

His kiss 1141

Chapter 1141

Wesley towered well over her, and looking down at her now, his eyes carried an impossibly soft warmth, like a gentle spring breeze.

She glanced up at him, momentarily caught off guard by the tenderness in his expression.

Once her collar was straightened, he leaned in and murmured against her ear, “The mark’s still a little visible. I’ll be more careful next time.”

The deliberate drop in his voice sent heat rushing to her cheeks.

Flustered, she snapped back to herself and said quickly, “You should head to work now.”

But Wesley lifted his right wrist, showing her a loose cufflink. “This one keeps coming undone. Can you fasten it for me?”

By now, the two of them lingering by the roadside had already started drawing curious glances from passersby.

Gabriela fastened the cufflink hastily and bolted, refusing to look back.

Wesley watched her go, a soft laugh escaping him before he strolled back to his car and drove off, unhurried.

What Gabriela had no idea of was that several Everglow Group employees had witnessed the entire exchange.

Later that morning, once her meeting wrapped up and she'd stepped into the restroom, she overheard hushed voices drifting from the neighboring stalls.

"Did you see that? Our new Director Lu got dropped off by the Moss Group heir himself!"

"I saw it! And he fixed her collar for her. The way he looked at her — I nearly melted just watching."

"I'd heard the rumors about how much Mr. Moss dotes on Director Lu, but I always figured people were exaggerating. Seeing it in person, though — he's completely smitten."

"Did any of you notice, during the meeting this morning? On Director Lu's neck..."

The last voice trailed off, dropping almost to a whisper as it uttered the words bite mark.

The others gasped, hushed.

“It was so obvious,” one of them murmured. “She must’ve layered on so much concealer, but it still didn’t cover it fully.”

A stunned silence followed, before their imaginations took off in earnest.

The thought of someone as composed and untouchable as Wesley losing his composure like that was almost too much for any of them to process.

Their whispers picked up again, tinged now with envy and awe.

Still tucked away in her stall, Gabriela felt utterly mortified.

Employees at Everglow Group were, on the whole, professional, especially on the upper floors, where workplace decorum was taken seriously.

But apparently Wesley’s charm had been enough to override all that restraint, leading to this barely-contained whisper campaign.

If she walked out now, it would be excruciating for everyone involved, herself included.

There was nothing shameful in any of it, sure, but it also wasn't exactly appropriate office chatter.

Silently, she sighed and waited for the gossiping voices to disperse before finally stepping out.

She caught her own reflection in the mirror, expression unreadable.

Her collar had slipped a little lower than it had been that morning at home.

Without changing her expression, Gabriela typed out a message to Wesley:

"Tonight, you're sleeping in the study."

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She'd actually believed he was being considerate, insisting on driving her that morning. She'd even taken his fussing over her collar as genuine concern.

Now it was painfully clear —

he'd done every bit of it on purpose.

He'd deliberately smudged her concealer, then adjusted her collar just enough to make sure the mark stayed visible.

And now, thanks to him, the entire sixty-third floor of Everglow Group was buzzing with gossip about her.

It was mortifying. Absolutely mortifying.

Gabby was so mortified that night she didn't even want to look at Wesley's face again.

She couldn't stand the thought of falling for his charm all over again.

The moment Wesley read Gabby's message, he knew exactly how upset she was.

Which was, of course, precisely the point.

Her anger meant this morning's little scheme had worked exactly as planned.

By now, the whole of Everglow Group likely knew he was Gabby's current boyfriend, and that things between them were going strong.

Ah, the trials of an unofficial boyfriend — always looking for a chance to stake his claim.

Truly, he thought, this particular boyfriend of hers deserved some sympathy.

Wesley typed back with feigned calm: “Who upset you this time? Tell your hubby, I’ll handle it.”

Reading his mock innocence, Gabby let out a frustrated laugh despite herself. She switched off her phone and decided not to answer.

Moments later, her assistant knocked and stepped in. “Director Lu, there’s a marketing event proposal that needs your sign-off. The department’s short meeting starts in fifteen minutes.”

Gabby’s brow creased. “Why am I only hearing about this now? Where are the meeting materials?”

This assistant had been assigned to her by the company — competent enough with small tasks, but prone to flustering the moment anything of real weight came up.

The assistant looked nervous. “The deputy director finalized the event. She has all the materials.”

The deputy director was Rebecca.

Before Gabby had joined the marketing department, the director's role had been little more than a title on paper.

