

His kiss 1111

Chapter 1111

His team found the whole thing rather remarkable.

It looked very much like their leader was personally mentoring Gabriela into the world of design.

A quiet undercurrent of envy stirred among them, though Gabriela paid it no mind whatsoever.

If you weren't drawing a little envy, you probably weren't worth noticing in the first place.

Finally, Leo's latest design came together.

Gabriela had sorted and arranged her silk threads, ready to follow through on their plan and add embroidery along the waistline of the garment. With the fabric secured and the design finalized, she began her work.

Leo stood close by, occasionally leaning in to speak with her.

As they talked, he'd lean down now and then, sometimes resting a hand without thinking on the back of her chair.

To anyone watching, the two of them looked remarkably close, though his team had long since grown used to the sight and thought nothing more of it.

Then, out of nowhere, a voice cut through the studio.

“Leo!”

The voice, sweet as it might have started out, sharpened into something piercing and thoroughly grating.

Everyone in the studio couldn’t help but turn toward the sound.

Leo looked over and saw Maura striding in, his brow tightening almost imperceptibly.

His gaze shifted to Rodrigo, trailing behind her.

Rodrigo spoke up, clearly aggrieved. “Boss, I told her you were busy, but Miss Maura insisted on barging in.”

As far as Rodrigo understood it, Maura was someone the boss had gone on a blind date with — someone he’d taken time out of an exceptionally busy schedule to visit in the countryside. Beyond that, Rodrigo genuinely couldn’t work out what she meant to his boss.

That was exactly why, back in Xamfield, he'd arranged for someone to look after her properly, worried she might feel neglected otherwise.

Who could have imagined she'd track her way all the way to Okburg, let alone find the studio itself?

The moment she'd arrived, she'd demanded to see Leo, and there had been no stopping her.

Leo wasn't upset. He simply waved a hand. "It's fine. You can go."

Rodrigo quickly ushered the other assistants out of the room.

Sensing this was a personal matter, Gabriela murmured, "Leo, I'll step out too."

Before Leo could even nod, Maura shot Gabriela a hostile glare. "You're not going anywhere. I came here for you today."

Just outside, in the large reception area, everyone had gathered, curious about who this Maura even was.

“She’s pretty enough, but that attitude has zero elegance to it. I wonder who gave her the confidence to talk to the boss like that.”

“Let’s not get tangled up in the boss’s business...”

Though no one would admit to caring about the boss’s private life, every ear in the room stayed carefully tuned to the commotion inside.

Inside the studio, Maura’s burning stare stayed fixed on Gabriela.

So this was Leo’s ex-girlfriend?

She was stunning.

Chapter 1112

Her clothes were sleek and fashionable, her waist slim and straight, her legs long and elegant — more striking than any actress on television.

Jealousy burned through Maura.

Gabriela, for her part, found the woman rather strange.

Was she Leo's girlfriend? What other reason could there be for a look this fierce, like she was ready to breathe fire?

But they'd only been discussing work, and half their colleagues were still within earshot.

"So you're Leo's ex-girlfriend?"

Gabriela had been trying to figure out the gentlest way to clear up whatever misunderstanding this was, and the words nearly floored her.

It took her a genuine moment to connect the term "ex-girlfriend" to herself, and she found the whole thing bewildering.

"Miss Maura, you must have the wrong idea. Leo and I are just friends."

Colleagues, even — nothing more.

"I'm not wrong about anything." Maura sneered at her. "I did my research. You run the Haynes Group, you're a single mother, and you've been through plenty of men already — and still you cling to my Leo..."

“Maura!”

Before she could finish, Leo’s expression darkened. “If you don’t know what you’re talking about, then don’t say anything at all.”

He was normally even-tempered, rarely one to lose his cool, but Maura’s words had struck a nerve.

“I know exactly what I’m talking about.” Maura shot Gabriela a look of open contempt. “I also know Leo’s too kind for his own good, which is exactly why you’ve been taking advantage of him all this time.”

“Let me be clear — if you know what’s good for you, you’ll stay away from him. Otherwise, I won’t think twice about making a scene at your company and dragging your name through the mud.”

Gabriela had come in intending to gently clear up the confusion, but it was clear now that Maura had absorbed some wild rumor and genuinely believed there was history between her and Leo, which was frankly—

An insult to Leo, if anything.

