

Take My Breath Away by Rabbit Chapter 1

"Here's the divorce agreement, Philip. I've already signed it. Please give it to Carlos."

It was difficult for Debbie Nelson to work up the nerve to hand the divorce agreement to Philip Brown, the Hilton family's steward.

Sighing in resignation, Philip went over the document and noticed clauses that made him frown. He looked at the girl sharply and bellowed, "Debbie!" Incredulous, he asked, "Do you realize how stupid this is? I can understand if you want to divorce Carlos. After all, you haven't seen him for the past three years. But why aren't you asking for any money?"

Debbie was an undergraduate with no father or mother. In Philip's opinion, she shouldn't want a divorce, let alone get out of the marriage without any money.

Debbie scratched the back of her head in embarrassment. She was well aware that Philip always treated her as a daughter, so she had no plans to keep anything from him. "I... I want to drop out of university," she stammered.

"What? Why do you suddenly want to leave university? What happened? Are you being bullied?" The steward's eyes widened in astonishment.

"No, no, no! You're overreacting, Philip. You already know, I-I don't like studying. So, I don't want to waste my time in university," she explained.

The excuse of dropping out of university was lame but the only one that came to mind quickly to stall him off. But she was not telling anyone the real reason for wanting a divorce.

She was silent for a while, as several thoughts ran through her mind. 'Tomorrow is my 21st birthday and also the third wedding anniversary.

I'm still young. I don't want this hollow marriage to stand in the way of pursuing true love.

I've never even seen Carlos in person. My father arranged this marriage. How can anyone live like this?' she thought desperately.

Sensing that the girl was not about to share anything else, Philip conceded, "It appears you've made up your mind, so I will..." He waited for her to say something. "I'll hand the divorce papers to Carlos tomorrow," the steward said with a deep sigh when she didn't respond.

"Thank you so much, Philip!" She let out a huge sigh of relief before giving the man a sweet smile.

But Philip could not help himself as he stared at the young girl. "Debbie, Carlos is a good man. I believe you are a perfect match, so I do hope you will think this through carefully and reconsider. If you change your mind, you may call me anytime," he said sincerely.

Of all he said, two words stood out that made Debbie cringe. 'Perfect match? He didn't even show up at the wedding! The man was at a dinner reception for a foreign president at that time. Even the photograph on our marriage certificate was Photoshopped.

In the last three years, I haven't even laid eyes on him. So, why is Philip saying that we are a perfect match?' Debbie couldn't control the sarcastic thoughts in her head.

Finally coming to her senses, the young lady took a deep breath before speaking again. She had intended to say, "I've made up my mind," but as a sign of respect for Philip who was truly concerned for her, she uttered, "Okay."

Thinking that she might have a change of heart, Philip waited until the next afternoon to inform Carlos about the divorce papers. But to his disappointment, she didn't call him. Slowly, he brought out his cell phone and dialed a number. "Carlos, I have a document that needs your signature," he said respectfully.

"What document is that?" came the cold reply. He noted a hint of impatience in Carlos's voice.

After hesitating briefly, the steward answered, "A divorce agreement."

Then his hand holding the pen froze as Carlos Hilton let the words sink in. He closed his eyes and rubbed his brows thoughtfully.

It quickly dawned on him as he thought, 'Oh, I have a wife. If Philip didn't call me now, I wouldn't even remember that I am married and have a wife.'

"Just put the papers in my study. I'll be back in Alorith in a couple of days," Carlos said coolly.

"Alright," Philip acknowledged, and then hung up.

Meanwhile, at the Blue Night Bar in Alorith, the bar was dimly lit but packed with people.

Young men and women flocked to the establishment which was very popular in the city.

Inside Room 501 was a table littered with beer, wine, champagne and a variety of snacks.

The room was the venue for a birthday party. The celebrant was Debbie, who turned 21 that day.

Nicknamed "Tomboy" by her classmates, Debbie now wore a pink lace dress. This was one of the very few occasions that she donned something feminine instead of h

er usual attire of jeans and shirts. Several of the female guests whipped out their phones to have a selfie with Debbie.

