

His kiss 1091

Chapter 1091

But it was his first day there, and he didn't want to overstep by taking over her kitchen so soon.

Before long, Tessa came back with a light snack, handing him a pair of chopsticks with a smile. "Tyler, go ahead, eat."

He accepted them, feeling strangely honored by the gesture.

Watching him, Tessa suddenly remembered Gabriela's earlier comments, and a small, uncomfortable pang settled in her chest.

The more Tessa turned it over in her mind, the sorrier she felt for Tyler.

Finally, unable to hold back, she said, "Tyler, you really are a wonderful person."

He'd been focused on his noodles, and the sudden praise made him pause mid-bite.

He gave an awkward little laugh. "Thank you."

"I'm not just saying that," Tessa went on, looking at him with real sincerity. "You have a kind heart, and you're tall and strong. Just standing beside you makes me feel safe. You really are an exceptionally good man."

She said "exceptionally good" twice, and Tyler flushed, rubbing the back of his neck, unsure how to respond.

Tessa bit her lip and added, "Don't take anything Gabby said to heart."

"Oh." Caught up in her uncharacteristically gentle manner, it took him a moment before he managed to ask, "What did Gabby say to you?"

Exactly as Gabriela had predicted — none of it had landed with him at all.

Realizing that only made Tessa more upset.

She drew a slow breath and said, quietly, "I actually have feelings for you."

Tyler went completely still.

It took him a long moment to even process what she meant.

Feelings for him — did that mean she liked him?

How could that possibly be?

Seeing his stunned reaction, Tessa felt a wave of embarrassment and fled to her bedroom, leaving her noodles untouched, her face burning.

Tyler felt like he was moving through a fog, quietly finishing off the last of his noodles and tidying the dishes with care before retreating awkwardly to his guest room.

He tossed and turned on the unfamiliar bed, unable to fall asleep.

Eventually, he gave up and called Gabriela.

“Gabby. What exactly did you say to Tessa today?”

Why had Tessa suddenly confessed to him, out of nowhere?

Gabriela couldn’t hold back a smile the moment his call came through.

“Tyler, what’s brought this on?”

He said nothing.

She guessed. “Did Tessa say something to you?”

Straightforward as ever, Tyler assumed Gabriela already knew what was going on, and unable to help himself, repeated exactly what Tessa had said.

“I want the truth. What did you tell Tessa to make her say something like that?”

Gabriela had a strong feeling these two were headed somewhere good.

Suppressing a laugh, she explained, “When Tessa asked you to stay at her place for a few days, I could already tell she liked you.”

Why else would a divorced woman living alone invite a man into her home so casually?

Even if that man had once saved her life, an invitation like that wasn’t something offered lightly.

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But Tessa had been badly hurt, and Tyler was completely oblivious. If neither of them said anything, they might let the whole thing slip away.

So Gabriela had decided to give them a nudge.

That confirmed exactly what Tyler had suspected, but he still felt like he must be dreaming.

Even if it was true, he didn't dare let himself hope too much.

As far as he was concerned, he and Tessa belonged to entirely different worlds.

Lost in thought, he heard Gabriela sigh on the other end of the line.

"Tyler, you think it's not a good match too, don't you? That's exactly what I thought at first."

A bitter taste settled in Tyler's mouth.

If even the sister he loved thought he wasn't good enough for Tessa, then maybe it was best he stopped dreaming.

Gabriela kept talking. "I told Tessa you've been divorced, and that whole business with Fulton is common knowledge online. Tyler, you have hundreds of followers — you have a reputation to think about."

"The divorce between Tessa and Fulton happened years ago, but the internet never really lets anything go. Anyone could dig it up in a search. And Tessa, being a senior executive at Apex Group, carries herself with a certain polish. If the two of you spent too much time together, there could be friction — I worried she might end up looking down on you..."

"Gabby!" Tyler snapped. "How could you say things like that to Tessa?"

That kind of hurtful talk wasn't like Gabriela at all.

"You told me yourself Tessa took good care of you back at Apex Group, and this is how you repay her — saying things that could hurt her feelings? You shouldn't have done that."

Gabriela realized just how genuinely upset he was.

Holding back her amusement, she said, "I was only being honest. Tessa seemed a little hurt, sure, but it's better to be upfront about the hard truths from the start."

“Gabby, you’re being completely reckless!” Tyler’s frustration was clear now. “If you really think of me as your brother, you’ll go apologize to Tessa tomorrow.”

