being treated made Carlos' blood boil. He walked over grimly like a soul slayer and, before the two robust men could realize it, he sent one of them sprawling onto the floor

and kicked the other one to the side of the shabby bed.

Carlos helped Debbie sit up and held her in his arms. Her hair was all messed up. He gently brushed the disheveled hair out of her eyes and asked in a whisper, "Are you okay?" There were some scratches on her face. Worried that it might hurt, he didn't touch her face and just blew some dust off it.

With teardrops flowing down her cheeks, Debbie nodded to convey to him that she was okay.

Carlos kept her at a safe distance from the two fallen men, and then he walked back to them. He hauled one man up, twisted one of his arms behind his back, and then with one snap, dislocated the man's arm.

The man yelled miserably in pain.

While Debbie was exercising her wrists, the other man's arm got broken by virtue of Carlos' actions.

She was impressed when she saw Carlos take down the two sturdy men so quickly with his own bare hands. Seeing his rage, Debbie started to worry whether Carlos would kill them. Those men cried and yelled as if they were pigs being taken to an abattoir. After a long while that seemed like a century to the men, Carlos finally decided to rest his arms and attend Debbie.

He relaxed his wrists, helped Debbie up, and carried her out of the room. When they came outside, the storekeeper was waiting for Carlos, on his knees. Obviously, he had realized that he had made a huge mistake by messing with the wrong person.

"What happened?" Carlos asked Debbie coldly. Debbie was surprised at the question. Since Carlos had beaten the two men up without saying anything, she had assumed that he would never bother to ask the cause of the matter. 'Did he lose his rationality because of me?'

That thought crossed her mind, but only for a second. She pointed at the lucky peace buckle on the showcase and said, "They forced me to buy that lucky peace buckle and wouldn't let me leave unless I gave them the money."

Carlos glanced at the lucky peace buckle and didn't utter a word.

Debbie continued, "They asked for \$28, 000, but it wasn't worth that much. Of course I wouldn't buy it. Then they locked me up in that room. They also snatched away my purse and wanted to swipe my bank card. I'm sorry, your card."

With only one glance, Carlos knew that the lucky peace buckle was fake. It wasn't even worth \$100, let alone \$28, 000. And the worst part was that they had tried to coerce his wife into buying it.

Carlos let go of Debbie's hand, walked over to the showcase, and kicked it so hard that the entire showcase crumbled into pieces.

The fake emerald items displayed inside the showcase got dismantled in a second.

Debbie was startled because she had never seen him burning with rage ever before. She had seen so many sides of him tonight.

"Smash the damn store!"

Carlos said to Tristan ruthlessly.

"Yes, Carlos." Tristan motioned to the men behind him and a dozen men came forward and started smashing everything in their sight.

The storekeeper wailed and begged in tears, but who cared? Who would question Carlos' command?

The door of the store remained closed all the while. Therefore although some people heard the noise inside, they didn't know exactly what happened. Hence, there weren't any strangers to witness the happenings.

While his men were busy smashing the store, Carlos took Debbie out of there. He and Debbie walked in a lane hand in hand, both keeping their mouths shut as though to not disturb the eerily silent atmosphere around them.

She was thinking that since Carlos had found her, he must also know where she stayed. For obvious reasons, she then realized that they were heading for her hotel.

"Old man," she called.

Carlos didn't respond, nor did he look back. He didn't seem to care.

"Carlos."

Silence.

"Carlos."

Still no response. The silence seemed deafening.

Not wanting to be ignored any longer, Debbie trotted ahead of him and blocked his way.

He shot a cold glance at her, but remained silent.

"Mr. Handsome, thank you for saving me tonight," she said politely.

Carlos released her hand, took off his suit jacket, and draped it over her dirty white casual jacket. The gesture gave her a lot of confidence standing beside him.

While she still seemed to fidget, he picked her up, carried her in his arms and walked on.

Never had a man treated her this way. He treated her as if she were the most precious thing in his life.

"Old man—"

"Shut up!" His growl made her lose all the courage she had to continue with what she was trying to say. He sounded really pissed.

When they reached her room, Carlos looked around. 'Not as bad as I thought. At least she got herself a room facing the lake.'

He put her down, locked the door, and next... Stripping her?

Stunned, Debbie held his hand and asked, "W-What are you doing?"

"You!" he answered curtly.

For a moment, she fell into a deep pit of confusion. When she realized what he literally meant, her face flamed with embarrassment.

'This perverted pig, ' she cursed in her heart. "No, don't. Old man, I apologize. I'm sorry. What I did was wrong. Don't be mad, okay?" she said.

Carlos continued to strip off her jacket, as if he couldn't hear her. Debbie clutched her clothes tightly, but then he lifted her jacket up.

"Carlos, be a gentleman! How can you be such a jerk? Get your hands off me!"

Continuing to ignore her, he turned her around with her back to him. When he was sure that there was no injury, he finally put her jacket down and straightened her clothes for her.

By now, she realized that this man had no ill-gained intentions in his mind.

Then, he started to take off her pants. "I am not injured," she said hurriedly.

Carlos was relieved. After a glance at her, he asked, "Debbie, how are we going to settle this?"

When she saw his face, all her anger vanished into thin air, because she had done something wrong. "I know I was wrong, so please don't be mad," she pleaded holding his hand with a fawning smile, in a soft voice.

As a tomboy, that was the best she could do to play cute. Actually, even that was killing her.

However, the man didn't seem to appreciate her efforts. He stayed nonchalant and didn't believe a word she had just said.

Debbie felt utterly frustrated. Desperate to prove her sincerity, she raised her right hand and vowed, "I meant every word I just said. I'm really grateful for what you did for me today, and I promise I'll listen to you after we go back."

Carlos suddenly pulled her into his arms. Debbie's heart pounded nervously.

She didn't even know how to react to such a situation. "Don't ever travel alone again," he demanded.

She nodded in a fluster. 'Is...is he worried about me?' she wondered.

But she had doubts. "Carlos, why are you here?" She finally mustered up enough courage to ask the crucial question that was troubling her throughout the day. At the same time, part of her hoped that his answer would be "I'm here for you."

"I was just passing by," he replied casually.

She refused to believe a word he had just said. Thinking that he had come here for her, Debbie wrapped her arms around his neck happily, stood on tiptoe, and kissed him on the cheek affectionately.

'Thank you, Carlos. Thank you for letting me rely on you, ' she reflected.