

His kiss 1041

Chapter 1041

“I won’t do it. Gabriela, if you have the guts, just destroy me. Otherwise, when you return to the company, even if the board of directors doesn’t deal with you, I will!”

Gabriela raised an eyebrow, suddenly changing the subject. “Actually, I told Grandma that if you don’t want to do the live stream, that’s fine.”

Rebecca was stunned, not believing Gabriela would be so kind. “What’s your condition?”

Gabriela glanced at Cindy. “You should leave first.”

Alissa immediately took Cindy out, making sure she wouldn’t eavesdrop.

In the reception room, Gabriela said to Rebecca, “I want something from Lauren. If you steal it for me, I’ll let you off the hook.”

Seeing Gabriela’s calm expression, Rebecca frowned. “Impossible!”

Asking the eldest daughter of the Howard family to be a thief? Dream on!

“You can steal anything you want,” Gabriela said, “but it must be something Lauren values highly and is quite valuable.”

Rebecca’s eyes shifted. So it wasn’t a specific item she had to steal? Then she could just grab something from her mom’s room, and it wouldn’t technically be stealing.

After some consideration, Rebecca agreed. “Fine, I promise you.”

Upon hearing her agreement, Gabriela’s lips curled slightly. “Remember, the item must be valuable and something Lauren wears often. Otherwise, I might just turn against you.”

Rebecca assumed Gabriela was just being greedy and scoffed, “Alright, I’ll figure it out.”

After their discussion, they went out.

Cindy was surprised to see Rebecca looking calm. “Sis, did you work it out? No live stream?”

Rebecca nodded. “Yes.”

Cindy was overjoyed. “That’s great—”

But before she could finish celebrating, Gabriela cut in, “You’re not off the hook. Rebecca has the standing to negotiate. Do you?”

Cindy wanted to argue, but Rebecca, worried Gabriela might change her mind, shot her a cold glare. “Keep quiet. Since you lost our previous bet, I’ll have someone drive you out to North Village later — a remote area.”

Cindy dared not say another word.

In less than half a day, Rebecca handed over the stolen item to Gabriela.

It was a pair of pearl earrings.

Gabriela had often seen Lauren wearing them and confirmed they were hers.

Holding the earrings, Gabriela looked thoughtful.

Seeing Gabriela staring at the earrings for so long, Rebecca sneered, “Don’t worry, they’re definitely my mom’s. She got them at an auction for over three million dollars.”

Lauren was quite fond of these earrings.

She wore them to almost every important event, and often even on ordinary days.

She probably liked them so much because it was Matthew who had paid for them at the auction.

In a way, it was a gift from Matthew to her.

Rebecca was lucky that day; Lauren happened to be out and wasn't wearing the earrings.

Gabriela accepted the stolen earrings, hiding the glint of cunning in her eyes.

"That will do."

Gabriela got what she wanted and immediately contacted a major social media influencer in front of Rebecca.

The influencer quickly released two statements online:

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"1. Gabriela and Rebecca are practically like sisters; family disputes don't last overnight. The live-streamed kneeling incident was something Gabriela decided to let go of, not something Rebecca refused to acknowledge. We hope netizens will stop the online abuse."

“2. As for the video of the company vandalism, it was just Rebecca and Gabriela messing around. All the computers at the Haynes Group have since been replaced with new ones. The two sisters reconciled long ago, and we wonder who had the time to secretly film and release an old video just to get attention. We ask netizens to simply enjoy the drama.”

Once the statements were out, most netizens expressed understanding — after all, in high society, rivalries can quickly turn into alliances.

The wave of online abuse did in fact die down.

As for Everglow Group’s stock, although it didn’t bounce back, at least it stopped falling.

Rebecca hid in her room, watching the tide of online opinion turn, and scoffed, “At least Gabriela knows her place!”

Still, the phrase “the two sisters” infuriated her, filling her with disdain.

Gabriela’s magnanimity was just a ploy to leave herself a way back into the Howard family — and she’d even swindled a pair of her mother’s earrings worth millions in the process!

With her troubles resolved, Rebecca immediately arranged for a driver and sent Cindy to North Village the next morning.

Accompanying her was a popular livestreamer who had collaborated with Gabriela several times, known online as “Gem.”

By now, Gem had amassed ninety million followers and had become one of the hottest streamers online.

She used to be at odds with Gabriela and had criticized her openly, but over time she’d come to appreciate Gabriela’s character, and the two eventually became good friends.