“Apologizing’s not a problem,” Gabriela said. “But what exactly should I say when I do? Something like — ‘Tessa, you’re wonderful, and you’re a perfect match for my brother Tyler’? Or maybe — ‘Tessa, keep doing what you’re doing, my brother Tyler thinks the world of you, you two should absolutely be together’?”

Tyler didn’t answer right away, then finally said, “Don’t get involved in this for now. I’ll find the right moment and explain everything to Tessa myself.”

Gabriela agreed easily, smiling. “All right.”

After hanging up, Tyler found it even harder to sleep than before.

He couldn’t wrap his mind around how someone like Tessa could possibly have feelings for him.

His sleepless night left him with two deep circles under his eyes by morning.

Tessa startled at the sight of him and asked, concerned, “Tyler, did you not sleep well last night?”

All he could manage was, “Just not used to the bed.”

Thinking of his feelings for her, Tessa felt a wave of guilt settle in.

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This was really Gabriela's doing — saying such hurtful things to her own brother.

She shouldn't have done that.

Watching Tessa's hesitant expression, Tyler felt his own irritation rising.

Tessa was such a remarkable woman, and having her feelings for him at all was already more than he'd hoped for — and yet she'd had to hear Gabriela's harsh words on top of it.

That girl had really gone too far.

Each of them silently criticized Gabriela in their own head, while quietly feeling for the other.

The result was a breakfast spent sitting across from each other, wanting to say something and holding back every time.

Eventually, Tessa picked up her bag. “Tyler, I’m off to work.”

He grabbed his car keys at once. “I’ll drive you.”

She hadn’t wanted to trouble him at first, but remembering Gabriela’s remarks, she worried refusing might hurt him more.

So she nodded. “I’ll take you up on that, then.”

Tyler’s car was a modest, practical model, worth maybe twenty thousand dollars, and well-worn after years of use.

As he opened the door for her and watched her settle in wearing her sharp white business suit, he couldn’t help feeling his car was beneath her.

He found himself wondering whether he should upgrade to something better, worried that showing up to pick her up might embarrass her.

The thought caught him off guard.

He was actually starting to hope for something with Tessa — all because of a few words from Gabriela.

Was he getting ahead of himself?

When he dropped Tessa off at Apex Group, he didn't linger, afraid someone might notice her arriving in such an unremarkable car.

That evening, when he came to pick her up, he parked across the street instead of pulling into the plaza in front of the building.

Sharp as ever, Tessa quickly pieced together what was on his mind.

It wasn't the hassle of driving her around that bothered him — he was worried about embarrassing her.

Something in Tessa's chest tightened at the realization, and her resentment toward Gabriela only deepened.

Whatever it took, she was going to make that girl apologize to Tyler.

But before Tessa got the chance to confront her, something unexpected happened.

Fulton had been released from prison.

When they got home, they found him crouched outside Tessa's door, cigarette in his mouth, wearing a look full of malice.

"Well, well. Look who finally decided to come home. My ex-wife."

His gaze settled on Tessa, cold and threatening.

Tessa looked at Fulton.

It was hard to say exactly what he'd been through in prison, but he looked to have aged a good twenty years. His back had taken on a slight stoop, and his eyes brimmed with malice.

It was hard to believe this had once been her husband.

Memories surged back — his fist tangled in her hair, the blows raining down — a fear rooted so deep in her bones it drained the color from her face.

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Sensing her fear, Tyler took her hand at once, patting the back of it gently.

“Don’t be afraid.”

His steady voice settled her nerves, little by little.

She wasn’t truly scared, not really — just reacting to a shadow that had loomed over her for years.

Tessa turned a cold glance on the man crouched on the ground. “What are you doing here?”

Fulton pushed himself up, flicked his cigarette to the pavement, and fixed her with a grim stare. “What am I doing here? Reclaiming what’s mine.”

Tessa looked away in disgust, refusing to meet his eyes. “While you were locked up, I threw everything you owned in the trash. Go dig through the dump if you want it.”

“Don’t play stupid.” Fulton stepped closer. “That house was bought after we got married. Half of it’s mine. Either you let me stay in half of it, or you pay me out in cash based on what it’s worth.”

“Not a chance.” Tessa’s voice dripped with contempt now. “I paid the down payment. I’ve been covering the mortgage this whole time. You’re nothing but a freeloader and an ex-convict. What right do you have to any of it?”

