

His kiss 1131

Chapter 1131

Lauren tore through the living room in a fit of rage until, finally, she felt some of the pressure ease, and sank onto the sofa, breathing hard.

She smoothed her hair back into place with practiced elegance and told the butler, her voice suddenly calm, "Call Matthew. Tell him to come home and clean up this mess."

She wanted him to see, firsthand, just how appalling his newly reclaimed daughter really was.

The butler made the call as instructed, only to report back that Matthew had no time and wasn't coming.

Ever since the divorce dispute began, Matthew and Lauren had been living apart. She'd refused to leave the Howard family villa, so he'd moved out instead.

At first, for Rebecca's sake, he'd come back occasionally for a meal.

But eventually, even those visits stopped entirely.

The butler relayed the news carefully, sensing the terrifying intensity building behind Lauren's eyes.

Her fists clenched, but she held herself back from another outburst, ordering coldly instead, “Get someone in here to clean all this up.”

Did Matthew really think staying away would let him off the hook?

He’d wanted a divorce once before, all for the sake of that mistress.

And now, even with a grown daughter to show for it, he still wanted out — all to raise that same mistress’s child.

She wouldn’t allow it.

Whatever it took, however miserable the marriage became, she would hold onto the title of Mrs. Howard for life. Let Gabriela — that shameful offshoot — never once be recognized as legitimate.

While the staff worked to clear away the wreckage, Rebecca arrived home.

She dropped heavily onto the sofa, flinging her handbag aside, her face twisted with resentment.

Lauren felt her own unease churning beneath the surface, but her love for her daughter won out, and despite everything, she sat down beside her and asked gently, “Rebecca. What’s wrong?”

Rebecca rounded on her at once.

“Mom, Gabriela is unbearable! Didn’t you say you could handle her? And now she’s on the board, in the company, made director of the planning department! Why haven’t you done something?”

Gabriela now outranked her entirely.

Just the thought of having to answer to her at work made Rebecca feel like she couldn’t breathe.

Lauren’s brow furrowed slightly.

“Rebecca,” she asked suddenly, “did something happen between you and Gabriela today?”

A flicker of guilt crossed Rebecca’s face. “You already know?”

Seeing her expression, Lauren felt a stab of disappointment.

“Rebecca, you cannot outmaneuver that girl. Going forward, don’t get tangled up in things you’re not certain you can win.”

“Right — because I’m just not as clever as her!”

Having swallowed her frustration all day at the company, Rebecca finally snapped at her mother’s words.

“And that’s your fault, for raising me to be this foolish!”

Rebecca’s words landed like a thunderclap, and the entire living room fell into stunned, deathly silence.

Lauren stared at her daughter, unable to believe what she’d just heard.

For years, she’d been married into the Howard family, failing again and again to thaw Matthew’s cold heart, until eventually she’d poured all her energy into her daughter instead.

Chapter 1132

Everything Lauren had, she’d given to raising her — cultivating her talents, polishing her manners into something elegant, sending her abroad to study.

When Rebecca had once hinted at wanting to marry Wesley, Lauren had resorted to the ugliest tactics imaginable, willing to go to any length, no matter the moral cost, to secure that chance for her daughter.

And now—

Look at the daughter she'd raised with such painstaking care, finally dropping every pretense, no longer bothering to keep up appearances at all — nothing left of a noblewoman's grace, just abandonment written across her every move.

Whatever talents she had only surfaced now and then at the occasional banquet.

The marriage to Wesley had already collapsed thanks to the old lady's interference.

And now, her daughter had become the laughingstock of elite society, unmarried and aging, and instead of any self-reflection, she'd fixated entirely on Gabriela — resorting to petty tricks like locking bathroom doors, behaving like some crude, quarrelsome woman off the street.

But still — she was Lauren's own flesh and blood.

Drawing a deep breath, Lauren tried to soothe her. "Leave Gabriela to me. Since you've taken your seat on the board, focus on learning management. You're far more qualified than she is to inherit Everglow Group. Do you understand?"

Rebecca's expression twisted with impatience.

“Mom, you’ve been saying you’ll deal with Gabriela for years now, and she just keeps getting stronger. Now she’s outshining me completely, and you’re still this calm about it? Sometimes I honestly wonder whose side you’re on!”

“That’s enough!”

Lauren’s temper finally snapped, her voice rising sharply.

The servants nearby flinched, ducking their heads as low as they could manage.

Reining in her anger, Lauren waved them all out of the room before pulling her daughter into the bedroom to talk.