This time, she volunteered to join the trip.

“Gabriela, leave the broadcast to me. I’ll make sure these plastic sisters stay trending for half a year!”

With such a generous offer, Gabriela naturally didn’t refuse.

The moment Gem’s livestream went live, viewers flooded in, and the internet immediately caught fire.

“Let me see who’s on-site.”

“The handsome young guy next to Gabriela is Wesley, I already knew that. But who’s that elegant, distinguished-looking man on the other side? He’s so handsome, like something out of a drama!”

“A little background info: that distinguished man is Matthew, the largest shareholder of Everglow Group and Gabriela’s biological father.”

“Wait, her dad is that handsome? No wonder Gabriela is so stunning...”

The camera slowly panned across the scene.

Cindy stood at the foot of the mountain in North Village, staring up at the rugged mountain road, feeling apprehensive.

But with the camera trained right on her, she didn’t dare run. Besides, it wasn’t just Wesley there — Matthew had come along too.

Cindy was more than a little intimidated by her uncle.

In that moment, she truly regretted everything.

It had clearly been Rebecca who wanted to cause trouble for Gabriela — so why did she always end up the one suffering for it?

Cindy glanced over at Gabriela, wishing she could drop to her knees and beg for forgiveness right then.

But Gabriela simply stood there, expressionless, watching her with a cold, level gaze. “Kneel.”

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With the camera pointed directly at her, Cindy’s face burned with humiliation, and she finally gritted her teeth and dropped to her knees.

The moment her knees hit the ground, she almost cried out.

She swore to herself she would never cross Gabriela again.

Alanna’s grave sat partway up the mountain, not far from the base — roughly thirty to forty meters up. But the path was uneven, littered with sharp stones, thorny branches, and tangled weeds. Even with thick pants on, by the time Cindy finished the ritual of bowing and kneeling nine times before the grave, her knees were scraped raw and bleeding.

Sweaty, dizzy, aching, exhausted, and disheveled, Cindy wanted nothing more than to finish and go home. She’d long since stopped caring about saving face.

Without needing Gabriela to remind her, Cindy knelt before Alanna’s grave and bowed eighteen times, shouting with each one:

“I, Cindy, am an idiot!”

On the tombstone, the young woman’s photograph smiled back warmly.

For some reason, that smile unsettled Cindy, and she found herself shouting louder each time.

Viewers watching the livestream burst out laughing at the sight.

[I can’t believe this — it’s hilarious. Did Cindy ever imagine she’d end up like this when she sent someone with a camera to corner Gabriela?]

[People like her never think they’ll lose. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have agreed so easily.]

[After this, Cindy will probably run the other way every time she sees Gabriela.]

[This is wild! The most thrilling scandal in elite circles in years! Shame Rebecca didn’t end up in the same spot.]

[Gabriela really stood her ground and earned her mother some respect. Her mother can finally rest easy.]

Then came the ones who prided themselves on their “righteous” takes:

[What kind of upbringing does it take to be this twisted? Gabriela’s mother was a mistress. No matter how impressive Gabriela is, that doesn’t erase the fact that her mother broke up a family.]

[Rebecca is the real victim here. Do you really have to pile on her like this?]

But they were quickly drowned out:

[There’s plenty of hidden history in elite circles. Who really knows who the actual mistress was here. The person above needs to mind their own business. Just enjoy the show...]

The comment section descended into chaos, every possible opinion on display.

Even though Rebecca hadn’t been forced to suffer the same humiliation as Cindy, her name kept resurfacing in the comments.

[Even though Gabriela said Rebecca didn’t have to livestream, somehow Rebecca still comes off worse than Cindy.]

[I've suddenly got a wild idea — wouldn't it be just as entertaining if these high-society sisters fought over the family inheritance next?]

After the livestream ended, the betting scandal finally began to fade.

Gabriela didn't return to Okburg right away. She stayed in North Village for two more days.

She spent the time trying hard to recall her mother's voice, her smile.

Her mother had been a gentle person, yet also a formidable woman in business.

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But among Gabriela's few childhood memories, she often pictured her mother hiding away, quietly wiping away tears. Back then, Gabriela hadn't understood why. Now, she thought she finally did — her mother had missed her father.

Even living in the same city, she'd never dared to see him. She died without ever seeing him one last time.

Gabriela sat on the swing in the yard, lost in thought.

Wesley watched her from a distance, not daring to disturb her.

But Matthew walked over, pulled up a chair, and sat down beside her.