Talking to him even this long made her stomach turn, and she no longer bothered softening her words.

Fulton's face twisted with fury. "You're asking for it."

He lurched toward her, limping, reaching out to grab her — but before he could, Tyler stepped between them.

Fulton glared at him. "Get out of my way."

Tyler looked down at him, his voice a low rumble. "That's exactly what I should be saying to you."

With that, he sent Fulton flying two or three feet backward without much effort at all.

Fulton hit the ground hard, blood welling in his mouth, fury boiling over.

"Tessa, since when have you been sleeping with this guy? No wonder you were so eager to divorce me and get me locked away — all so you could carry on with him."

Tyler's glare turned murderous. "Shut your mouth."

“Want me to shut up? With how shameless Tessa is, I’ll call out your affair right—” Before Fulton could finish, Tyler grabbed him by the collar and drove a fist into his face, knocking loose two of his teeth.

“Ah!” Fulton howled in pain. “Great, first you hurt my mother, now you’re beating on me too. I’ll sue you until you’re bankrupt!”

Tyler thought the man looked pathetic.

A man who beat his own wife and then spat venom like that made his blood boil.

He was a disgrace to men everywhere.

Tyler’s fist clenched, ready to strike again, but Tessa caught his arm. “Tyler. Don’t do anything rash.”

He was only out on bail — more trouble now could cost him dearly.

“I’m sorry, Tessa. Did I frighten you?”

A wave of regret hit Tyler.

This wasn't like him at all, and he worried she might start seeing him the same way she saw Fulton.

Watching Tyler hold back, Fulton felt a flicker of smugness return.

Chapter 1095

"Oh, look at the devoted lover. When Tessa was my wife, she did whatever I said. I used her up plenty, and now here you are, treating her like she's precious."

Those words sent color flooding into Tyler's face, fury boiling — he wanted nothing more than to tear the man's tongue out.

Seeing that Tyler wouldn't hit him again, Fulton grew bolder still. "The two of you shady lovers ought to be sneaking around in secret, not flaunting it out here in the—"

Tessa didn't let him finish. She yanked off one of her high heels and struck him with it, hard.

"I divorced you. Why are you still hounding me? You set that whole hero-saves-the-damsel act just to trap me into marriage, and it cost me years of my life! And now you dare to disgust me even further?"

"My boyfriend and I can be together, openly, proudly — and it's none of an ex-convict's business!"

“He’s not some fling. He’s my man! We’re registering our marriage and holding a wedding, and inviting everyone we love!”

With every insult, she struck him again.

The heel was sharp enough to draw blood with each blow, and Fulton finally broke and ran, arms thrown up to shield his head.

“Tessa, you disgraceful woman — just you wait!”

Spitting out a final string of threats, he fled the scene.

Tessa tossed the shoe she’d used to hit him into a nearby trash can, disdain written across her face, then turned to find Tyler standing there, utterly stunned.

“Tyler. Sorry you had to see that.”

She wondered if her outburst had frightened him.

Still recovering from her declaration that he was her man, that they’d soon be married, Tyler shook his head quickly. “No. You were incredible.”

Watching him struggle to find the right words to praise her, Tessa couldn't help but laugh.

Remembering what Gabriela had said about him, she found she couldn't disagree more.

Tyler wasn't intimidating at all.

If anything, he seemed like a gentle giant — the kind of person people might mistake for easy to push around.

A little shy now, she said, "Tyler, I lost my shoe. Could you carry me inside?"

"Of course."

Without hesitation, he scooped her up and carried her into the house.

Tessa kept her composure the whole way, head down, saying nothing.

Once inside, she rushed off to shower, then retreated to her bedroom and stayed there.

Thinking back on what Gabriela had said — words that had cut right into old wounds — and having just watched Fulton’s behavior firsthand, Tyler felt a sharp ache settle in his chest.

Why did a woman as remarkable as Tessa have to go through something so awful?

Still, with her shut away in her room, he didn’t want to intrude by knocking.

Instead, he went to the kitchen, found the fridge well-stocked, and got to cooking.

Before long, he’d put together a simple meal — three dishes and a soup — and used it as his excuse to knock on her door.

“Food’s ready. Come eat with me.”

Tessa was caught off guard.

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Sitting down at the table, looking at the steaming dishes in front of her, she felt an unexpected warmth rise in her chest.