Once inside, she flung the video Gabriela had sent onto the bed in front of Rebecca.

“Look at this. What kind of nonsense have you been spouting?”

Rebecca’s expression flickered.

“That wretched Gabriela secretly recorded this? How shameless can she get.”

“Stop talking.” Watching Rebecca miss the entire point, Lauren nearly raised a hand to slap her.

But remembering this was still her precious daughter, she held herself back.

“Denying it changes nothing — we can’t deny how capable Gabriela is. You are not to confront her head-on again.”

Lauren spoke with real conviction, but Rebecca barely absorbed a word of it, answering instead with a cold laugh. “Mom, I don’t want to be humiliated like this either, but you won’t lift a finger to help me!”

With that, she ignored the sourness spreading across Lauren’s face, turned, and stormed out of the bedroom.

Lauren was left with fury simmering inside her.

Gabriela. You really did it this time.

Sending that video had clearly been meant to drive a wedge between her and Rebecca.

It might not have worked outright just yet, but the damage had already been done, and left to fester, it could easily grow into something unmanageable.

Someday, she and her own daughter might end up true enemies over this.

The thought left Lauren cold with dread.

Chapter 1133

She reminded herself, again and again — however difficult her daughter had become, she was still her own blood.

She would not let Gabriela's provocation get the better of her.

While Lauren kept repeating that to herself, Rebecca stormed back into her own room, seething.

She paced the floor, agitated, before finally calling Ariadne to recount everything that had happened.

"Ariadne, Gabriela's absolutely vicious. You have to help me get back at her."

Ariadne listened, then answered with calm restraint.

"Rebecca, Gabriela's standing is too high now. We should avoid taking her on directly."

Never mind that Wesley already stood behind her — recent word had it that the man who'd shown up to back Gabriela at the recognition banquet had been Tyler.

Tyler, with over three hundred followers and real standing in Okburg's underworld, wasn't someone Ariadne was eager to provoke.

Frustrated, Rebecca held back from venting further at Ariadne, offering only a stiff, muted acknowledgment before hanging up.

Once the call ended, Rebecca threw herself into working through her contacts, frantic.

With neither her mother nor Ariadne willing to help, she decided she'd have to handle this alone.

Whatever it took, she wasn't letting Gabriela get away with any of this.

Meanwhile, Gabriela remained blissfully unaware of Rebecca's scheming.

And even if she had known, it wouldn't have troubled her in the slightest.

Having successfully stirred the pot with Lauren, she went home in high spirits to cook dinner, letting the process unwind her while showing a little love for her family.

By now, the table was set with a truly generous spread —

colorful, fragrant, delicious.

But Matthew's attention wasn't on the food at all. It was fixed squarely on Wesley.

Wesley had invited himself along, settling in right beside Gabriela and, with zero shame, referring to Matthew as his "future father-in-law."

And Gabriela hadn't objected in the slightest.

A flash of irritation crossed Matthew's face as he shot his daughter a look.

His daughter, once she dug her heels in, could be remarkably stubborn, refusing to yield ground to anyone. And yet, once she decided to forgive something, she went soft in a way that put everyone else to shame, willing to bend endlessly, so long as it wasn't a matter of principle.

That particular trait worried him. He feared Wesley might one day come to dominate her entirely.

Sensing her father's glare, Gabriela shrank back slightly and busied herself scooping food for Truett instead, using him as cover.

"You two can work this out between yourselves. Leave me out of it."

Between all the recent chaos, Gabriela had no patience left for petty squabbles. Besides, with one man being her father and the other her boyfriend, staying neutral seemed the wiser path.

Sensing the tension building, Farley cut in smoothly. "It's rare for Gabriela to cook. Let's eat while it's still warm."

Out of respect for Farley, Matthew finally picked up his chopsticks and began eating.

Wesley followed suit at once, even taking care to serve food onto Matthew's plate.

Chapter 1134

Only then did Matthew feel somewhat mollified, easing off Wesley for the rest of the meal.

The dinner passed pleasantly enough after that.

But once it ended, Wesley's mood soured again.

Gabriela had gotten a call from Leo, asking if she could make time to stop by the SK Elite Boutique studio — the renowned fashion design house.

Naturally, she agreed.

She'd only just confirmed the collaboration with him, and with her return to Everglow Group the very next day, the partnership was already running behind schedule.

Since Leo was asking her to put in the extra hours, she wasn't about to refuse.