“Miss Maura, mind what you say.” Gabriela’s expression turned cold, her gaze suddenly carrying real weight. “Leo and I are business partners. Nothing more. Keep spreading lies, and I won’t hesitate to make you answer for slander.”

And spend a few nights in a holding cell for good measure.

Maura had always been treated like royalty back in her village, thanks to her looks. In every setting, her word had been final, and any man who dared push back had usually rushed to defend her instead.

Gabriela was, without question, the most formidable woman Maura had ever come across, and something about her gaze planted real fear.

She instinctively shrank back — but remembering Erik's words, she squared her shoulders again. "Don't try to deny it! Leo's own parents confirmed it — you're his ex!"

"If it weren't for you, I would already be married to Leo. Maybe we'd even have kids by now."

"You ruined everything for us! And on top of that, you've got other men on the side!"

The accusations kept coming, one after another, with a strange, unsettling coherence to them.

Genuinely stunned, Gabriela turned to Leo.

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Who was this woman, and why was she trying to smear Gabriela's name like this? Who had put her up to it?

Leo felt his patience thinning.

Sure, he'd used Gabriela's name once as a convenient excuse to fend off his parents' pressure about marriage — but he'd never once claimed she was his girlfriend.

Where had Maura even gotten an idea like that?

"Miss Maura. Gabriela already has a boyfriend, and it's a serious relationship. Stop making up stories and dragging her reputation through the mud."

A boyfriend? Not just some random man?

Maura blinked, and understanding dawned on her — no wonder Gabriela already had Leo as one man and still wanted more.

She was trying to have it all.

What infuriated Maura most of all was that Leo apparently knew this — and was letting her get away with it regardless.

Her fury doubled. “Gabriela, you’re shameless. Trying to have it both ways, are you? Doesn’t that strike you as completely inappropriate?”

Gabriela was almost tempted to laugh at the sheer absurdity of it.

She turned to Leo instead. “Leo. What exactly is your relationship with Miss Maura? Are the two of you close?”

If not, she was fully prepared to call the police and let Maura learn a proper lesson.

Leo looked equally troubled.

He’d always kept his distance in matters like this, never close to any woman before, and had genuinely never had to deal with a situation like this.

Reluctantly, he laid out the whole blind-date business.

“I have no plans to marry, and I’ve already made that clear to my parents. Miss Maura, I’ve explained this to you plainly before — there’s nothing between us, and there never will be. Please watch what you say and do.”

Thinking of the gold chains Erik had given her, Maura assumed Leo simply wasn’t being honest, and refused to believe a word of it.

“Leo, what exactly are you saying? You told me that if it weren’t for your ex clinging to you, you’d be willing to marry me. Why are you suddenly singing a different tune now, in front of her?”

Whatever gentleness Leo usually carried drained away.

Especially seeing the surprise on Gabriela’s face, real anger rose in him.

He’d never once hoped for anything more with Gabby, but he didn’t want her thinking of him as someone reckless or dishonest.

He wanted to keep her good opinion of him intact.

“Miss Maura, keep this up and don’t blame me if you’re removed from the premises by force.”

“I’m not leaving!” Maura glared at Gabriela. “It’s this shameless ex who should be the one leaving!”

The fact that Leo, knowing full well Gabriela had a boyfriend, still seemed so concerned about her only deepened Maura’s discomfort.

This was supposed to be the man who could have been her husband.

How dare he go fawning over another woman!

“Who exactly is shameless here? Who’s the ex?”

Just then, a low, cold voice cut across the room.

Every head turned toward the studio entrance.

Chapter 1114

Wesley had arrived without anyone noticing, standing there with an unmistakable air of command — no telling how long he’d already been listening.

Wesley strode in with a hard expression, closing the distance in a few steps until he stood in front of Gabriela.

She looked up at him. “When did you get here?”

“Not long ago.”

He'd caught the tail end of Maura's claim that Leo's own parents had confirmed Gabriela as his ex-girlfriend.

Wesley had met Patrick and Adalynn before — a warm, decent couple, not the type to spread groundless rumors that could damage a young woman's reputation.

But Maura's certainty hadn't sounded like a fabrication, either.

Which left only two possibilities.

The first: someone had deliberately fed Maura this story, convincing her that Gabriela and Leo had once been romantically involved.

But why go to that trouble? What would the person behind it stand to gain? To push Gabriela and Leo together? Or to drive a wedge between Gabriela and Wesley?

