

His kiss 1031

Chapter 1031

All Gabriela had truly needed was to ensure the elders would not step in and obstruct things. Beverley considered this briefly, then gave a short, decisive nod.

“This time, I will respect your decision.”

“Thank you, Grandmother.”

With the underlying conflict of interest settled, Beverley looked at Gabriela with an appreciation she had not quite extended before. After a moment’s pause, she added — not without a trace of mild disapproval — “You are returning to the Howard family soon. Even if you keep your surname, you should not be calling me ‘Madam’ any longer.”

Gabriela smiled and inclined her head. “Yes, Grandma.”

Beverley maintained her composure with practiced restraint, offering only a measured “Hmm” in response.

Gabriela shifted the conversation without warning. “Grandma, Truett is about to start kindergarten. He’s grown quite a bit these past two years. If you have any free time, you should come and see your great-grandson.”

Beverley blinked, caught off guard. The image of the little boy surfaced immediately in her mind, and the severity in her expression softened before she could prevent it. She cleared her throat. "I happen to be free this afternoon. Let's go now — and I'll bring him something for starting school."

Gabriela smiled and inclined her head. "I'll thank you on Truett's behalf, Granny Beverley."

The informal warmth of the address reached something in Beverley that the formal version never had.

When Beverley arrived at the villa and laid eyes on Truett — bright-eyed, perfectly charming, entirely himself — whatever remained of her reserve dissolved without ceremony.

Gabriela crouched beside him. "Truett, this is your Granny Beverley. Say hello."

Truett looked up at Beverley with clear, open eyes. "Granny Beverley," he said, his voice crisp and unaffected and exactly right.

Beverley made a sound that was more warmth than word, and gathered him into her arms. Her hand moved gently over his soft hair. Although she had never been the sort of woman to make a fuss over children, and the absence of a son in Matthew's line had quietly sat with her for years, holding this little boy — listening to that sweet voice call for her — made her feel she would give him the world if he asked.

She straightened her back and cleared her throat softly. The butler, reading the signal, stepped forward with the prepared gifts.

Model airplanes, remote control cars, Monopoly, transforming superheroes — they accumulated into a small mountain. Truett's eyes went wide.

"Granny Beverley, are all of these for me?"

"Hmm," Beverley said, with great dignity.

"Thank you, Granny Beverley!"

Gabriela watched him tear into the packaging and said gently, "Grandma, there's no need to bring so many next time."

"I didn't know what he liked, so I had the butler buy a selection." Beverley sipped her tea with elegant composure — and could not stop herself from glancing over at Truett every few seconds to see which gift he reached for first.

It was the remote control car. His eyes went enormous. "It's so cool!" He left everything else where it was and tugged at Beverley's hand immediately. "Granny Beverley, come play with me!"

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His small, soft hand closed around her aged one, and that was the end of Beverley's career-woman composure.

She followed him to the playroom and sat with him on the floor.

The butler hovered, anxious for her joints. “Madam—”

“Go home,” Beverley said, not looking up. “Have the driver return for me later.”

She spent most of the day at the villa, leaving only after the evening had settled in. Truett walked with her to the edge of the neighborhood, holding her hand, reluctant.

“Granny Beverley, when will you come play with me again?”

He had understood without needing to be told that while Granny Beverley could be strict with others, she was gentle with him. He liked her — the same way he liked Grandpa Farley.

Beverley patted his head. “In a few days.”

Truett extended one small finger toward her, wanting a pinky swear. Beverley hesitated for just a moment, then gave him her finger, and the promise was sealed.

Wesley, who had been keeping a quiet watch on developments around Gabriela, was informed of the day’s events not long after.

Billy delivered the report and could not quite keep the admiration out of his voice. “Everyone in Okburg knows how guarded Beverley is — she barely acknowledges the younger generation. And Miss Gabriela managed to win her over in an afternoon.”

Wesley allowed himself a small smile. “Gabriela has always known how to charm the elders.” He paused. And with Truett in the picture, it was nearly impossible for anyone to resist. The boy was his son, after all — naturally as magnetic as Gabriela.

Billy noticed the quiet pride in his employer’s expression and felt a private relief. After the long conversation with Roger, Wesley had carried a heaviness that had been difficult to watch. It was lifting now, slowly but unmistakably.