Everyone had simply deferred to Rebecca. Now, with Gabby in charge, the assistant apparently still saw informing her about meetings as a mere formality, not yet grasping that even Rebecca's plans required Gabby's approval.

"Even if the materials sit with Rebecca," Gabby said, sharper now, "as my assistant, you should have pulled the relevant documents together for this meeting yourself."

But catching sight of the assistant's panicked expression, she waved a hand dismissively. "Never mind. You can go."

Relieved, the assistant fled the office as if escaping a fire.

In that moment, Gabby found herself missing Alissa more than ever.

Her old senior assistant had always been dependable. Pulling together meeting materials had been such a small matter — never once something Gabby had needed to worry about, back when Alissa was handling things.

As if summoned by the thought, a message from Alissa lit up her phone: [Director Lu, I have some incredible news, and I can't wait to tell you!]

Curious, Gabby replied: [What is it?]

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Alissa teased her back: [Not telling you yet. Guess! I'll swing by Everglow this afternoon and tell you in person.]

[Fine, I'll be waiting for your big news.]

Gabby set her phone down with a small smile, her mood lifting for the first time in hours.

Meanwhile, Wesley, having waited several minutes without a reply, finally put his own phone away.

Not long after, Billy knocked and entered.

"Mr. Moss. Dr. Vasquez is here."

Wesley's brows lifted in surprise. "He's back in the country? What brings him by?"

Before Billy could answer, a warm, cheerful voice arrived along with the sound of footsteps.

“Mr. Moss, don’t tell me you’ve got no use left for an ophthalmologist. Can’t an old friend just drop by for a visit?”

A tall, distinguished figure appeared in the doorway.

Dr. Vasquez — a highly respected ophthalmologist, renowned for his skill in the most delicate of eye surgeries.

He was one of only five doctors in the entire country capable of performing certain procedures, his reputation in the field practically unmatched.

He had once treated Myah’s eye condition, pouring a considerable amount of time and effort into her case. Despite everything he’d tried, her condition never improved, and eventually even Myah had given up on treatment altogether.

Unwilling to accept the failure, Dr. Vasquez had left the country to pursue advanced training abroad.

Wesley hadn’t seen him in years.

“Dr. Vasquez.”

His expression stayed composed, giving little away, though a faint note of reproach crept in. “I heard you’ve been back for months. And only now do you think to pay me a visit?”

Standing off to the side, Billy couldn't help a quiet chuckle.

Wesley didn't have many people he called friends, but Dr. Vasquez, close to him in age and free of any real conflict of interest, had always been someone he could speak with openly.

Dr. Vasquez settled into the seat across from him and explained, evenly, "I've been at Silvermoon Village this whole time."

The mention of that name made something flicker faintly behind Wesley's eyes.

"I only found out about Myah's situation after I got back," Dr. Vasquez said, regret plain in his voice. "That girl used to be so sweet, so gentle. Who could have guessed that once her sight came back, her whole nature would change so completely?"

Back when Wesley had entrusted Myah's care to him, he'd placed enormous hope in the man's abilities.

The pressure had been immense — Myah's condition had gone untreated since childhood, leaving her without any perception of light for nearly a decade. Even for a physician of Dr. Vasquez's caliber, it had been a nearly insurmountable challenge.

The trust and hope Wesley and Myah had both placed in him had weighed heavily on Dr. Vasquez, driving him abroad in search of further training.

But upon his return, he'd learned that Myah had ended up institutionalized at Ravenbrook Hospital.

He'd gone quietly to visit her there and found her mental state far from stable. The gentle young woman he remembered had given way to something sharp and abrasive.

Chapter 1144

When he'd approached her, she hadn't recognized him at all, telling him harshly to leave.

It had troubled him deeply, but in the end, he'd respected Wesley's decision and set off instead for Silvermoon Village.

There, he'd discovered that Myah's long-standing eye condition — one Western medicine had never managed to treat — had ultimately been resolved by an elderly practitioner of traditional medicine, using acupuncture alone. Astonished and impressed, he'd stayed on at Fred's home to learn more about the practice.

As Dr. Vasquez recounted all this, Wesley's expression stayed carefully neutral.

Whatever he felt toward Myah — compassion, guilt — it all traced back to his connection with Allan.

But Myah had also been responsible for Allan's death, and had come dangerously close to harming Gabby as well.

Wesley could no longer afford to see her through the lens of family affection. Whatever misfortune had come her way now, he considered simply the consequence of her own choices.

It wasn't until Dr. Vasquez brought up something else entirely that Wesley's demeanor shifted.