“Gabriela, you and your mother suffered all these years because of me. I’m sorry.”

His voice came out choked and hoarse.

Visiting Alanna’s grave that day, seeing her young face smiling out from the photograph, Matthew hadn’t been able to steady his emotions.

“Dad, it’s all in the past. Don’t dwell on it too much.” Gabriela shook her head. “Mom never blamed you.”

Since she’d chosen to forgive, there was no reason to keep picking at old wounds.

Looking forward was the better way to live.

Matthew took Gabriela’s hand, his eyes rimmed red.

The knot in his chest began to loosen at her words.

“Thank you, Gabriela.”

“You don’t need to thank me.” Gabriela smiled. “Dad, what do you want to eat? I’ll cook today — let you enjoy some real homemade country cooking.”

Their neighbor, Mrs. Liu, knowing Gabriela was coming back, had brought over a load of fresh vegetables and home-grown corn early that morning.

“Sounds good.” Matthew nodded firmly. “Whatever you cook, I’ll eat it.”

Gabriela steadied herself and headed into the kitchen to get to work.

Wesley followed quietly behind her, saying nothing, and started washing vegetables.

He’d already made up his mind — he wouldn’t cling to Gabriela. But wherever she went, he’d make sure to be there too.

Just by staying visible, he figured, he could keep anyone with designs on her at bay.

At least this time, Leo and Stewart hadn’t tagged along.

Gabriela chopped vegetables and glanced over to see Wesley quietly washing them, which brought a small smile to her face.

The CEO had apparently learned to wash dishes — though his vegetable-washing technique left something to be desired.

She couldn't help teasing him. "Wesley, at the rate you're washing each leaf one by one, I'll have dinner ready before you finish a single bowl of vegetables."

"Let me take over. The scenery around North Village is nice — you should go for a walk."

She kept talking for a while, but Wesley didn't answer, just kept his head down, silent.

Curious, she stepped closer. "Wesley..."

Suddenly, he turned and pulled her into his arms.

His throat tightened with emotion, and after a long pause, he finally managed three words.

"I regret everything."

Five years ago, Gabriela had no idea that the man in her room that night was Wesley. Even after she found out she was pregnant, she never dared to let him know.

She could only quietly retreat to the village to find some peace and prepare for motherhood.

Although the air was fresh and the surroundings peaceful, transportation was inconvenient, making even simple trips difficult.

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Later, Wesley heard from Tessa that on the day Gabriela gave birth, she'd had a difficult labor and suffered massive blood loss, requiring emergency surgery. No one could even be found to sign the consent form in time.

In the end, it was Farley — a man with no blood relation to her at all — who stepped in to sign.

And Wesley?

Because of his pride, despite caring for Gabriela more than he let himself admit, it had never once occurred to him to send someone to check on her.

If Gabriela hadn't survived that ordeal...

Wesley used to avoid even imagining that possibility.

Now, having come to North Village and seen the plain village houses and the uneven roads with his own eyes, he could finally begin to grasp the hardship she must have endured.

His chest ached with guilt at the thought.

“Gabriela, I’m truly sorry.”

All the memories he’d tried to suppress and push away came flooding back at once.

Wesley had no idea how he could ever make up for the pain and grievances she’d suffered.

Gabriela paused for a moment.

“It’s okay,” she said softly, patting his back reassuringly. “There’s no need to dwell on it now. I was at fault too, for not telling you about Truett sooner.”

Wesley had confessed his feelings to her more than once back then, but she had always avoided him, afraid that the truth about room 1205 would come out because of the misunderstanding surrounding her and Brenden.

She'd never even asked Wesley what he actually thought — she'd simply assumed he'd be disgusted by her supposed involvement with Brenden and would fire her over it.

Looking back on those days now, years later, she found the memory bittersweet.

And in that reflection, she realized she had already let it go.

Hearing the casual ease in Gabriela's voice, Wesley felt his remorse deepen, as if something were lodged in his throat.

"Gabriela, please don't send me away tonight. Let me stay with you, okay?"

Gabriela was quiet for a few seconds before finally answering, "Alright."

The storm of online harassment had finally died down.

Still, even after Cindy's livestreamed apology, Rebecca hadn't managed to shake the label of being "foolish and irresponsible."

Several days passed, and Everglow Group's stock showed no sign of recovering.

Growing restless, Beverley called Gabriela as soon as she was back from North Village.

"Girl, when are you going to get that project sorted out?"