Just as Gabriela had said, Tyler might not be the most educated or the most polished man out there, but he had a gentle, good heart.

He'd even cooked for her.

A man like that — spending the rest of her life with him wouldn't be such a bad thing at all.

They ate quietly, and afterward Tessa watched him clear the table and busy himself in the kitchen.

When he finally came back out, she said, "Tyler, everything I said to Fulton out there was true."

Including the part about marriage — about registering, about the wedding.

Tyler had assumed, at the time, that she'd only said it in the heat of anger.

But hearing her repeat it now, in earnest, left him completely speechless.

Seeing his reaction, a flicker of hurt crossed her face. "Tyler. Do you not want to marry me?"

It wasn't that he didn't want to — he'd simply never let himself imagine it.

But seeing her look so wounded, he thought back to Gabriela's blunt words.

"No — I do want to."

Having managed the hardest part, the rest came easier.

"Tessa, I think you're wonderful. It would be an honor to marry you."

"I just don't feel like I'm good enough for you."

Hearing Tyler's earnest words, the tension eased out of Tessa's chest all at once.

"Tyler, don't think that way. I've been divorced, deceived by a man as vile as Fulton..."

Tyler stepped forward and took her hand before she could finish.

"None of that was your fault."

If trusting someone with your whole heart, and being tricked into a marriage out of gratitude, counted as a mistake — then men like Fulton deserved far worse than they'd already gotten.

Feeling the warmth of her hand in his, Tyler let go almost instantly, as though he'd been burned.

Watching him flush and fumble, Tessa had to stifle a laugh.

"Tyler. When should we get married?"

"G-Get married?" He froze completely.

The idea of simply being with Tessa had already felt like more than he'd dared to hope for.

And now marriage?

She went on, earnest. "Gabby was right about one thing. We're not getting any younger, and there's no sense wasting time. We already know we like each other — why not just move forward?"

Caught in the sparkle of her eyes, something in Tyler lifted. Whatever she said, he would agree to it.

"All right. Whatever you want."

Word of Tyler and Tessa's engagement spread quickly.

Tessa's mother, consulting family tradition, set the wedding date three months out.

She threw herself into the preparations, determined to make up for her daughter's unhappy first marriage and for the ways her own family had failed to understand her back then.

Everyone at Apex Group offered Tessa their heartfelt congratulations.

Brenden, too, was delighted at the news.

"Sounds like there's a happy occasion coming up around here — soon we'll all be celebrating over wedding cake."

Chapter 1097

Since Wesley had returned to Moss Group headquarters, full control of Apex Group had passed to Brenden. Everyone, Tessa included, had stayed on to help him settle in, while Wesley had taken only Billy and his six-person think tank with him.

Despite his new title, Brenden still relished any excuse for a celebration, and he was already thinking through what gift might best show his appreciation for his chief secretary.

Watching from the side, Fiona chimed in. “Since you’re her boss now, let’s make it something generous.”

“Agreed,” Brenden said. “Let’s pick out some jewelry too.”

Several months had passed since his accident, and Brenden had largely recovered, though one leg still hadn’t regained full function, leaving him with a slight limp when he walked.

Still, compared to a life spent bedridden, this counted as a remarkable improvement.

His doctors remained optimistic that continued rehabilitation would bring him a full recovery.

Fiona accompanied him to Apex Group every day, and the employees had taken to calling her the president’s wife.

The thought brought Fiona a flicker of nostalgia.

She’d once admired Wesley, dreaming of the prestige that came with being married to a president.

The president in question hadn’t turned out to be who she’d originally imagined, but she was content — especially now that she held shares in three major companies.

One from her own family, one from the Saunders family, and while she held nothing directly in Apex Group, Brenden's shares were as good as her own.

In all of Okburg, only Gabriela could rival her standing now.

As she drifted through these thoughts, Brenden's voice broke in. "Fiona, why don't we go look at jewelry tonight too, pick something out for you?"

"The wedding's still a ways off — don't get ahead of yourself." Fiona flicked his forehead playfully. "After work, straight to rehab. No skipping."

Brenden sighed. "Can't I get one day off?"

Rehab was grueling, and he was more than ready for a break.

"Absolutely not," Fiona said, firm, leaving no room to argue. "You need to keep working with the doctor. Once your leg's fully healed, then you can relax."