Every successful person in this world had, at some point, poured their whole heart into their work, sacrificing time and rest without complaint.

Leo, back when the brand was first getting off the ground, had reportedly spent ten grueling days holed up in the studio, barely stepping outside, sleeping only three or four hours a night beyond his meals.

The glamorous reputation the world now associated with an international top designer had been built on countless sleepless nights just like those.

After ending the call, Gabriela kissed Truett's cheek and headed for the door.

Wesley, his expression tight, caught up with her.

“I’ll drive you.”

She glanced back at him. “No need.”

Before his face could darken further, she closed the distance quickly and wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Boyfriend, you’ve had a long day too, you know. I care about you.”

Her soft words, the warmth in her eyes, melted whatever irritation had been building in Wesley, gone in an instant, like snow under the sun.

Seeing his smile break through, Gabriela pressed on. “You should just go home and get some rest. I’ll be back as soon as I’m done.”

She didn’t want Wesley overexerting himself, not after two major heart surgeries already behind him.

But Wesley wasn’t about to let himself be soothed with just a few soft words, no matter how hard he worked to keep the smile off his own face.

“You’re more worn out than I am. I’ll drive you there.”

She was an extraordinary woman, and he felt it was his duty to look after her in every way he could. Which, naturally, meant clearing away anyone who might pose competition for her attention.

Seeing how insistent he was, Gabriela couldn’t bring herself to argue further.

“All right.”

She already knew that if Wesley drove her to SK Elite Boutique, he’d inevitably plant himself there and wait for her to finish so they could head home together.

Still, no amount of talking would change his mind. Perhaps after a few more trips like this, once he saw for himself that there was truly nothing between her and Leo, he’d finally ease up.

Obediently, she slid into the passenger seat, buckled her seatbelt, and gave him a sweet smile. “Looks like my hardworking boyfriend is going the extra mile for me today.”

Chapter 1135

Her voice came out soft and low, the word boyfriend lingering with a tenderness that tugged gently at something in his chest, sweet enough to leave an afterglow.

Wesley stayed in good spirits the whole drive to Leo's studio.

Once there, he even offered a courteous greeting. "Mr. Leo, I hope my Gabriela hasn't been too much trouble for you."

Leo studied him for a moment, serious, before offering a gentle smile in return.

"Not at all. It's my pleasure."

Having agreed to collaborate with her, he intended to do everything in his power to support her work.

Leo handed Gabriela the embroidery template from the day before and asked her to keep working on it — he wanted to see how the quality held up over a larger section.

She nodded and quickly lost herself in the work.

Wesley, meanwhile, settled onto the sofa in the waiting area.

At first, he stayed calm enough, handling a few work matters on his phone, sipping tea. It was almost relaxing.

But—

The second time he wandered back into the studio and saw Leo leaning in close beside Gabriela, his expression darkened.

She trusted Leo completely, utterly convinced he had no romantic interest in her whatsoever. If Wesley tried to shatter that belief outright, it would likely backfire on him.

He retreated back to the waiting room, tugging irritably at his collar.

Just then, Billy sent him a message — a detailed report on Leo's recent blind-date arrangement.

The report noted that Patrick and Adalynn had been pushing Leo toward matchmaking since the previous year. During one recent attempt, the couple had even sent expensive gifts to the farmer's family by way of apology, stating plainly that Leo and Maura simply weren't a good match.

Afterward, rumors had spread through the village community, painting Leo as a penniless man pretending to be wealthy.

Later, a second rumor surfaced — that Leo already had a girlfriend, and had gone on the blind date deliberately, to provoke her after some falling-out between them.

Wesley studied the report, sensing something didn't quite add up.

He called Billy. "Did Maura have contact with anyone else?"

However reluctant Wesley was to admit it, Leo carried himself with an honest, upright bearing — not the type to hide behind others for his own gain.

Especially given how obvious it was that Leo genuinely had feelings for Gabriela.

"Not yet," Billy answered after a pause. "But during the fashion show Leo held recently in Xamfield, Stewart paid a visit to Silvermoon Village."

Billy's digging had turned up that Stewart had stayed overnight at Patrick and Adalynn's home before going to see Fred for some herbal medicine for his health.

Wesley's mood soured at the mention of Stewart's name. "Did he go alone?"

"He went with Erik," Billy said.

Wesley went quiet for a moment before saying, "Got it. Thanks — get some rest."

After reading through Billy's report, his mind kept circling back to this new thread.

He returned to the studio once more.