If there really was someone orchestrating this, Wesley was determined to expose them, whatever it took, and make them answer for it.

The second possibility: if no one was pulling strings, then perhaps Gabriela herself had once played along as Leo's girlfriend, under some particular set of circumstances.

Maybe Leo, pressured by his parents to marry, had asked her to act as a decoy?

Gabriela respected Leo as her mentor — if he'd asked her to play the part, she might well have agreed.

That thought alone was enough to set Wesley's blood boiling.

Gabriela had once asked Brenden to pose as her boyfriend to fend off her uncle. Was pretending to be someone's partner turning into a habit of hers?

Still, however furious he was, Wesley swallowed it down, reminding himself to keep his composure. Whatever needed sorting out with his woman could be handled privately, away from prying eyes.

He forced his anger back, brushed a hand gently through Gabriela's hair, then turned away.

The moment Maura got a proper look at Wesley's face, she froze.

Men that handsome, she'd only ever seen on television or in celebrity magazines.

The one exception had been Leo — the most striking, most magnetic man she'd ever laid eyes on, though she'd initially dismissed him as some penniless nobody.

She'd never expected to run into someone even more attractive here in Okburg. And judging by his earlier behavior, this man appeared to be Gabriela's boyfriend.

How could a man this perfect end up as nothing more than Gabriela's backup?

Were people really this blind, falling for a woman this shameless?

Maura sauntered up to Wesley, brimming with confidence. "Hey there, handsome..."

Wesley recoiled, visibly disgusted, stepping back several paces. "Were you the one just now, calling my woman shameless?"

Maura rushed to explain. "Listen, handsome, Gabriela isn't a good person. She already has a boyfriend, and she's still flirting with my Leo. Don't let her fool you."

Wesley's expression turned utterly grim.

What exactly did she mean, Gabriela stringing Leo along? If anything, Leo had been the one pursuing her.

Chapter 1115

And even if Gabriela had once pretended to be his girlfriend — that had clearly been nothing but an act.

Sensing his fury, Gabriela reached for his hand and murmured, "Let me handle this."

She turned to Maura, genuinely baffled.

How could anyone believe a story this baseless? Where had she even heard it?

"Miss Maura," Gabriela asked, "who exactly told you I was Leo's ex-girlfriend?"

Find the source, and this whole mess would unravel on its own.

Something flickered across Maura's face.

A few days earlier, Erik had come to see her, offering her useful information and arranging her trip to Okburg.

But he'd warned her never to mention his name, or he'd cut her off entirely.

"Adalynn told me," she said.

The moment the words left her mouth, Wesley's expression darkened further.

A lie that thin, that easy to disprove the moment someone pushed back — no one with any real intelligence would have offered it up so readily.

The second possibility, then, seemed far more likely.

Leo's expression turned serious. "My mother wouldn't lie about something like that."

He'd already explained everything clearly — that he was interested in Gabriela and hoped to pursue her, even though nothing had come of it yet. His mother wasn't the type to spread falsehoods that could ruin someone's reputation.

"Then let's call her right now and settle this," Maura challenged. "Let's hear what Adalynn actually has to say, all of us together."

After all, when Adalynn had shown up with gifts, apologizing for how the matchmaking had fallen through, she'd said outright that her son already had someone he liked — and that she felt genuinely sorry for Maura because of it.

Adalynn had been eager to see her son married soon; she wasn't the type to lie about something like this.

Faced with Maura's brazen confidence, Leo hesitated, unsure what to say.

Seeing him falter, Maura seized the moment. "Leo, you were so quick to speak up earlier. Why so hesitant to make the call now?"

The employees still listening in from outside were left speechless.

Was Maura really this dense?

She was so fixated on humiliating Gabriela that she hadn't noticed Leo was doing everything he could to shield her. Even if Gabriela ended up embarrassed today, none of it would win Maura anything with Leo.

Leo's silence stretched on too long.

Wesley's expression had darkened to the point it looked like it might drip water.

Confused, Gabriela called out softly, "Leo?"

He looked up, met her clear, steady gaze, and let out a helpless sigh.

“Gabriela, there’s something I need to tell you. Privately.”

She nodded, but Wesley caught her hand. “You’re not going anywhere alone. Can’t you say it here, in front of me?”

Leo could have said it in front of Wesley easily enough — liking someone wasn’t a crime, nothing shameful, nothing that needed hiding.

But he worried Wesley’s reaction might upset Gabriela.