"Grandma, don't worry. I've already received the approved documents from the top, and I've drawn up the proposal. I'll bring it over to you now."

Gabriela soon arrived at the old house, handed the documents to Beverley, and walked her through the plan in detail.

"Grandma, I need you to personally visit the Everglow headquarters. Even if this proposal gets handed to Rebecca, she probably won't be able to carry it through on her own."

"But if it goes to Jasper instead, I won't be happy about that either."

Gabriela's words matched Beverley's own thinking exactly.

Despite years spent studying abroad, Rebecca had come back with questionable skills. After two or three years at the company, all she had to show for it was a string of losses and no real progress.

Then again, she'd spent most of that time chasing after Wesley with a head full of romance instead of learning the business — so perhaps it wasn't surprising she'd picked up so little.

As for Jasper...

Beverley certainly wasn't about to let him take the credit for this.

"Gabriela, if you're willing, I can bring you along to tomorrow's meeting."

"No need," Gabriela said, shaking her head. "Grandma, I haven't formally returned to the Howard family, and I hold no position at Everglow. If you suddenly bring me in, what will the executives think of you?"

"Besides, the credit for this has to go to Rebecca. The public needs to believe that Rebecca herself came up with a plan to turn things around."

Only then would Everglow's stock fully recover.

This was the mess Gabriela intended to clean up on Rebecca's behalf.

“Gabriela, you really have thought this through.”

Beverley nodded in approval, warming to Gabriela more by the minute.

An idea this clever couldn’t have come without real, careful thought behind it.

Gabriela had the intellect, understood the situation clearly, and wasn’t the type to grab for credit out of impulse.

This was exactly the bearing befitting an heir of the Howard family.

After Gabriela left, Beverley sat looking over the approved document stamped in red and the proposal Gabriela had put together, growing more satisfied the longer she studied them.

Her usually stern, hard-edged face softened into a rare, gentle smile.

The butler, watching from the side, couldn’t help but offer his praise. “Miss Gabriela truly is brilliant — a blessing for the Howard family. Congratulations, Madam. Everglow finally has a future to look forward to!”

Indeed, who could argue with that?

Beverley cheerfully brought Matthew in to go over it with her, and together they agreed Gabriela's plan was entirely workable. The next day, she returned to headquarters with the plan in hand and called a board meeting.

The mood in the meeting room that day was noticeably tense.

Beverley sat at the head of the table, with Matthew to her right.

Jasper and Rebecca sat to her left.

The two of them exchanged puzzled glances, wondering what had brought Beverley and Matthew to the company so suddenly.

Once the meeting began, Beverley briefly laid out the day's agenda before presenting the plan Gabriela had devised.

"Regarding the seaside resort project, I've come up with a new approach..."

Since the island Rebecca had signed on had already been designated an environmentally sustainable development zone, they would expand the resort outward from the island itself.

Given the eco-conscious surroundings, they could sell the idea of sustainable living outright — turning the site into a destination for vacationing, wellness, and even rehabilitation.

These days, wealthy clients cared more and more about health and wellness. As long as the marketing landed and the execution matched the concept, the profits would follow.

Once Beverley finished laying out the plan, the room broke into discussion.

Some voiced concerns.

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“Madam, the concept is sound, but this approach would mean doubling — maybe more — our initial investment.”

“Exactly, and since we’re essentially selling an idea, the marketing costs alone will be substantial.”

“Not to mention, doing business inside a sustainability zone means navigating a much more complicated approval process...”

Beverley listened to each concern with a faint smile, then shook her head. “The online buzz has already given us free advertising.”

“And the approval documents are already secured, which saves us time there too. All that’s left is to invest the funds and start construction. Within two years, we’ll be well past breaking even.”

As Beverley produced the official documents for everyone to see, the dissent in the room quickly faded, and the conversation shifted toward how to raise the additional funds.

Sweeney couldn’t help but ask, “Madam, who came up with this new plan?”

Matthew, who had been sitting quietly beside Beverley, spoke up at last, a note of pride in his voice. “My daughter did.”

He didn’t say which daughter — but everyone in the room was sharp enough to read between the lines.

Rebecca was known for turning profitable deals into losses; there was no way she could have come up with something this clever.

That left only one possibility: the daughter who hadn’t yet been formally acknowledged.

Though Matthew never said her name outright, no one dared to press further.

The meeting ran another half hour, and by the end, everyone had signed off on the new plan, agreeing to the increased investment.