An idea came to him. “Mr. Moss, since the young master is starting kindergarten soon, perhaps you should bring him a gift as well?”

Wesley was already reaching for his phone to call Billy to arrange it before the sentence was finished.

He arrived at the villa to find Truett freshly bathed, who came running the moment he heard his father’s voice.

“Daddy, you came to see me too!” He launched into a full account of the day without pausing for breath — Granny Beverley’s visit, the mountain of gifts, the remote control car. Wesley listened with his eyes creasing at the corners.

“Truett is so lovable — of course Granny Beverley couldn’t be stern with you.”

Truett, delighted to the tips of his fingers, immediately insisted that his father play with the new toys. Wesley obliged without hesitation.

Gabriela watched from the side, feeling the particular resignation of someone who knows there will be another bath required before bed.

Wesley played with him for a full half-hour before Truett’s eyes grew heavy. Once the little one was asleep and the house had settled into quiet, Wesley found Gabriela in the living room.

“When Truett starts school, I’d like to be there to send him off,” he said.

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Gabriela nodded. “Alright.” Truett would be overjoyed to have both of them there.

A silence fell between them then — comfortable on the surface but carrying something unspoken beneath it. The large wall clock ticked steadily in the stillness. Wesley looked at her.

“Gabriela—”

“Actually,” Gabriela said, glancing to the side, “was it you who helped amplify things online this time?”

She had deliberately exposed Rebecca’s failed resort project to generate noise and catch Beverley’s attention. But someone had escalated the situation beyond what she had set in motion — stock price movement, internal contract details surfacing, the kind of precise amplification that required both resources and access. It had made her insider information seem more authoritative than she had intended, and had driven Everglow Group’s stock down sharply.

Wesley nodded, with a slight, helpless air. “It was a small thing, Gabriela. There’s no need to be so formal about it.”

“I just wanted to say thank you.”

“No need for thanks.” He held her gaze with that same steadiness. “Gabriela, I want to—”

“Oh — your suit.” She moved before he could finish. “It’s been cleaned, but I kept forgetting to send it over. I’ll get it now.”

She returned with the jacket and held it out to him.

He took it. “Thank you.”

A few more moments of quiet passed.

"It's getting late," Gabriela said. "Shouldn't you be heading back to rest?"

Wesley looked at her without moving. "I've been working all day. I haven't eaten."

A beat.

"Gabriela, I'm hungry."

She wanted to suggest any number of restaurants that would be delighted to receive him. But there was something in his expression — not quite forlorn, but adjacent to it — that made the words change before they reached her lips.

"What would you like to eat?" she asked instead.

Wesley had only hoped to steal a little more time with her.

He had not anticipated happiness arriving quite so suddenly. The usually composed and self-possessed Mr. Moss found himself feeling slightly unsteady.

"Anything is fine," he said. As long as it came from Gabriela's hands, he would love it.

Gabriela cooked him a bowl of noodles, added an egg, and scattered green onion over the top. The aroma that rose from it was simple and warm.

When she set the bowl on the dining table, she reached instinctively for the chopsticks and began picking out the green onion. She had done it several times before she caught herself, paused, and set the chopsticks down with a quiet click. She pushed the bowl toward him.

“When you cook an egg, you need green onion and ginger,” she said. “If you don’t want them, pick them out yourself.”

When she looked up, Wesley was watching her, his dark eyes quiet and full of something that looked very much like amusement.

Alarm bells sounded somewhere in Gabriela’s chest. “I have things to do tomorrow,” she said quickly. “I’ll head to bed. Take your time with the noodles.”

She was already moving.

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“Gabriela.” Wesley’s voice stopped her. “I’m a guest right now. Are you going to leave a guest alone in the dining room?”

If he was a guest, she was the host, and hosts did not abandon guests at the table. If he was not a guest — then what exactly was he? Gabriela felt a quiet wave of regret for her moment of softness. She should not have made him the noodles.

She sat back down. “Then eat quickly. The egg won’t taste right once it goes cold.”