A little intimidated by her tone, Brenden gave in without further protest.

Fiona felt satisfied with her choice. He'd become a good man, fully reformed, devoted entirely to her now, with no wandering eye for anyone else.

Meanwhile, on the 76th floor of Moss Group headquarters, word of Tessa's wedding reached Wesley through Billy, who delivered the news with a smile.

"Apparently their relationship owes quite a bit to Miss Gabriela."

Wesley's attention sharpened. "What exactly did Gabriela do?"

"From what I hear, Miss Gabriela spoke poorly of each of them to the other. Since they already had feelings for one another, hearing her criticize the other person only made them more determined."

The details had come from Alissa.

A flicker of jealousy stirred in Wesley.

Gabriela seemed so invested in everyone else's happiness, and yet she'd turned cold toward him ever since their night together.

She ignored him whenever their paths crossed, and had even banished him to a separate bedroom whenever he stayed over at the villa.

Chapter 1098

The night itself had been entirely consensual — and yet the next day, she'd been furious with him over ruining a dress Leo had designed for her.

He'd thought taking the initiative might shift something between them, but instead she buried herself in work, or spent her time in Mr. Guzman's garden, often with Leo at her side.

Billy, who'd come in expecting to deliver good news, was baffled by Wesley's sudden change in mood. Was it simply that everyone else around him was getting married while he stayed single?

Billy found himself at a loss, watching their famously sharp, business-minded boss slide into something resembling lovesick foolishness.

How was he supposed to fix this?

"Mr. Moss, about the Holtsley project — in three days—"

Billy hoped shifting the conversation back to business might snap Wesley out of it.

Instead, Wesley grabbed his coat and headed for the door.

Startled, Billy asked, “Mr. Moss, where are you going?”

“Crawford Manor.”

Wesley had made a point of respecting Gabriela’s focus on her career, holding back from visiting during the day.

But news of Tessa and Tyler’s engagement had finally pushed him into motion.

He needed to know, once and for all, exactly where he stood with her.

When Wesley arrived at Crawford Manor, he found Presley and Lilian in the living room, admiring a set of paintings from Stephen’s exhibit. They greeted him warmly and offered tea, and he joined them in looking over the artwork without bringing up Gabriela directly.

Though a businessman by trade, Wesley had a genuine eye for art, and he could easily recognize the quality and value in the pieces before him.

Presley’s sudden suggestion that the paintings be put into storage caught him off guard.

He couldn’t quite work out why she’d want to hide them away, especially given how close they were.

Something in her manner suggested the paintings held some kind of secret.

Wesley kept his confusion carefully hidden.

He watched as several attendants gently moved a few paintings, then quietly lifted his teacup, his thumb drifting along its rim.

Presley, with a gracious smile, asked, "Mr. Moss, is there something important you need from Gabby?"

Wesley sidestepped the question smoothly, as he always did. "Has Gabriela taken on any new projects lately?"

"Not exactly new," Presley said, a note of quiet pride slipping into her voice. "My apprentice loves to experiment. She's recently been blending elements of Shu embroidery into fashion pieces. As it turns out, Leo felt her craftsmanship complemented his signature style beautifully."

"They're working out the details of a collaboration together right now."

The moment she finished, Wesley's brow creased slightly, unable to fully mask his displeasure.

Presley added quickly, “I was overseeing things at first, but once it looked like they had it well in hand, I decided to step out for a bit.”

Given her age and experience, she preferred not to linger too long in the studio these days.

Wesley’s expression eased somewhat. “Gabriela’s always full of ideas. I appreciate you looking after her, Presley.”

Chapter 1099

While they talked, Gabriela and Leo were still in the studio, hashing out the finer points of the project.

Gabriela held up a sketch of a phoenix, its colors not yet filled in.

“Embroidery tends to make a strong visual statement on its own. If the colors run too bright, they could overpower the garment underneath.”

“But if I shade them slightly darker than the fabric you’re working with, it might create something more subtle — and the results could surprise us.”

Her words trailed off as she noticed Leo watching her intently, his eyes bright and unblinking.

“Gabby, that’s brilliant. Whenever you have time, come by my studio and we’ll work through the rest of the details.”

“Sure,” Gabriela said, a little surprised herself.

When she’d first added embroidery to that burgundy evening gown, it had only ever been meant as damage control — something to offer up as an explanation if Leo ever asked.