"Mr. Moss, I heard you've been looking into Stewart recently."

Wesley straightened, leaning in slightly.

"What have you heard?"

"I happened to be at Fred's place the day Stewart and his assistant came by for medicine."

At the time, Dr. Vasquez had been doing everything he could to make himself useful, hoping to earn Fred's trust.

Stewart and his assistant hadn't paid him the slightest attention.

"What exactly do you know?" Wesley pressed.

Dr. Vasquez nodded and laid out what he'd seen.

"Stewart's in perfectly good health. There was no real reason for him to travel all the way out to a rural village just for herbal medicine."

He went on, "Fred grumbled the whole time about spoiled city boys making a fuss over nothing, insisting on treatment when there was nothing wrong with them. But Stewart wouldn't let it go, even brought him a gift of high-grade cloud mist tea. Eventually Fred gave in and put together a few packets of herbs for him."

Dr. Vasquez had assumed, at the time, that Stewart was simply there seeking Fred's expertise — but once Billy's people had come around asking questions about Stewart's visit to the village, he'd realized something was off.

As he spoke, Su Zhuoming looked faintly embarrassed.

He was deeply immersed in his work as a physician, rarely one to meddle in other people's affairs.

But he'd heard Stewart's name before, knowing it was he who'd brought Myah to Silvermoon Village for treatment, and that alone had drawn his attention.

Later, once he'd learned that Wesley's people were looking into the matter, he'd gone to Adalynn's house to see what he could gather.

Having finished his account, Su Zhuoming rubbed the back of his nose, sheepish. “In the end, once Fred realized I’d been asking around about his patients, he threw me out of the village in a fury.”

Traditional medicine wasn’t his own field of expertise, but he regretted missing the chance to learn from someone like Fred.

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The old man was clearly aging, and Su Zhuoming worried about all that skill simply disappearing with him.

“Thank you, Dr. Su. I owe you for this.”

Wesley now had full confirmation that Maura had, in fact, been in contact with Stewart’s assistant.

He’d also worked out that Maura’s mistaken belief — that Gabriela was Leo’s ex-girlfriend — had come from Erik deliberately misleading her.

Erik’s actual motives, though, remained a mystery.

“Billy, there’s no need to keep digging around Silvermoon Village.”

Wesley was now certain Stewart sat at the center of all this. Further investigation there would only tip him off.

Reaching the same conclusion, Billy left at once to make arrangements.

With only Wesley and Su Zhuoming left in the office, Su Zhuoming wandered toward the floor-to-ceiling window, watching the tiny figures of pedestrians far below, and let out a sigh.

“Moving into a role with this much pressure — it must weigh on you more, doesn’t it?”

Apex Group, for all its rapid rise in recent years, was still nothing compared to Moss Group headquarters, where the pressure ran on an entirely different scale.

“It’s not so bad,” Wesley said. He’d grown used to thriving under pressure since he was young. His reluctance to return to Moss Group had always come down to his distaste for the power struggles among his own family, not the workload itself.

Su Zhuoming’s concern turned to Wesley’s health.

“I only found out after I got back that you went abroad two years ago for another major heart surgery. You need to take better care of yourself.”

As a doctor, it was practically instinct for him to remind his patients of that.

Rather than take offense, Wesley thanked him sincerely.

“Don’t worry. Now that there’s someone I truly treasure, I want to stay healthy and live a long life more than anyone.”

Curiosity sparked in Su Zhuoming. “Is that the woman named Gabriela you mean?”

“You guessed right,” Wesley admitted easily.

His curiosity only deepened.

He found himself wondering what kind of woman could completely win over someone like Wesley.

He’d heard that Gabriela was the one who’d sent Myah to Ravenbrook Hospital, and that she’d once shared a close, if strictly platonic, bond with Allan.

A woman willing to commit Allan’s own sister to a place like that would have to be remarkably composed, coldly rational.

It was surprising, then, that Wesley would be drawn to someone like that.

Su Zhuoming's first impression of Gabriela, sight unseen, was of someone cool and calculating — perhaps not so different from Wesley himself, both of them detached, aloof.

But once he actually met her, he realized his assumptions had been entirely off the mark.

Su Zhuoming spent half the day with Wesley before the latter left to pick Gabriela up from work. With nothing pressing on his own schedule and genuine curiosity about her, Su Zhuoming tagged along to Everglow Group.

Before long, he met her in person.

She was vivid, warm, full of life.