No one was happier than Rebecca.

Her once-hopeless project had suddenly turned into a promising one.

Who would dare mock her incompetence now?

Only Jasper's expression shifted, just slightly — though he was careful not to let it show, keeping his head down as he studied Gabriela's proposal, his fingers tightening almost imperceptibly around the paper.

After the meeting, Beverley had someone reach out to the media to announce the new plan publicly.

Netizens, once they'd read through the details, reacted with surprise.

[Turns out the eldest Howard daughter isn't nearly as dim as everyone online made her out to be.]

[Honestly, the environmental policy issue was always a matter of local governance — anyone who'd signed onto that project would have taken a loss. But the fact that Rebecca pivoted to the island's outer zone and drafted a whole new plan so fast really shows some vision.]

Within two days of the new plan going public, Rebecca had all but shed her “fool” label, and Everglow Group’s stock gradually climbed back to normal.

Everyone at headquarters was pleased — everyone except one person.

Since taking over as CEO of Everglow Group, how long had it been since Jasper had felt like an outsider, just watching the company’s fortunes rise and fall without him?

No one had ever managed to put him in that position before.

But this time, Gabriela had done exactly that.

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Jasper’s mind drifted back to that day years ago when Gabriela had shown up with a hundred homeless people to make trouble for him, and to how she’d taken The Riverside Hotel right out of his hands.

Just remembering it sent a chill down his spine, cold all over.

Gabriela wasn’t just clever — she was bold, and she had connections everywhere.

Worse still, once she decided to be ruthless, she didn't care in the slightest about Everglow Group's interests.

She was supposed to be coming back to compete with them for control of the company, yet in her eyes, Everglow was nothing more than a bargaining chip — a pawn she could discard the moment it stopped being useful.

If she wanted to, Gabriela could bring down Everglow Group without leaving a single trace.

How was he supposed to outmaneuver a woman like that?

A cold, dark thought began to take shape in Jasper's mind — to arrange an accident for Gabriela. To make her disappear for good.

But the thought flashed by quickly, and Jasper dismissed it just as fast.

He was ambitious, yes — but not ambitious enough to get his hands dirty with murder just to seize power.

Besides, Gabriela wasn't formidable enough yet to warrant such extreme measures.

He decided to wait and watch.

Gabriela would undoubtedly be back at Everglow Group headquarters soon enough, which would give him plenty of chances to keep an eye on her and act when the moment was right.

While Jasper turned over his plans for dealing with Gabriela, the banquet Matthew was hosting was about to begin.

Matthew had ordered a specially made evening gown for Gabriela — one that, as it happened, came from SK Elite Boutique.

Gabriela looked at the burgundy gown and couldn't help but smile wryly.

She hadn't expected to end up wearing this dress after all, given everything that had happened.

Once she'd tried it on, Gabriela called Leo.

"Thank you for the gown, Leo."

Leo's voice came through gently. "I hope you haven't gotten too thin this time."

At the last fashion show, Gabriela had used the excuse of having gained weight to get out of wearing a dress Leo had picked for her.

She hadn't expected him to bring it up and tease her about it now.

Given the circumstances, she felt it would be rude to turn him down a second time.

She laughed and said, "No, it fits perfectly."

Hearing her laugh through the phone, Leo felt a smile tug at his lips.

"Gabriela, if you don't mind, could you send me a photo? If anything doesn't sit quite right, I can have the staff in Okburg make adjustments."

Without thinking much of it, Gabriela had Alissa help her take a few photos from different angles and sent them to Leo over WhatsApp.

After sending them, she got no immediate reply.

She was used to his slow responses by now, so she changed out of the dress and got ready for bed.

She knew tomorrow's banquet would inevitably draw out troublemakers.

Rebecca and her circle certainly weren't going to let her walk into the venue without a fight.

She needed to be well rested.

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She was ready for anyone who dared to start something.

Watching Gabriela so fired up, Alissa couldn't help but feel a little puzzled.

"Since when did you get this deep into power plays and scheming?"

The Gabriela she used to know had been easygoing to a fault, content living off the steady income from her properties and businesses, with no interest in climbing any higher.

Back then, she wouldn't have even bothered dealing with someone as minor a threat as Myah.

The only time she'd ever shown real ambition was designing handbags for the princess.

Could it be that the whole live-embroidery incident had lit something in her?

“Don’t ask so many questions, kid,” Gabriela said, patting her shoulder with a smile. “You’re my assistant, so you’d better be sharp tomorrow. Go get some rest.”