Gabriela was deep in discussion with Leo, who had pulled a chair up right beside her.

Chapter 1136

The two of them were bent close over the embroidery, heads nearly touching, going over the results together.

Though nothing in Leo's manner suggested anything improper, the sheer ease between them was more than enough to grate on Wesley.

He cleared his throat. "Mr. Leo, could I have a word outside?"

Leo nodded, said something quietly to Gabriela, and followed Wesley out.

With only Rodrigo left in the studio, still working overtime, he tactfully brought the two men tea before excusing himself.

Leo spoke first. "What can I help you with, Mr. Moss?"

Wesley tapped a finger against the coffee table, his voice measured. “Call your parents. Ask them exactly what Stewart did during his visit to Silvermoon Village. Every detail.”

Surprise flickered across Leo’s face.

Stewart had mentioned the trip to him before, but Leo’s attention had been on his health at the time, not the specifics.

Now, hearing Wesley’s question, he realized there might have been more to that visit than he’d assumed.

It was still relatively early — just past nine in the evening — so his parents would likely still be up.

He dialed their number without delay.

Seated nearby, Wesley added, “Be thorough. Ask about his assistant too — everything he did.”

Silvermoon Village was remote enough, underdeveloped enough, that there were no security cameras anywhere. If Stewart and Erik had made contact with Maura unwitnessed, it would be nearly impossible to trace unless Maura confessed to it herself.

Leo found Wesley's manner a little abrasive, but he couldn't deny that Maura's earlier stunt had already done real damage to Gabriela's reputation.

Patiently, he pressed his parents for every detail of Stewart's stay.

Eventually, he uncovered something worth noting.

Adalynn mentioned that while she'd been preparing herbal medicine for Stewart, Erik had gone out for a walk through the village alone.

She'd even joked about it. "I wonder what he found so fascinating out here in our little backwater!"

Something in Leo's chest tightened slightly. "How long was he gone for?"

"About two or three hours," Adalynn said.

"Got it," Leo answered.

Adalynn, sounding put out, pressed on. "Why are you so worried about your friend's assistant? Worry about yourself for once! Have you told that girl how you feel — Gabriela? Did you win her over?"

Leo froze, his eyes widening slightly as he instinctively glanced toward Wesley.

Thankfully the call hadn't been on speaker, or it would have been a disaster for Gabriela.

Wesley, who'd been watching Leo closely, caught the sudden tension in his posture instantly, suspicion sharpening. Embarrassed, Leo turned his face away to avoid that probing stare.

Cutting his mother off, he said quietly, "Mom, let's not get into that right now. I've got something important to deal with."

He ended the call quickly.

Wesley offered him a knowing, unreadable smile. "You seem awfully tense, talking to your own mother, Mr. Leo."

Chapter 1137

"My mother's been pushing marriage on me for a couple of years now," Leo said, composing himself, trying to sound offhand as he let out a sigh. "I don't know what's gotten into her lately — she just won't let up about it."

"A man's just hitting his stride at thirty," Wesley remarked. "But she's not wrong. If you're really as devoted a son as you seem, you ought to think about settling down sooner rather than later."

Just as Leo opened his mouth to respond, Wesley added, “At your age, I already had a son.”

“These days, that son of mine isn’t just old enough to run errands — he’s already in school.”

Leo: ...

Watching the disbelief spread across Leo’s face, a wave of satisfaction settled over Wesley.

Leo had always assumed that Wesley, for all his empire and standing, acted more like a petty schoolboy whenever Gabriela was around — possessive, narrow-minded, quick to sulk.

He’d never understood why someone as brilliant and self-possessed as little Gabby would fall for a man with that kind of disagreeable temper.

But in this moment, he finally understood her choice.

A man who was powerful and wealthy, and yet still so unguarded and genuine underneath it all, held a certain undeniable appeal.

Case in point: watching Wesley brag about his son to a rival, of all people, was oddly satisfying.

Leo offered a gracious compliment. “Mr. Moss, that’s impressive.”

Wesley’s happiness was plain, and he made no effort to hide it, launching straight into stories about his son.

“He grew up right by Gabriela’s side. For various reasons, I missed a lot of his early years — but his very first word was ‘Dad.’”

“He looks just like me. Sharp, just like me. Unmistakably mine...”

The smile on Leo’s face faded, subtly.

He regretted admiring Wesley even for that moment.

Now he was jealous.

He’d never expected to feel envious of someone like this, of all people.

It was a distinctly uncomfortable feeling.