She’d never imagined that the moment he saw her work, he’d want to see more of her designs, let alone propose a real collaboration.

As they talked things through, Leo mentioned that others had approached him before, wanting to layer their own touches onto his designs.

But his style was too distinct, too much a signature of his own vision — forcing in extra elements almost always ended up feeling tacked on, unnecessary.

Gabriela’s few careful stitches, though, had fit his work as though they belonged there from the start.

More than that, the burgundy dress had already been a finished piece before she touched it.

Her precision with color alone was enough to leave Leo genuinely impressed.

Hearing such open praise from him left Gabriela a little flustered.

“Honestly, it was Mr. Guzman who first suggested how I should approach the embroidery.”

She was still fairly new to the field. She’d experimented privately with different styles, but she’d only ever sold two pieces successfully.

One had gone to a client named Wu, and that bag now belonged to Alissa.

The other was a new handbag, commissioned by a duchess.

Compared to Leo, who’d made an international name for himself while still young, her experience felt slight by comparison.

Leo watched her quietly.

Presley had only offered the faintest suggestion, and yet Gabriela had turned it into embroidery that folded seamlessly into his own work.

A small spark lit behind his eyes, and he felt a rush of genuine delight.

He looked at her — the light in her eyes, the sketches spread out before her, the delicate stitching — and before he quite meant to, his hand closed around hers.

If he hadn't been afraid of frightening her, he might have pulled her into an embrace right then.

Since the moment his name had become known, no one had ever managed to complement his work so perfectly.

The world adored what he created, sure — but no one had ever truly understood it.

And Gabriela, someone he'd only just met, had done exactly that.

Chapter 1100

It felt like a small miracle, as though simply meeting her eyes was enough to feel her spirit moving in step with his own.

"Leo?"

Gabriela's voice cut through the quiet, his grip having tightened enough that she felt the need to speak up.

The intensity of his gaze, too, left her feeling a little self-conscious.

Leo seemed to snap out of it, releasing her hand at once.

“Sorry. I got a little carried away.”

“It’s fine,” Gabriela said with a small laugh.

A lot of truly gifted people were like that — wealth left them unmoved, but the smallest detail, done just right, could set them alight.

Today, it had been her who’d sparked that reaction in him, and she couldn’t help but feel a flicker of bashfulness about it.

Leo studied her open, unguarded expression and let out a soft sigh. “Now that we’ve worked out the details, let’s head out. You must be hungry.”

He’d come to discuss the collaboration first thing in the morning, and they’d spent nearly the entire day holed up in the studio.

Unlike him, whose only real responsibility was design, Gabriela had a job and a family waiting on her elsewhere.

He worried the day had worn her out.

As they stepped outside, Gabriela was saying, “Mr. Guzman already had food arranged. We should be able to eat sh—”

Her words died in her throat the moment they reached the entrance.

Wesley sat in the living room, teacup in hand, his gaze fixed on her, expression unreadable.

His face gave away nothing, but the cold, heavy weight in the air around him was enough to make her feel a little uneasy.

Leo, spotting him, showed no surprise and greeted him amicably.

“Mr. Moss. What brings you here today?”

“I’m here to see my... girlfriend.” Wesley let the last word land deliberately, his eyes locked on Gabriela, the look on his face daring her to deny it — a silent promise that if she did, things would turn cold between them fast.

Remembering the night he'd nearly worn her out completely, Gabriela didn't dare contradict him.

Instead, she changed the subject smoothly. "Mr. Guzman, is lunch ready?"

Seeing that she hadn't denied it, some of the tension eased out of Wesley's expression.

"It is," Presley said, nodding, and gave word for the food to be brought out.

Everyone took their seats.

Wesley settled in beside Gabriela.

Sensing the weight of his presence, Leo tactfully chose a seat a little further away from her.

At first, the meal passed pleasantly enough.

Then Lilian spoke up. "Leo, how did things go with Gabby?"

Leo smiled. "We've come to an agreement."

Lilian brightened, delighted on Gabriela's behalf. "So Gabby's your partner now?"

He nodded.

Presley clapped her hands together, thrilled.

"Gabby, you've truly found yourself a mentor here. With Leo guiding you into the industry, you'll skip a decade's worth of trial and error."

Gabriela hurried to thank him properly.

But Leo, looking straight at her, said, "Finding a partner as talented as Gabby — that's the real stroke of luck, and it's mine."