Chapter 1146

Looking only at the warmth in her eyes, it was hard to imagine the hardship and cruelty she'd endured as a child.

Two young women accompanied her — one on the left, round-faced and endearing, said something that deepened the smile on Gabriela's face.

Su Zhuoming's gaze lingered on her for a moment.

Wesley stepped out of the car and walked over to them.

Seeing him, a flicker of irritation rose in Gabriela.

With others around, though, she couldn't very well embarrass him in public, and settled for a pointed, silent look instead.

I told you not to bother coming to pick me up today.

Wesley smiled, entirely unbothered by her teasing edge. "Things were quiet at the office, so I figured I'd stop by."

Once they finished talking, Aubrey and Alissa, standing beside Gabriela, came over to greet him.

"Mr. Moss."

Wesley nodded, opening his mouth to say something when Gabriela cut in.

“Wesley, Alissa, Aubrey, and I have plans to go shopping. You should head home.”

Alissa had come by just to visit for fun, and for reasons unknown, Aubrey had ended up tagging along too. Gabriela had decided to treat them both to a meal out, since it had been a while since she'd properly caught up with old friends.

Wesley looked mildly surprised.

“Aren't you supposed to be working overtime at SK's studio tonight?”

“I already cleared it with Leo,” Gabriela said with a nod.

Hearing that, some of the tension eased out of Wesley.

“Then go have fun. Buy whatever you like.”

As long as she wasn't spending the night working alongside Leo, he had no objection to her staying out late with her friends.

After finishing with Wesley, Gabriela noticed Su Zhuoming standing quietly off to the side and gave him a polite nod.

Then she turned back to Wesley. “Is this your friend?”

Wesley made the introductions all around.

Su Zhuoming learned that the round-faced girl was Aubrey, and the other — carrying herself with the unmistakable ease of someone raised in wealth — was Alissa.

He greeted them both courteously.

With introductions finished, the group parted ways.

Once in the car, Alissa could hardly wait to share her news. “Gabriela, let’s head to Horizon Club first.”

Horizon Club was a high-end, members-only venue popular among Okburg’s wealthy young elite. It was also where Gabriela had closed her very first successful deal for the Haynes Group.

She blinked, puzzled. “What are we going there for?”

“You’ll see when we get there,” Alissa said, keeping her tone deliberately mysterious as she drove.

Before long, they arrived at Horizon Club.

Alissa parked, then led Gabriela and Aubrey inside, heading straight for the third floor.

Given how at ease Alissa seemed with the place, Gabriela's curiosity only grew.

What exactly was this good news she kept teasing?

The third floor was reserved strictly for members. Once Alissa showed her card, someone guided the three of them to a large private room.

Inside, a group of young men and women were gathered, drinking and chatting, the whole room buzzing with energy.

Chapter 1147

The moment the three striking young women walked in, heads turned to follow them.

Recognition flickered across several faces at the sight of Gabriela.

Her name had climbed rapidly in recent months — in Okburg's upper circles these days, who didn't know her?

Even without ever having met her directly, plenty of people could pick her strikingly beautiful face out of a crowd on sight.

“Isn’t she the daughter the Howard family just acknowledged? What’s she doing here?”

“That’s her. That’s Gabriela!”

“I was at the Howard family’s recognition banquet — her face is far too distinctive to mistake.”

“What’s she doing here, of all places? Is she looking for trouble?”

“That... doesn’t seem likely. You might not know this, but she’s got underworld connections. Word is she has a huge following, hundreds of people. If she were really here to start something, she wouldn’t just bring two girls with her, would she?”

“Hundreds of followers? That sounds absurd. Could just be a rumor.”

“You weren’t at the banquet that day. Gabriela clashed with the McCoy family, and her close ally — an imposing man, built like a mountain — casually brought a few hundred people to surround the hotel...”

“It was quite a scene.”

The whispers stayed hushed, and Gabriela only caught fragments — words like “trouble” drifting past.

She turned to Alissa. “These people seem a little hostile toward us.”

Alissa’s smile turned mysterious. “It’s not hostility toward you. Tonight’s event is just... a special one.”

She leaned in and murmured against Gabriela’s ear. “Remember that bet I placed for you six months ago?”

Back then, a playful bet had sprung up as a bit of a joke at Gabriela’s expense — whether she and Wesley would end up married within six months. The moment she’d heard, Gabriela had immediately had Alissa put down a million dollars on it.

Then a whirlwind of events had followed — Gabriela had nearly died in a fire, and her ongoing standoff with Rebecca had consumed every waking day.