Wesley disappeared into the kitchen and returned with a smaller bowl, having divided the noodles between them. “Join me for a bit,” he said. Before she could object, he continued — his voice lowered, carrying a genuine weariness beneath it — “I’ve been so busy lately. I rarely make it back to the estate. I’m almost always eating alone.”

Gabriela looked at him. She thought of the man she had known a few years ago — energetic, certain of himself, the center of every room he entered. They had both changed so completely, though she could not have said exactly when it had happened.

Something nostalgic settled quietly in her chest. She picked up her bowl. “Alright. Let’s eat together.”

They sat across from each other in the lamp-lit dining room, eating noodles in near-silence. It felt, unexpectedly, like the late nights at the office when Gabriela had often stayed too long, cooking for him because they had both forgotten the hour. Back then, Wesley had been particular about almost everything — and had found endless reasons to keep her nearby, using his authority as her employer as a convenient cover. Looking back now, the conflicts and small irritations faded. What remained was how simple it had been. How uncomplicated happiness had felt.

When they finished, Gabriela rose to clear the table. Wesley was on his feet before she reached the bowls.

“You’ve been running on empty for days,” he said. “Let me.”

He gathered the dishes and washed them in the kitchen with quiet efficiency. Gabriela stood in the doorway watching him and could not quite articulate what she was feeling.

He had changed. But then, so had she.

She was still turning the thought over when Wesley finished and turned to leave the kitchen. Caught off guard, Gabriela stepped back too quickly — her foot caught itself, and she pitched backward. Wesley’s arm shot out and caught her, pulling her in against him.

They were very close. Through the fabric between them, Gabriela could almost feel the steady rhythm of his heartbeat — clear and unhurried in the quiet of the night.

The warmth of it made something flutter in her chest. She shifted. The moment he felt her resistance, Wesley released her immediately.

“Sorry.”

“No — thank you,” she said, careful not to meet his eyes. “It’s late. I’m going to sleep.”

Wesley stood alone in the living room for a few moments after she disappeared, thinking about the expression on her face before she had looked away.

Chapter 1035

She was less resistant to him now. Something had shifted, even if she was not ready to acknowledge it. The realization filled him with a warmth he could not entirely contain. He left the villa in such a state of quiet elation that he forgot his freshly laundered suit jacket on the chair.

Gabriela, who treasured sleep above almost everything else, could not sleep.

Every sleepless night in recent memory seemed to trace back to the same source. Was this man simply her inescapable fate?

“That’s a romantic entanglement,” said a voice behind her, catching her entirely off guard.

She spun around. A head had appeared from beneath the covers — hair disheveled, face half-hidden — tilted up and regarding her with drowsy curiosity.

Gabriela threw a pillow at it.

Alissa yelped. “Gabriela, what was that for?”

"I should be asking you," Gabriela said, still catching her breath. "What are you doing in my room?"

Alissa gave her a long, exasperated look. "Even if I'm staying over, you should at least be reasonable. This is my room."

Gabriela looked around. It was, in fact, the guest room. She had walked through the wrong door entirely.

"Sorry," she said. "I wasn't paying attention."

"Never mind that," Alissa said, sitting up now that sleep was clearly not happening. "I heard you muttering about some kind of calamity. What calamity? Who is it?"

"You heard wrong."

"I heard it perfectly clearly," Alissa said, leaning toward her with interest. "Is it Wesley?"

Gabriela pushed her head away. "Go to sleep. Don't gossip."

She returned to her own room, sat on the edge of her bed, and pressed her hands against her warm cheeks.

One embrace. That was all it had taken to send her walking into the wrong room entirely. Even the air in the villa felt different somehow — charged with something she did not want to name.

She washed her face, got into bed, and closed her eyes firmly.

She was someone who could sleep anywhere, at any time. She was not going to lie here suffering over Wesley Moss.

She began counting to settle her mind. One sheep, two sheep, three Wes—

She sat up.

This was ridiculous. She had been with him before. They had slept in the same space countless times. How could one accidental embrace reduce her to this? Was it the grey suit? The quiet way he had spoken to her, without pressure, without demands? Had his face somehow become more appealing since the last time she had looked at it properly?

Chapter 1036

She gave up on sleep.