After everyone had their fill of taking photos, the celebrant started to have fun by drinking with her classmates. Stacked in one corner of the room were the many presents Debbie received from friends and classmates.

A slightly tipsy young man broke out in a song, with his arm slung around another boy's shoulders. "I knew you were trouble when you walked in..." he warbled.

His voice was so grating that many of the girls covered their ears and groaned.

"Hey, Jared! Stop that singing. Let's just play games that won't bust anybody's eardrums." It was Kasie Garcia, one of Debbie's roommates, who called out to Jared Hampton.

She was a cheerful girl, full of confidence, who always got people's attention.

Her suggestion made everyone in the room turn silent. The boys and girls in the room turned to look at Kasie, waiting for her instructions.

She was a known party animal, and was popular among the classmates.

Looking at everyone with mischief in her eyes, Kasie said, "Let's play Truth or Dare!" A cunning smile crossed her lips as guests balked at the suggestion.

Several of them cast a scornful glance at the girl. "Kasie, that game sucks!" This time, Jared, who belonged to the rich second generation, got back at Kasie. He rolled his eyes in disgust because he thought it was a boring game.

Kasie stared at Jared defiantly and continued, "Today is Debbie's 21st birthday, so we'll make the game more exciting!" She flashed an evil smile that made some of the guests uncomfortable.

Since all people at the party were students, many were still pure and innocent. They were familiar with the game; the consequences for the dares were usually singing the high notes in Mariah Carey's 'Loving You', carrying the heaviest guy around the room, or singing a duet with the opposite sex.

But Kasie had something else in mind for Debbie. The celebrant's cheeks were already crimson from too much champagne and wine. As the first round started, Kasie winked at the others, who quickly caught on to what she was planning.

"The loser in this round has to go out the door, turn right, and then kiss the first person of the opposite sex he or she runs into. But it will be a kiss on the lips

instead of a peck on the cheek. If he or she opts to skip this consequence, there is an alternative. He or she has to drink ten glasses of wine," Kasie declared.

Everyone became excited about the game. They were all eager to find out who the first loser would be. This time Jared snorted in disgust but said nothing. He knew there was already collusion.

After playing Rock-Paper-Scissors, everyone turned to look at the celebrant, who was dumbfounded.

Debbie stared at her hand, which formed the scissors symbol, and then glanced at the others who held out Rocks. Her eyes widened, and her jaw slackened.

"I hate you, Kasie!" she screamed. Remembering the consequence, the birthday girl felt like crying. She was already drunk, and couldn't afford ten more glasses of wine.

Mustering her courage, she took several deep breaths before opening the door.

Following instructions, she turned right.

Standing in the hallway was a man dressed in a crisp white shirt, black slacks, and black leather shoes.

He looked to be in his mid-20s and stood around 180 cm tall. His face was all angles and planes, from his forehead, cheeks to his jawline. His looks were the type that would stand out in a crowd.

His eyes, however, were so cold that Debbie couldn't help but shiver when he glanced at her.

"Wow, he is one handsome dude! Tomboy, hurry up! We're watching you," Kasie said in a loud whisper. Debbie stood frozen for a moment. She was busy thinking, 'He looks somewhat familiar. Where have I met him before?'

But Kasie's voice broke into her thoughts, so she took a deep breath and plucked up more courage.

Still there was this niggling thought, 'I think I've met him before. Never mind! I'd better make this quick.'

Bravely, she walked up to the man, gave him a sweet smile and stood on tiptoe. His cologne wafted through her nose.

Carlos was looking for a quiet place to make a phone call when he was stopped by a girl in the hallway.

He frowned in annoyance as Debbie approached him.

Something clicked in his mind. 'Why does she look so familiar? Her eyes...' Carlos thought, trying to recall the face.

As he pondered who the girl was, Debbie planted a soft kiss on his lips and caught him off-guard.