She’d all but forgotten the bet ever existed.

Hearing Alissa mention it now, Gabriela couldn’t help but laugh. “So this is the good news you were teasing me about?”

Genuinely unexpected, this windfall.

Who wouldn't be pleased by a surprise like that?

Alissa nodded, grinning. "Exactly."

Today was the day to collect.

Gabriela glanced between Alissa and Aubrey, and something clicked. Her eyes widened. "Aubrey, did you put money on it too?"

Aubrey gave a sheepish nod. "I just happened to hear about it, so I figured I'd throw in a little myself."

Watching Aubrey pinch her thumb and forefinger together, Gabriela asked, amused, "How much did you bet?"

"Thirty thousand."

Aubrey sent most of her salary home each month, keeping only a modest amount for herself. She'd scrimped together some private savings and put every bit of it on the idea that Gabriela and Wesley wouldn't marry within six months.

Gabriela was left speechless.

Chapter 1148

Even her closest friends had bet against her. Did that mean they knew her too well — or that they hadn't held out much hope for her relationship with Wesley?

Aubrey hurried to explain. "Don't be upset, Gabriela. I just wanted some extra pocket money."

"I'm not upset." Gabriela laughed, patting her shoulder. "Because I bet the same way."

Aubrey nodded emphatically.

She'd known Gabriela had placed her own bet, which was exactly why she'd followed suit.

With Gabriela's instincts about money, betting the same way was practically a guaranteed win.

Alissa led the two of them inside to collect their winnings.

As they walked in, the room stared, disbelieving.

“What are they doing in there?”

“That innermost room is where you go to collect if your bet paid off. Could it be...”

These pampered heirs of wealthy families had placed their bets with a mocking, dismissive attitude, all wagering “no wedding.” None of them had expected that six months later, Gabriela and Wesley still weren’t married, and that they themselves had somehow ended up on the winning side, walking away with a decent sum.

Even having won, though, unease lingered — they’d profited, technically, at Wesley’s expense, and that thought alone made them uneasy.

Which was exactly why, when Gabriela had walked in earlier, everyone’s instinct had jumped straight to suspicion.

Now, it seemed, she’d simply come to collect her own winnings.

Several of the wealthy heirs pressed their hands over their mouths, half-afraid a gasp might slip out.

Was this really happening?

Was Gabriela really this bold? Having earned Wesley's affection was already a rare blessing — and yet she'd dared to place a bet like this on top of it?

Was she just that confident in his feelings for her?

While everyone puzzled over it, Gabriela and Alissa were already sorting out the transfer of funds.

To Gabriela's surprise, the man overseeing the payouts was a familiar face — the very butler who managed the Howard residence.

Word had it Lauren had brought this butler over from the McCoy family herself; he was one of her most trusted people.

The butler recognized Gabriela too, and hesitated for the briefest of moments.

But he composed himself quickly, processing the transfer as though nothing were amiss.

The odds on "no wedding" had been set at three to one. Gabriela walked away with three million, Alissa with a million and a half, Aubrey with ninety thousand.

The three of them were thoroughly delighted.

But the moment they turned around, still smiling, they found themselves face to face with a furious expression —

Rebecca's.

“Gabriela. When they told me just now, I didn't believe it. It's really you? Have you no shame at all? You're even profiting off this?”

Gabriela had been right — Rebecca really was the one behind the whole scheme.

She'd set the whole thing up specifically to mock Gabriela. But with Wesley's name attached to it, most people had hesitated, only placing small, token bets out of deference to Rebecca.

Only Gabriela and Alissa had dared to bet such large sums.

Chapter 1149

Still, even the smaller bets had all landed on “no wedding,” which, added together, amounted to a considerable loss overall.

This time, Rebecca had taken a serious financial hit. Without enough in her own account to cover it, she'd had to go crawling to Lauren for help.

Strained as their relationship already was, Lauren had ended up pulling a substantial sum from her own funds to bail her daughter out.

And now, watching Gabriela and Alissa walk off with so much of it, Rebecca was practically shaking with fury.

While she seethed, Gabriela stayed perfectly composed, even asking, "Why wouldn't I take the money, if it's on offer? Didn't you consider the risk of losing when you set this whole thing up?"

Fury drained the last of Rebecca's composure entirely.

"You'd disrespect Wesley's feelings, all for a little pocket money?" she spat. "Just you wait. I'll make you regret this."

She ordered her people to block Gabriela and her friends from leaving.