She picked up her phone. Some impulse she could not name made her open his chat. She typed a message — then deleted it. Typed another — deleted that too. She went through several attempts before finally setting the phone face-down on the blanket beside her.

Enough.

She was going to sleep if it was the last thing she did tonight.

But she lay there like a pancake being flipped — restless, overheated, unable to find stillness — until she gave up entirely and slipped down the hall to Truett's room. She climbed in beside him and held her small, warm, deeply-sleeping son, and her mind gradually went quiet.

She drifted off not long after.

She had no way of knowing that across the city, someone else was lying awake because of her.

Wesley had opened their WhatsApp conversation and been staring at it, turning over various pretexts for sending a message. Then he noticed the indicator: typing.

He waited. Patient, alert, suddenly very awake.

He was still waiting when the middle of the night arrived. Nothing came through. The indicator had disappeared long ago.

He stared at the empty chat for a while longer, then set his phone down and looked at the ceiling.

Wesley stared at his phone until the night gave way to morning.

By the time Billy arrived to deliver the day's work report, the evidence was plain on his employer's face — two faint dark circles beneath eyes that had clearly not closed. Billy paused for just a moment, taking it in. Even the most formidable CEO in Okburg, it turned out, was not immune to sleepless nights. It made him seem unexpectedly human.

Billy had just finished the report when Tessa knocked and entered, carrying a paper shopping bag. "Mr. Moss, a courier just delivered this."

Wesley did not need to look inside. It was the suit jacket he had left at Gabriela's villa the night before.

"Thank you." He took it, his lips pressing into a thin line.

He had lain awake the entire night, waiting for a message that never came. And the first thing Gabriela had done upon waking was send his jacket back. Was she afraid he might use leaving it as a reason to return? Or was she sending a quieter message — that he should not read too much into the evening?

His mood darkened at once. He waved Billy and Tessa out of the room.

Gabriela, for her part, was entirely unaware of the weight Wesley had attached to a folded jacket. She had simply noticed it on the chair when she came downstairs, and had it sent over before heading to the office. Then she called Rebecca.

Rebecca had not been sleeping well. Being woken early and pulled into a phone call before she had even had tea put her in the worst possible temper.

Chapter 1037

When Gabriela mentioned the bet, Rebecca's restraint snapped. "Gabriela, I'm warning you — don't push your luck. If you keep this up, I have the power to make your company disappear."

Even though Gabriela had once secured a degree of protection for Haynes Group through unexpected channels, and the Howard family had since thought twice about moving against it directly, Rebecca was beyond caring. She had already been publicly embarrassed. At this point, what was one more confrontation?

"I'm at the Golden Honey Café waiting for you," Gabriela replied, sounding almost amused. "If you don't come, let's see which disappears first — you from the Everglow board, or my little company."

She hung up before Rebecca could respond.

Rebecca stood in her bedroom trembling with fury — and with no real way to retaliate. Gabriela had already brought Beverley around, and Matthew had never been on her side to begin with. The entire family had left her without an ally. All she could do was seethe.

Grinding her teeth, she got dressed and went to the Golden Honey Café.

It had only just opened. Gabriela was nowhere in sight.

Rebecca called immediately. “Where are you? I’m already here. Get over here now.”

“You’re already there?” Gabriela sounded genuinely surprised. “With your temperament, I expected you to drag it out until noon.”

“Gabriela!” Rebecca’s voice shot upward from a low growl to something close to a shriek. “Are you playing games with me?!”

“I’m sorry,” Gabriela said, with what sounded like complete sincerity. “You didn’t agree earlier, so I assumed you wouldn’t come on time. I misjudged — it seems you’ve learned to respect other people’s time.”

“Gabriela!” The veins at Rebecca’s neck were visibly straining. “Don’t think for a second I won’t—”

“I didn’t mean anything by it,” Gabriela said, still entirely calm. “I’m at the office about to go into a meeting. Come find me there instead.”

Rebecca slammed the phone down.

Come find her. At the office. Was this woman completely out of her mind? Rebecca was a Howard. Agreeing to meet Gabriela at a café had already been a concession. And now she was being asked to show up at Gabriela's office like a subordinate come to deliver a report?

She stormed back to Everglow Group.