He clenched his fingers slightly, keeping his expression carefully composed.

“Mr. Moss, Gabriela’s still working in the studio. I should check on her progress. If things go well, we might wrap up early and get home sooner.”

Wesley seemed reluctant to let the conversation end there.

Bragging about his kid to a rival was, frankly, exhilarating.

If Leo was willing to sit and listen, Wesley could have kept it up for days.

But he also wanted Gabriela to finish early and come home. With a small huff, he said, “Fair enough. No point talking children with someone who has neither a family nor kids of his own. Go on, get back to it.”

Leo nodded politely, but the moment he turned away, his usual gentle composure gave way to something closer to exasperation.

This man had no shame whatsoever about acting like an overgrown child.

Maybe it was exactly that vibrant, unguarded side of him that had won little Gabby over in the first place.

Leo let out a soft sigh, refocused, and threw himself back into work with her.

By 11:05, they'd finally finished the day's tasks.

Gabriela and Leo said their goodbyes and headed home separately.

Chapter 1138

Driving up front, Rodrigo noticed Leo rubbing his tired temples in the back seat and couldn't help himself. "This Gabriela really is something. She's barely confirmed the partnership with you, gone straight back to her job at Everglow headquarters, and now she's got you working overtime with her at night, too..."

Having worked at Leo's side for years, Rodrigo held something close to blind loyalty toward him, and it pained him to watch his boss work himself this hard.

His frustration with Gabriela slipped out before he could stop it.

Leo answered evenly, "Gabriela's already dealing with plenty of unsavory characters at headquarters all day. If anything, it's my fault for keeping her here this late too."

He spoke with his eyes closed, leaning back against the seat. His tone stayed gentle, but Rodrigo could sense clearly that something had unsettled him.

Still unconvinced, Rodrigo pressed. “Her hard work is her own business...”

Why should their boss have to shoulder any part of the strain that came with it?

“Rodrigo — between my SK Elite Boutique and the entire Howard family empire, which do you think carries more weight?”

However reluctant Rodrigo was to admit it, there was no denying the Howard family’s standing at the very top of Okburg.

“The Howard family,” he conceded.

Leo let out a small laugh. “Even with all the prestige and influence SK Elite Boutique carries, for Gabby it’s ultimately just a platform to work from.”

“But Everglow Group headquarters means something far more significant to her. If she plays things right, she could end up running the entire company one day.”

Leo was always patient with the people who worked for him, never minding taking the time to spell things out.

The reality of the situation dawned on Rodrigo quickly enough.

In the fashion world, Leo might be a towering figure — but in the business world, he wasn't necessarily anything remarkable.

And besides, given everything Gabriela was already capable of, even without this collaboration, she'd have carved out her own path in fashion regardless, as Presley's most trusted and final apprentice, with a princess's favor behind her besides.

Understanding this fully now, Rodrigo admitted, "Boss, I was being small-minded about it."

Leo only smiled and said nothing further.

Gabriela was sharp enough that it was only a matter of time before Everglow Group fell under her control.

And when that day came — would she still have any time left to spare for design work with him?

For now, all he could really do was make sure she kept producing new work, letting her savor the satisfaction of it, hoping that might give her enough reason to stay involved.

Meanwhile, Gabriela and Wesley made their way home.

He suggested she lean back and rest, but curiosity got the better of her. "What were you and Leo talking about earlier?"

Not wanting her to catch wind of the Stewart situation just yet, Wesley answered with a note of displeasure. "It's well past work hours, and you're still thinking about your business partner?"

Gabriela was thoroughly exasperated.

Wesley had been watching her work with Leo the entire evening.

It had been an entirely professional setting from start to finish, and he still found room to sulk about it?

Chapter 1139

She kept her tone as even as she could manage. "If you don't want to talk about it, then don't."

She closed her eyes and settled back, clearly done with the conversation.

Whatever sense of triumph Wesley had carried out of his earlier exchange with Leo evaporated instantly.

His own woman, brushing him off like this.

He'd only wanted to avoid the topic of Leo, and now she wasn't speaking to him at all?

Unbelievable.

The rest of the drive passed in silence.

By the time they got home, the villa's lights were all off, save for a single night lamp Farley had left burning.

They slipped upstairs quietly, heading for the bedroom.

The moment the door closed behind them, Wesley pressed Gabriela against the wall.

Before she could get a word out asking what he thought he was doing, his lips were already on hers.

By the time she came back to herself, her clothes were already gone.