He turned to her instead, asking earnestly, “Gabriela, should I say it here?”

She thought it over for a moment. “Let’s talk outside.”

Chapter 1116

Turning back to Wesley, her eyes steady and reassuring, she said, “Wait for me. I’ll be back in ten minutes at most.”

Given how firm she was, Wesley couldn’t push further, and he watched, cold-faced, as the two of them left the studio.

Outside, there was a small garden where they could speak.

Through the window, Wesley could see the two of them facing each other.

Even with the distance between them, it was enough to make his blood simmer.

Maura, equally stunned, couldn't help herself. "How can you just let them go off and talk alone like that? Leo's feelings are obvious. What if they're conspiring against you right now? How are you just standing here? Are you even a man?"

Already irritated beyond patience, Wesley found her chatter unbearable and shot her a cold, withering glare.

The look was enough to make Maura shiver and fall silent.

In the garden, Leo studied the trust written across Gabriela's face and let out a helpless breath.

"Gabriela, what I'm about to tell you might upset you. But I never meant to cause you any harm. I just hope we can keep working together after this."

He didn't dare hope for anything beyond that.

Caught off guard by his

As Gabriela finished asking her question, a tense silence settled over the garden.

Leo studied her quietly.

Gabriela scratched her head, suddenly wondering if she'd been a little too self-absorbed in even asking.

Maybe he just didn't have many female friends and had used her name as a convenient excuse. After all, he'd told his parents he had feelings for her.

They'd only met a handful of times back then — how could a crush have formed that fast?

He wasn't the type to be swayed by looks, and in so many ways he was leagues ahead of her — what was there for someone like him to admire? Her embroidery skills were nothing much, by his standards.

Just as she was about to apologize for asking, Leo let out a sigh.

"Gabby. I'm sorry. At the time, I was only trying to get my parents off my back about marriage. I didn't think it through."

He hadn't imagined it would spiral into something this embarrassing.

He felt too ashamed now to let her see what he actually felt.

"But I don't have romantic feelings for you. I work with you because I respect your talent. If this is going to be a problem, we can end the collaboration right now."

A flicker of anxiety rose in Gabriela.

Was he upset with her?

She said quickly, "Leo, please don't be angry. I just wanted things clear between us. Otherwise it'd be too stressful, working together like this."

"I understand." He reached out and patted her head gently, the way an older sibling might. "Don't carry any of this weight while we work together. I'll sort things out with your boyfriend myself."

"No need — I'll handle Wesley."

Knowing for certain now that Leo had no romantic interest in her, a huge weight lifted off Gabriela's shoulders. "And Maura? What are you going to do about her?"

"I'll take care of it," Leo said, serious. "I'm sorry for dragging you into this today."

With that settled, Gabriela felt considerably lighter and headed back into the studio.

She was met immediately by Wesley's expression, dark as a storm cloud.

She hurried over and tugged at his hand. "Wesley, let's go home."

He kept his eyes fixed on Leo, hostility written plainly across his face.

Gabriela tugged gently at his sleeve, murmuring, "Wesley. Let's go home. I'll explain everything once we're there."

Unable to resist her coaxing, he shot Leo one last hard look before finally letting Gabriela lead him out.

Leo felt a flicker of helplessness at the situation, but he wasn't troubled by it.

Maura, still completely out of the loop, chased after them in disbelief. “Hey, you’re just going to walk away? Your girlfriend’s been playing both of you, using my Leo as a backup, and you’re fine with that?”

Wesley turned on his heel, his expression cold enough to make Maura stumble back several steps, stunned into silence.

But his anger wasn’t for her. He turned instead to Leo. “If she’s going to cause trouble, keep her in check.”

His Gabriela — he couldn’t bear to speak a harsh word to her himself, so why should some stranger get to?

Maura had never been so bluntly dismissed by a man this handsome, and her face went through several shades of red and white in quick succession.

Seeing the apology written on Leo’s face only stoked Wesley’s irritation further. “If she’s not family, have someone remove her. Otherwise, I won’t have Gabriela working in an environment like this.”

Leo acknowledged the point and answered earnestly, “I assure you, it won’t happen again.”

Only then did Wesley leave SK Elite Boutique with Gabriela.

The moment they were gone, Maura, feeling wronged, rounded on Leo. “That scheming woman is playing both of you, and you won’t even expose her? You’re covering for her instead?”