The moment she walked through the doors, she could feel the staff's eyes sliding toward her — careful, sideways glances that vanished the instant she looked back. Expressions schooled quickly into respectful smiles. "Good morning, Director Howard."

She went straight to Jasper's office without knocking.

Luther was in the middle of briefing Jasper on a project. Jasper's brow tightened almost imperceptibly at the interruption, then smoothed. He dismissed Luther with a quiet word and turned to Rebecca, who dropped into the chair across from him with barely controlled agitation.

Chapter 1038

"Jasper, Gabriela has gone too far."

Jasper felt the familiar ache settle behind his eyes at the mention of the name.

The Everglow Group's stock had been declining since the embroidery incident, and the board's patience with Rebecca — and, by extension, with him — was visibly thinning. Just yesterday, Mr. Song had clapped him on the shoulder with the particular weight of a man making a pointed remark. "Jasper, can't you handle even something this small? What have you been doing all these years?" And Sweeney had followed with, "Perhaps it's time to let everyone see what you're truly capable of."

The subtext had been clear enough. Rebecca had caused the problem, yet the scrutiny fell on him.

He set his frustration aside, stood, and rested a hand gently on her shoulder. "Take a breath." He handed her a cup of warm water. "What has she done now?"

Rebecca recounted the morning — the phone call, the café, Gabriela's insufferable composure, the instruction to come to her instead. "Jasper, does she even have a functioning brain? A nobody with that kind of arrogance — it's beyond comprehension."

Jasper's patience was wearing through, though he kept his expression unchanged. At a moment this critical, when what was needed was a clear head and a strategy to turn public opinion around, Rebecca was spending her energy nursing wounded pride over a phone call. It was, to put it plainly, senseless.

But she was his sister. Indulging her had always been his public identity, and maintaining it had its uses. He smoothed her hair back gently and exhaled.

"If you already know she's not thinking clearly, why let a fool get under your skin?"

The mild dismissal of Gabriela — delivered so easily — took some of the heat out of Rebecca's eyes. Then she remembered the larger picture.

“Jasper, I’m being attacked online from every direction. The project I signed — Gabriela must have been the one who leaked it. The netizens know nothing, they just follow whoever shouts loudest. And now Dad is planning some family gathering to welcome her formally. You have to help me.” She leaned forward, her voice dropping to something more intimate and pressing. “Find a way to teach her a lesson. Humiliate her at the event.”

Jasper looked at her for a long moment, then sighed, running a hand through her hair.

“Becca. Even if I embarrassed her publicly — then what? She would still join the Howard family. She would still sit on the Everglow board. We are people who aim for greater things. Don’t exhaust yourself on trivialities.”

Rebecca was not interested in reason. “I just cannot stand her face. I cannot let her walk in here without consequences.”

Jasper stopped arguing. There were times when she simply could not be taught — and as long as she remained on the same side of the board as him, he had to manage her rather than correct her.

“Stop being angry,” he said quietly. “I’ll handle Gabriela. Now go back to work.”

The tension in Rebecca’s shoulders eased slightly. “Thank you, Jasper.”.

Just after Jasper managed to calm her down, Rebecca finally agreed to return to work.

However, as soon as she got back to the office, her anger flared up again.

It turned out that the day after tomorrow was the scheduled live stream from North Village, and many netizens were tagging Rebecca online, asking if she was ready to go.

Most of the comments were just idle gossip, which she could barely tolerate. But the majority were filled with mockery and disdain, calling her foolish and lacking integrity. They accused her of being a business failure who still clung to her position as the Howard family heir, of not honoring her bets, and of being utterly untrustworthy.

With a dark expression, Rebecca scrolled through some of the trending comments. She could easily imagine the looks those old board members would give her.

Meanwhile, Cindy stood nervously to the side, fearing that her sister might take her frustration out on her again.

Unable to bear it any longer, Rebecca called Gabriela.

But when the call connected, it was immediately hung up.

Fed up, Rebecca stormed over to Gabriela's company to confront her.

As soon as they arrived, the two receptionists recognized them and blocked their way.

“Miss Espinoza, you can’t enter without an appointment.”

“What kind of second-rate company requires an appointment? We don’t even want to go in!” Cindy exclaimed haughtily. “Get Gabriela out here to meet us right away.”