Remembering just how intense he could be, she pushed at his chest, heart still racing. “You promised — if I wasn’t willing, you wouldn’t push...”

Her protest died against the cool press of his mouth.

Swept up in the moment, Wesley lifted her and carried her toward the bathroom.

Whatever objections Gabriela had left soon dissolved into quiet, breathless murmurs.

For all his strength, he stayed mindful of how tired she must be after the long night, and held back after only twice.

Exhausted, Gabriela sat soaking in the warm bathwater, glaring at him.

“Starting tomorrow, you’re banished to the guest room.”

His expression fell instantly. “Absolutely not.”

Seeing the wounded, downcast look on his face, Gabriela couldn’t help but laugh.

She was clearly the wronged party here — and somehow this grown man had managed to look even more aggrieved than she did.

Wesley washed her carefully, his voice turning coaxing and gentle.

“Little Gabby. Let’s go get our marriage license tomorrow.”

She blinked, caught completely off guard.

Why bring that up out of nowhere?

Earnest, he explained, “You keep threatening to banish me to the guest room. It makes me feel insecure.”

Before Gabriela had a chance to react, Wesley pressed on. “I understand why you’re not ready to make things public, and I’ve been patient about that. But at the very least, we should make it official — register our marriage. That way, whatever you do and whoever you’re around, you’ll have that much clarity to hold onto.”

Otherwise, every time she got even a little close to Leo, Wesley would be left stewing in quiet anxiety, wondering if the man might sweep her away right out from under him.

Making it official would settle that, once and for all — no matter who came sniffing around, he'd never have to live with that gnawing unease again.

"I've always known exactly what I'm doing. I don't need clarity handed to me," Gabriela shot back, clearly annoyed. "But do you know what you're doing?"

She turned her neck toward him, showing him a spot.

"Look at this. I have work tomorrow."

Chapter 1140

Earlier, caught up in the moment, Wesley had bitten down on her neck hard enough to leave a mark. It hadn't broken skin, but the impression was unmistakable — obvious enough that even makeup might not fully hide it.

Wesley had been mildly irritated by her sudden change of subject, but the second he saw the mark, his heart skipped, unbidden.

Especially remembering how she'd looked beneath him only moments earlier, utterly pliant to his every touch, her soft protests laced with sweetness. That tender, yielding side of her — his Gabby — belonged to him and him alone, for the rest of this life.

The thought softened his gaze, warm as spring sunlight breaking through cloud cover, brimming with tenderness.

He leaned down and pressed a kiss to the mark, his voice low and rough.

“Don’t be upset. I’ll drive you to work tomorrow.”

Already drifting toward sleep, Gabriela didn’t push back further, since he’d dropped the subject of registering their marriage.

“Just drop me at the corner across from the Everglow building,” she murmured.

Wesley hummed his agreement.

Too worn out to notice much else, her eyes slid shut as she sank further into the bathwater.

He scooped her up quickly, steadying her as he finished washing her efficiently before carrying her to bed.

The next morning, Gabriela woke earlier than usual.

Whether it was the deep sleep or something else, she felt genuinely refreshed as she stood before the mirror, layering concealer over the bite mark.

It didn't erase it completely, but it was an improvement over nothing.

Wesley was already dressed and waiting downstairs by the time she came down.

With Truett off at school and Farley out tending the garden, only Ken was bustling around the living room.

Spotting them, he greeted them with a warm smile. "Good morning, Mr. Moss, Gabriela. Breakfast's ready."

Wesley adjusted his cufflinks with a smile. "Ken, just like with Farley — you can drop the formality and call me Wesley."

Though Ken technically worked as Gabriela's private chef, he rarely returned to his hometown anymore and had long since come to think of her as family.

Wesley, in turn, extended the same warmth and respect toward him.

Ken only smiled and didn't argue the point. "I'll get your utensils set out."

His cooking was excellent as ever, and both Gabriela and Wesley ate a hearty breakfast.

Afterward, they left for work together.

As agreed, Wesley pulled up at the corner across from the Everglow Group building.

Gabriela had barely taken a few steps before his voice called out behind her. “Gabriela — you left something in the car.”

She turned, puzzled, as he jogged over and handed her a tube of lipstick.

Her brow creased slightly.

She could’ve sworn she’d tucked that lipstick securely into the inner pocket of her bag. How had it ended up loose?

Without dwelling on it further, she took it, tucked it back into her bag, and was about to walk off when he stopped her again. “Wait, Gabriela.”

He stepped in close and leaned down to fix her collar.