As far as Maura was concerned, Leo should have exposed Gabriela’s supposed deceit right in front of Wesley, humiliated her for it.

The staff who’d been listening from outside were equally speechless.

Their normally composed, dignified leader had just been lectured like that — it was infuriating, VIP or not. They felt he’d been genuinely wronged.

Naturally, all their frustration turned toward Maura.

None more so than Rodrigo.

“Miss Maura, I thought you were the boss’s friend, which is why I always looked out for you. Is this how you repay him?”

Their leader was gentle, principled, never one to get tangled up in messy relationships. Even a famous actress hadn’t managed to win him over.

How could anyone think of him as someone’s backup option?

Gabriela and their leader had always kept things strictly professional, a respectful distance between them at all times. If Maura hadn't been called out on the spot already, it was likely only out of consideration for Leo.

Chapter 1118

Realizing there was no reasoning with her, Leo said, "If you won't tell me who's been spreading these rumors, I'll have no choice but to ask you to leave."

"Leo, you're choosing some deceitful woman over me?" Maura stomped her foot in fury. "You've really disappointed me."

Rubbing his temples in frustration, Leo turned to Rodrigo. "Find two reliable female bodyguards to escort her back to Snowport."

Rodrigo moved at once, and before long, Maura was ushered into a car by two capable female bodyguards, bound for Snowport.

Not far away, a black car with tinted windows sat parked, its occupants hidden from view.

"Mr. Williams," Erik said, "it seems this plan didn't pan out."

Stewart said nothing, his face lost in the dim interior of the car, giving nothing away.

Gathering his nerve, Erik pressed on. "Mr. Williams, maybe it's time to let go of these schemes. You're not getting any younger. Perhaps it's time to find someone suited to you, settle down, focus on your work..."

With every word, the air inside the car grew colder.

As a dutiful subordinate, though, Erik forced himself to finish.

"Mr. Williams, Gabriela doesn't have feelings for you. Whatever you do, she's going to choose Wesley in the end. And besides..."

And besides, Leo's such a gentleman that even if things don't work out between Gabriela and Wesley, you still wouldn't be her next choice.

That part, Erik didn't dare say aloud. He kept it to himself.

As if sensing exactly what Erik was thinking, Stewart let out a cold laugh. "Do you think I'm somehow beneath Leo now?"

A chill ran down Erik's spine, and he denied it at once.

“Absolutely not!”

Stewart’s expression stayed hard. “Drive. We’re heading back.”

He knew perfectly well that no matter what he tried, Gabriela would never have feelings for him. Years ago, he’d confessed everything, suffered for her sake, would have done anything she asked — and she’d never once looked back at him.

Everything he’d done since was simply his refusal to accept that.

Stewart had always believed himself the healthier man, the better bet, compared to Wesley. During those two years in Country A, he’d successfully schemed against Wesley with hired hypnotists and pharmacists.

And still, in the end, Gabriela had chosen Wesley.

Losing in business, he could stomach. Losing in love was something else entirely.

He simply couldn’t accept it.

If he couldn’t have Gabriela, then he refused to let Wesley have her without a fight.

What Stewart didn't know was that his moment of triumph wouldn't last much longer.

Because the second Wesley got home, he sent people out to investigate Maura.

Wesley instructed Billy to look into Maura, then leaned back in his seat, closing his eyes as though he had no interest whatsoever in dealing with Gabriela.

She found his attitude completely unreasonable.

"Wesley, I don't even know Maura. For all we know, Rebecca and her crowd sent her just to make my life miserable."

He opened his eyes slowly, fixing her with a look that said, plainly, go on, tell me another one.

Gabriela felt genuinely wronged.

Chapter 1119

"Wesley, I was a victim in all this too today. Can't you be a little more reasonable?"

“Victim?” Wesley scoffed. “So you’d rather have Leo stroking your hair, comforting the poor victim?”

If he hadn’t been there — would Leo have held her hand? Pulled her in?

The thought alone was unbearable, and the longer he dwelt on it, the angrier he grew, half-tempted to lock her away where Leo could never lay eyes on her again.

Understanding exactly where his temper was coming from, Gabriela was speechless for a moment before explaining earnestly. “Leo said he doesn’t have feelings for me. He thinks of me as a junior — practically a kid, in his eyes. Don’t be so petty about it.”

If anything, her words only poured fuel on the fire, and Wesley snapped.

