

### Chapter 13: How About Now?

Gabriel didn't show any expression after Rosalind's refusal. His face was just the same as before. "That's why you need the contract," he said in the same calm tone as he had. "It will protect you. I'll ask my lawyer to add a clause to assure you I'll never take away our children from you."

She said nothing for a while. It was truly a too good to be true offer, but she didn't think it was what she wanted. Yet, she was curious to know why he offered her. So, she asked, "Then tell me, why did you want me?"

"Ah, yes, I haven't told you about it." He stopped for a while, then smiled. "You reminded me of myself."

Rosalind gaped, as it was something she didn't expect. "How?"

"You are hardworking and loyal like me. I wasn't born with all the wealth, darling." His stare was elsewhere as he pondered about the past. "Sometimes I had to eat the remaining food. After my father's death, life was worse, and it pushed me to find a better life."

"I see." Who would have thought Gabriel, the zillionaire had a hard life? She thought he was born with the silver spoon in his mouth. From what he said, it seemed he built all by himself. What a man! She admired him more because of that. "I thought you had been rich from the first."

Gabriel shook his head. "No. It's through hard work, many years of good business investment, and the right people who have worked,

trusted, and supported me."

"It's amazing ...." Rosalind stared at Gabriel with awe in her eyes. A self-made zillionaire was amazing.

"Well, I'm lucky I guess." He smiled at her and held her hand. "I always admire hard workers. When I saw you the first time at Da Costa's dinner event, I couldn't take my eyes off you."

"Why? Because I'm too simple for Jeremy?"

"No." He smiled a little, recalling the event. "It's because your beauty shone brightly until it mesmerized me."

Rosalind giggled to hear that as he was good with compliment. Yet, as she was not in a good mood, hearing a good thing about herself could lift her mood. Later, she leaned her head and back to the couch. "Ah, Gabe. You always know what to say. You make me feel I'm good enough for anything."

"Because it's true, Rose. You are good enough for anything."

"Really?" Rosalind let out a long sigh and shook her head. "I just lost two jobs today." She grasped her hands together. "I had done my best, but they fired me." She took a deep breath. "I don't know why ...." Her tears trickled to her cheeks, and she wiped it swiftly with the back of her hand. "I'm sorry .... You may think I'm such a weak woman to cry easily over such things."

He hugged her and kissed her shoulder. "No. It's a tough day for you, and it's normal for you to feel defeated. But I'm here, darling. I can wipe away all your tears." He kissed her tears until she stopped

crying. "I mean every word I say, and I always keep my promise."

"I ... I don't know what to say ...."

"Say yes, my Rose. Be mine, and I'll protect you from the world."

Gabriel rubbed her back while murmuring, "We have more things in common than you think. I'll be a good husband for you."

"Gabe ... I want to believe it, but I'm scared .... After everything with Jeremy, I don't know if I can jump into a serious relationship again. At least, not this fast." Her eyes were dimmed as they reflected her heart. She was too afraid to open her heart again, to trust again only to be hurt.

Gabriel took a deep breath. He understood her fear because he had experienced it too for years. Pulling her into his embrace, he whispered, "See? We have more things in common. I understand what you feel because I once experienced it too."

"Oh?"

"It's the past, but I found it hard to open my heart again." He cupped her face with both hands. "Until you."

"Me?" Her eyes widened to hear his words.

"When I saw you, something happened in my heart. I know I wanted you, but you were Jeremy's. That's why I asked him about his relationship with you and also with Monica." Gabriel sighed. "I hoped Jeremy and you would break up quickly. But then, who would have thought it would take so many years?" He let out a long sigh. "Four years of waiting is so long."

At first, Rosalind said nothing. When his words sank in her mind, her eyes rounded. "You have been waiting for me for four years?!"

"Yes, darling. It's true."

"Oh ...." She had no words to say because what she heard just now was quite shocking. Who would have thought Gabriel had been waiting for her for so long?

"I have known you will be mine. The time has come. Don't make me wait longer, my Rose. Be mine and end this torture."

"Gabe ...." Rosalind took a deep breath. It was harder now to say no because she admired Gabriel. It flattered her too to know he might have a feeling for her. Because if he didn't, would he wait for her for four years? But then, was it love?

"Yes?"

"I don't know what I must say." She shrugged and moved her hands upward with the palms opened. "I mean, it should be easy, right? You are an influential man, rich and handsome too. I should say yes because it will be foolish to say no, right?"

Gabriel said nothing because he wanted Rosalind to decide it herself. "So, what do you think?"

"I know that if I say no, many women can take your offer in no time."

"Rose—"

But Rosalind shook her head, pleading to Gabriel without words so

she could finish her words. "I may regret this. But Gabe, I don't want to treat you as a rebound guy."

Gabriel smiled as he lifted his hand and put a strand of Rosalind's hair to the back of her right ear. "I don't need your protection, darling. You can use me as your rebound guy."

"I'm not protecting you. It's only fair that I will start a relationship afresh."

He caressed her cheek with his thumb. "My sweet and honorable Rose, I want you more than ever."

"Gabriel, I'm not playing hard to get your attention." She let out a long sigh. "The more I know you, the more I admire you, but is admiration a good enough foundation to build a relationship?"

"Sure. Why not? Many people even have less than that to start a relationship." Gabriel gazed deeply into Rosalind's eyes. "Be mine, Rose."

Rosalind took a deep breath. It was too much to process in a short time. Finally, she said, "Give me more time to decide."

"How long?"

"A month."

"It's too long."

"How much time do you think is acceptable?"

He cupped her face with both hands. "How about now?"