

Chapter 29 Burnt

Debbie's heart was hammering while she anxiously stammered to explain herself, "That's not true. My apology is sincere. I'm really sorry for offending you..."

Ever since Carlos moved back into the villa, he was not the mean, old womanizer he used to be; he was a changed man. He acted like a responsible adult and paid full attention to Debbie's daily needs. Debbie reminded herself all the time to stop being so headstrong with him. Perhaps if she made more of an effort to get along with him, he would get off her back.

Carlos interrupted her impatiently. "Enough. Now go away. You are forbidden to go into the kitchen ever again." When he finished talking, he produced a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his mouth gracefully.

"But why?" Debbie wondered. By now, she already knew better than to anger him again. "Got it. I'm sorry for disturbing your work." Debbie expelled her curiosity and answered like a good girl.

After picking up the meal box, Debbie made her way to the door. Before stepping out of the office, she looked back and asked, "Um, Carlos, could you sign the divorce papers?"

"So, that's what all this was about." Just as he had anticipated, she was up to something. "I knew she wouldn't just turn into this friendly, polite girl for no reason," he sneered inwardly.

Now that Carlos had seen through her facade, Debbie decided to come out with the truth. "Yes, it is. I just want the divorce. Why else did you think I did all of this?" In truth, Debbie had been grateful to Carlos before they had a falling-out. After all, he had financially supported her for three years.

Unfortunately, their recent unpleasant encounters had left a terrible impression on her. All the gratitude she had for him had evaporated.

"I told you to ask my grandfather's permission if you want a divorce. I'll sign the papers as long as he says it's okay."

Carlos' reply infuriated Debbie so much that she dashed towards his desk. But eventually, she clenched her fists to stop her temper from flaring. "How can a comatose patient give consent to anything?" she exclaimed.

"That's not my problem. Now get out!"

he warned with a stern look on his face. Rendered speechless, Debbie turned around and walked out of the room.

Carlos was filled with complex emotions even after she had closed the door behind her. Wisps of burning smell lingered the air and drifted into his nose.

Feeling restless, he got up and opened the windows to let the smell out. With a cigarette in one hand, he sent for Tristan. "I want a detailed report on Debbie Nelson's background. Don't leave out anything," Carlos ordered.

"Debbie Nelson?" Tristan was puzzled.

Carlos cast a cold glance at him before he took out a marriage certificate from the drawer and tossed it on the desk.

Tristan picked it up to have a closer look. When he saw the photos and the names written on the side, all of a sudden, the puzzled expression on his face turned into an open mouthed gasp. "So, the girl Carlos was staring at on TV the day of the marathon and the girl who has just walked out of here is Mrs. Hilton?"

Tristan felt overwhelmed by curiosity.

After leaving Carlos' office, Debbie got inside the BMW waiting for her in front of the office building. She sat in the backseat, unable to get a word out, looking dejected. Matan Riley, her driver, who was a veteran in his fifties, smiled at her through the rear-view mirror. "Debbie, did Carlos eat the dinner you cooked for him?"

Debbie shook her head in disappointment and put the meal box aside after closing the door.

Matan tried to comfort her. "Perhaps he had already eaten dinner before you came," he said.

Debbie didn't respond. Then she recalled how Carlos had reacted after he had tasted her food. She turned her sights towards the meal box, pensively wondering what made him react like that. A few moments later, she opened the box, picked up a bit of braised pork and put it in her mouth.

However, as soon as the food touched her tongue, she spat it out into a tissue, almost immediately.

Matan chuckled when he understood why Carlos didn't eat her food, as he watched what the girl, who was the same age as his daughter, was doing in the backseat.

'Gosh! What is this thing? Did I really cook this?' Debbie couldn't believe how bad the food tasted.

Dismayed, she stared at the burnt meat in the box and finally understood why Carlos had thought that she had gone to his office just to further provoke him.

As if it weren't bad enough he might have thought she was trying to poison him. Debbie thought about how excited and nervous she had been because it was the first time she had cooked a meal for someone. She remembered the pain she had felt when drops of sizzling oil sprinkled onto her hands. Now it seemed like it had been a total waste of time.

It was past 10 p.m.

After Carlos had come back to the villa from work, he rubbed his stressed temples to relax himself. At the entrance, he changed into his slippers in the dim light and went upstairs.

"Carlos," a quiet voice suddenly came from the kitchen.

Startled, he widened his eyes with fright. When he saw who it was, Carlos knitted his eyebrows as if he had just received some bad news.

"Dear God, what are you doing here at this hour? Why aren't you asleep?" he scolded. Debbie sensed anger in his tone, but she didn't know why he was angry. 'What did I do wrong now? Did I frighten him?'

With that in her mind, she stifled her laughter and put on a sulky face before coming out of the kitchen with a glass of hot milk in her hand. Debbie had anticipated that Carlos would be back soon, so she had come

downstairs to heat up a glass of milk for him. Coincidentally, he came back just as soon as the milk was ready.

"Carlos, this is for you." She handed him the glass of milk with an innocent look on her face.

He glanced at her, feeling a dull ache in his head. "Why didn't you switch the lights on?" "She came downstairs to heat up milk for me? Could it be poisonous?"

"I did. I just turned the light off before you walked in," she answered defensively.

With another doubtful look at her, he thought, 'She isn't reckless enough to poison me.' Then he took the glass of milk from her hands and gulped it down.

"Wait..." she suddenly uttered.

Before Debbie could even finish her sentence, Carlos rushed to the bin and spat the milk out. Debbie reached out and took the glass from his hand nervously.

What she meant to tell Carlos was that the milk was too hot, but by the time she could say anything he had already gulped it down.

Carlos strode to the diningtable with a black face, and pulled out some tissues to wipe his mouth.

Debbietried so hard to stifle her laughter that her cheeks became as red as cherries. "You! Go to sleep!" Carlos commanded her.

Debbie opened her mouth, hoping to mention the divorce, but after consideringhis bad mood, she finally decided that it mightnot be a good time to talk about that topic. Pursing her lips tight, she put the glass of milk on the diningtable and went to her room meekly.

Carlos stared at the glass of milk and then shifted his eyes towards her as she made herself scarce. After he calmed his nerves he followed up the stairs as well.

As soon as she got into her bedroom, Debbieburst into wild laughter. It was an innocentmistake, but it felt good to see the man suffer a bit.

As the night deepened, Debbie turned and rolled about in bed restlessly. Multiple thoughts cascaded like a waterfall in her head.

"What do I have to do to get a divorce?"

I have tried to be defiant and failed. I have tried to please him and that didn't work out either. That man is such a piece of work," she thought.

The sound of the door shutting lightly came to her ears from the next room. She looked at the clock to check the time. It was 1 a.m.

"Does he always work so hard? What if I buy him a nice present tomorrow? Maybe he will be pleased and sign the divorce papers."

Debbie was convinced that it was a good idea. She invited Kristina and Kasie to shop with her the next day through WeChat and finally fell asleep.

At 7 a.m. the next morning, Carlos was sitting at the dining table by himself, as usual. Julie served breakfast, and assuming she wasn't needed at the table anymore, she turned to leave him alone in the dining room.

"Julie," he called.

"Yes, Carlos," Julie responded.

"Did she... cook dinner on her own yesterday?" he asked.