“I’m petty? How much older is he than you, exactly? He tells you he sees you as some kid, and you just believe him?”

Leo claimed publicly to be thirty-one, but according to what Wesley had dug up, the man was only thirty — barely a year or two older than Gabriela. What right did he have calling himself a senior?

Only someone as naive as Gabriela would swallow that. In plenty of cultures, age carried real weight, real seniority — which made Leo’s claim all the more brazen.

Gabriela blinked, caught off guard.

Given how composed and gentle Leo's manner was, so unbothered by worldly things, people tended to overlook his actual age and treated him with the deference of someone much older, almost without thinking about it.

Still, she didn't dare sing his praises again in front of Wesley. Instead, she scooted closer and wrapped her arms around his.

"Why would I care about his age? We're colleagues, at most friends. There's nothing else there."

"Don't be like this," she murmured softly. "Leo's practically a stranger to us. Are you really going to get this upset with me — your girlfriend, who just got back together with you — over someone who barely matters?"

Wesley let out a huff. "So you do remember you have a boyfriend."

Up front, Billy kept his eyes fixed on the road, wishing fervently he could disappear entirely.

Mr. Moss, usually so composed and dignified, completely lost his footing whenever Gabriela was involved.

Billy felt secondhand embarrassment on his behalf.

The domineering CEO showed not a trace of shame, his displeasure written openly across his face.

Gabriela leaned in closer still, pressing a kiss to his cheek. “I never forget it. Not for a second.”

Her voice, soft and clinging, along with the warmth of her body pressed through thin fabric, was enough to remind him of just how pliant she’d been the night before, and his anger dissolved without a trace.

She had a point — getting worked up over some outsider would only strain things between them, and it would play right into certain people’s hands.

He pulled his arms back and wrapped them instead around her waist, letting her settle against his shoulder.

“Stay at the apartment tonight.”

Chapter 1120

At the villa, their son had a habit of knocking on the door at odd hours, asking for water or needing the bathroom — more than enough to derail any mood entirely.

Tonight, Farley and Ken would just have to manage a little extra.

His voice, low and rough near her ear, sent a warmth creeping into her cheeks.

Having only just smoothed things over with him, Gabriela wasn't about to refuse something this small. She took out her phone and called Farley, apologizing as she asked him to look after Truett.

Well practiced in caring for the boy by now, Farley agreed easily, reminding her, gently, to take care of herself and not push too hard.

It seemed he already knew about her and Wesley getting back together, and was quietly cautioning her to look after her own health.

Gabriela flushed and answered honestly, "I understand."

That night, Wesley kept her in one position after another well into the night, her body practically boneless by the time he finally let her rest.

Later, half-asleep in his arms, she mumbled, "Wesley, you're not exactly young anymore. How are you still so full of energy?"

They said men lost their edge in that department past thirty, and yet here Wesley was, well into his thirties, still remarkably vigorous — surprising, to say the least.

She was mostly teasing him, her sleepy haze loosening her tongue more than she'd intended.

Unexpectedly, that simple, half-asleep comment struck a nerve in the domineering CEO instantly.

“Gabby. Are you calling me old?”

He was seven years her senior, which did make Leo look younger by comparison.

Catching the dangerous edge in his voice, Gabriela snapped awake at once. “Of course not.”

Afraid he might press the point further, she added quickly, “I just happen to like someone a little older, like you — someone who knows how to take care of a woman.”

It wasn’t entirely a lie, either.

Despite being well into middle age, Wesley kept himself lean and toned, his defined abs more than pleasing to the touch.

Combined with the confidence that came with experience, he didn’t read as older so much as dangerously attractive.

Wesley’s expression eased slightly. “You really do know how to talk your way out of things.”

He was rigorously disciplined about his health, keeping up a habit of morning runs. His heart wasn't at full strength, so he paced himself carefully, refusing to let his body slip with age.

After all, his woman drew far too much attention as it was, with plenty of men quietly eyeing her — he needed to keep himself worth looking at, too.

Having finally smoothed things over, Gabriela didn't dare say another word and quickly shut her eyes to sleep.

The next morning, she discovered a bruise along her lower back, tender to the touch.

Wesley had clearly taken quite a liking to her waist, gripping it again and again through the night.

Or maybe—

Gabriela shot him a sharp glare.

He was still fast asleep, eyes closed, an expression of pure, satisfied peace on his face, deceptively refined.