The receptionist rolled her eyes discreetly but remained polite. “I’m sorry, Miss Lu is currently in a meeting. We can’t pass along your message right now.”

Rebecca was incredulous.

Did Gabriela think she was genuinely afraid of her?

Rebecca turned to leave.

After all, she wasn’t going to live stream or kneel, and Gabriela couldn’t force her to go to North Village, could she?

To her surprise, Gabriela remained silent the entire day, not even making a single call.

Rebecca didn't believe she would let her off so easily, and it unsettled her.

As expected, that night, a video suddenly began circulating online — footage from years ago, showing Rebecca hiring bodyguards to smash Gabriela's company.

Recently, Rebecca's scandals had been the hottest topic, drawing more attention than even top celebrities.

The video immediately went viral.

"Is this really the heiress of the prestigious Howard family? I'd believe it if you told me she was just a spoiled brat!"

"Look at her ferocity. She's fierce, sure, but also incredibly stupid. If someone like her can uphold the Howard family, I'll eat my hat."

As public opinion fermented, the Howard family's stock price took another hit.

The board members couldn't sit still and convened an emergency meeting the next day, demanding Rebecca publicly apologize to Gabriela and fulfill her promise to kneel during the live stream.

After being scolded by the board for over an hour, Rebecca was at her wit's end and tearfully sought out Beverley.

Chapter 1040

Jasper couldn't truly control the old board members; only Beverley could help her now.

But this time, Beverley only gave her a cold glance.

"Go find Gabriela. She's the only one who can help you now."

Rebecca's eyes reddened in disbelief.

"Grandma, even if Gabriela doesn't make me live stream, so what? She's been dragging my name through the mud and released a video from years ago. She wants to ruin me!"

"Gabriela promised me that if you compromise, she'll help restore your reputation," Beverley replied coolly. "I need to rest now. You may leave."

As Rebecca left the old house, rain suddenly began to pour from the sky.

Her father and grandmother had sided with Gabriela, and her mother couldn't help her either.

Did she really have to beg Gabriela?

The thought made Rebecca feel utterly devastated, wishing she could stab that illegitimate child.

“Sis, are we going to find Gabriela now?”

Cindy’s timid voice brought Rebecca back to reality.

This time, she decided to swallow her pride, if only temporarily. Once she regained her footing in the company, she’d deal with Gabriela later.

“Let’s go!”

The two of them returned to the Haynes Group.

This time, before the receptionist could say anything, Rebecca declared, “Gabriela asked me to come. Go and inform her immediately.”

The receptionist didn’t argue and quickly dialed the executive office’s internal line.

Before long, Alissa came out to meet them.

She smiled and said, "Miss Rebecca, our Ms. Gabriela is still in a meeting. It should take about another half an hour. She asks that you wait in the reception room."

Another meeting?

Rebecca was instantly displeased at the thought of waiting, ready to explode with frustration.

Cindy quickly whispered a reminder, "Sis, we're here to negotiate with Gabriela. Don't get upset."

The angry party is always at a disadvantage, losing ground before the conversation even begins.

Rebecca, having likely been infuriated by Gabriela one too many times, took a deep breath. Her anger was almost becoming a habit now.

With a cold expression, she walked in with Alissa.

Gabriela was indeed in a meeting.

But as soon as it ended, she came out immediately to see Rebecca.

Rebecca was already like a cat with its back arched, launching into a tirade the moment she saw her.

It was the usual string of insults: “mistress,” “bastard,” “little wench,” “nuisance.”

Gabriela couldn’t even be bothered to show emotion. She waited until Rebecca finished before saying calmly, “If you do as I say, I can give you a pass this time, for Grandma’s sake.”

Rebecca’s expression changed at the mention of “Grandma.” “What did you do to manipulate Grandma into listening to you?”

“You don’t need to worry about that.” Gabriela’s tone was indifferent. “Today is already the sixth day, and tomorrow is the deadline for the public apology live stream. If you can’t speak to me properly, then tonight you should think hard about what to wear on camera tomorrow, so you don’t end up too embarrassed.”

Rebecca couldn’t even imagine that scene.