The room was full of prominent second- and third-generation heirs, so Gabriela wasn't especially worried Rebecca would try anything too extreme.

If Rebecca wanted to make her wait, Gabriela was more than willing to wait.

She'd already given Tyler word to bring backup, after all. If things escalated, no one on her side would be caught off guard.

Sure enough, before long, Wesley arrived to join Gabriela and her friends.

Billy and Su Zhuoming came along with him.

Su Zhuoming, having no ties to this particular social circle, drew more than a few surprised glances.

But it was what Rebecca said next that truly rattled him.

"Wesley, your girlfriend came here to walk away with a couple million dollars — by betting you two wouldn't get married within six months."

She said it with open disdain, contempt curling her lips.

"Is this really the woman you chose? Your taste really is something, golden boy."

Rebecca's words landed, and the entire private room fell into a tense hush.

A moment earlier, everyone had only dared speculate quietly to themselves. No one had expected Rebecca to lay it all out so bluntly.

And to say it right in front of Wesley, no less?

Wasn't this practically inviting a scene?

Everyone knew, after all, that Rebecca and Wesley had once been engaged. No one was entirely sure why the engagement had fallen apart, but it was plain to see that watching him with another woman didn't sit well with her. Understandable enough, honestly.

For a moment, the whole room held its breath, waiting to see how Wesley would react. Surely he'd erupt any second.

But instead—

His brow only creased slightly at her words before smoothing out again almost instantly.

He walked over to Gabriela, studying her with an unreadable expression. "You won?"

She nodded, calm. "I did."

"How much?"

"Three million."

He let out a light laugh. "That's nowhere near enough."

Gabriela blinked, thrown by his reaction.

Everyone else in the room felt the conversation veering somewhere unexpected, too, and leaned in, sensing the real drama hadn't even started yet.

Chapter 1150

Wesley reached out and ruffled her hair, his tone indulgent. "I'll add to it. Let's round it up to a billion. Call it your wedding fund."

Real tenderness colored his voice. "Marry me. What do you say?"

Gabriela froze, stunned.

So did everyone else in the room.

Was Wesley... proposing? Publicly?

Not only had Gabriela's brazen little stunt failed to anger him — he was offering to top off her winnings toward a wedding fund?

Was this actually happening?

Rebecca looked utterly incredulous. "Wesley, did you not hear what I said? Gabriela's greedy and vulgar, flaunting her cheap little schemes to mock the sanctity of your relationship. And you're not even angry?"

Wesley regarded her, dispassionate.

"Everyone in this room cares about money. Gabriela's just honest about it. That's a good deal better than people who play at being above it all while secretly coveting every dollar they can get."

Rebecca let out a scoff of disbelief. "Wesley, don't drag everyone else down with you just to defend her. Ask anyone here — who's actually so fixated on money?" Contempt dripped from every word. "Only someone who's known real poverty gets this obsessed with wealth."

No one dared voice open agreement with Rebecca, but plenty in the room silently shared the sentiment.

Ordinarily aloof, sparing with his words especially around strangers, Wesley didn't hold back this time — not when it came to defending his Gabriela.

"Not care about money?" He let out a cold laugh, his gaze sweeping the room, frost in every glance.

"Everything you enjoy today — what part of it doesn't come down to money? If you're truly indifferent to wealth, go ahead and try living like an ordinary person. Wear clothes that cost less than ten dollars. Work a nine-to-five. Earn your own living without leaning on your parents."

Aubrey's face lit up as she listened, nodding hard.

She couldn't help muttering under her breath, "He's absolutely right! You rich kids blow through your parents' money like it's nothing and still act like you're too good for it. It's hypocritical and disgusting!"

Her voice hadn't been especially quiet, and everyone heard every word. The mood in the room curdled instantly, faces souring all around.

These people, who considered themselves a cut above everyone else, had just been scolded by someone they'd have considered beneath them.

Worse still, Aubrey had essentially seconded everything Wesley said. No one dared push back.

Amused by the whole scene, Billy kept sneaking glances at Aubrey.

She'd puffed her cheeks out while talking, and he found it strangely charming.

Even Wesley gave her a look of quiet approval.

Nosy and gossipy as she usually was, she had her moments. He made a private note to have Brenden give her a raise sometime soon.

Rebecca, meanwhile, was livid.

She'd already lost a considerable sum of money tonight, and now her pride lay in shreds on top of it. The man she'd once loved had just humiliated her publicly — and to make it worse, he was defending Gabriela while he did it.