Alissa wasn’t remotely sleepy — if anything, she was more wound up than Gabriela.

“Why hasn’t Wesley said anything about you wearing an SK dress to the banquet?”

“What’s there to say?” Gabriela replied. “Wesley used to order me SK dresses too. That just means he approves of the brand.”

“That’s because you hadn’t met Leo yet back then,” Alissa pointed out. “Maybe he’s only staying quiet now because it was your dad who sent it.”

“Just wait till he sees you in that dress tomorrow. He might not stay so calm.”

Gabriela thought it over for a moment.

Wesley had been pretty reasonable lately, and she doubted he’d make a scene over it.

“I’m not worried, so you shouldn’t be either. I’m going to sleep now. Goodnight.”

She ushered Alissa out of the room and fell asleep soon after.

She had no idea that after receiving the photos, Leo had been looking at them for a long time.

Back at SK Elite Boutique, Leo sat on the sofa, staring at his phone.

It seemed like Gabriela always found a way to surprise him with something new.

After a while, he saved each photo to his private collection, then turned to Rodrigo. “Let’s wrap things up here for today. I need to head back to Okburg tomorrow — I have a special gift to deliver to Gabriela, and I want to make sure no one dares underestimate her.”

Rodrigo answered promptly, “Yes, sir.”

In truth, Leo could have left Xamfield right after the fashion show ended.

But his presence drew people in, and even after the event wrapped, business associates kept approaching him to talk.

One wealthy businessman even suggested that SK Elite Boutique expand into mid-range products to reach a wider customer base — a move that would bring in serious profit while boosting the brand's visibility even further.

Leo turned him down.

From the very start, SK had positioned itself as a luxury brand for the upper echelons of society.

He'd worked hard to build that image, and he wasn't about to compromise it now.

Besides, he'd already made more money than he could ever need.

How much could one person spend in a lifetime, anyway?

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With that clarity of mind, Leo turned down several lucrative offers, though he still found himself dragged from one dinner meeting to the next, his patience wearing thinner by the hour.

As he stepped out of one such dinner, he failed to notice a familiar figure lingering in the corner — Maura, the woman he'd once been set up with on a blind date.

After taking Erik's advice, Maura had gone digging for information about Leo online.

What she found left her stunned: Leo was a major figure in the industry, known throughout the fashion world under a sleek English name. People had practically gasped when they realized she hadn't known who he was.

The more she uncovered, the more her fingers trembled with excitement.

She'd been following coverage of his fashion show in Xamfield, marveling at the extravagance and polish of it all, watching clips of him being interviewed by reporters — composed, magnetic, effortlessly eloquent in front of the cameras.

With every passing day, her regret and frustration deepened.

Why had he hidden such an impressive identity from her?

Patrick and Adalynn had seemed so sincere, and yet they'd let her believe Leo was far less well-off than he actually was.

Had it been some kind of test? Or had they simply looked down on her?

Thinking back over her time with Leo, Maura reminded herself that despite her outrageous demands, Adalynn had actually seemed rather pleased with her — which meant she must have left a good impression.

If she hadn't bolted that day, she might already be Leo's wife by now, admired by everyone around her.

She could have had her pick of those stunning gowns from the fashion show.

The more she dwelled on it, the more convinced she became that she and Leo were meant for each other. As for his unhinged ex-girlfriend, she had no business interfering.

With that conviction firmly planted, Maura pulled some money from her family and headed to the city, eventually arriving at the Veale Grand Hotel.

It was part of a global luxury chain, so opulent that she hesitated even to approach the entrance.

But the moment Leo stepped out, she rushed toward him.

The dinner had just ended, though the businessman, Fan, was still gripping Leo's hand earnestly. "Mr. Lu, please reconsider. I can put in five hundred million."

Five hundred million?

Maura's heart nearly leapt out of her chest.

Even in her wildest fantasies of marrying into money, a sum like that had never crossed her mind.

And yet Leo brushed it off so casually.

“Mr. Fan, I appreciate the offer, but I’m genuinely tied up with other matters right now. I’ll be sure to reach out when the timing’s right,” Leo said, his tone sincere.

The businessman had no choice but to let it go.

After seeing the group of businessmen off into their cars, Leo turned to leave — and that was when he heard a sweet voice call out.

“Leo.”

Leo heard Maura’s voice and turned his head slightly.

“Miss Maura?”