

## His kiss 331

### Chapter 331

Gabriela shot back, her voice steely, “She could skip the business trip if you insist — but if she does, she’ll be jeopardizing a critical deal. She might as well wait for the company to fire her.”

Raven’s mind raced with quick calculations. Without Tessa’s generous salary, what would keep their household afloat? She gave a sharp, dismissive snort. “If your job requires you to go on a business trip, then leave — but don’t drag your feet about it.”

Gabriela slipped an arm around Tessa and urged her inside to pack her things.

Within the cramped apartment, several relatives sprawled lazily across the worn sofa, their eyes glued to glowing phone screens. They scrolled, chuckled, and exchanged gossip, yet not one of them had thought to cook a meal or step out for groceries. They were clearly waiting for Tessa to return and shoulder it all for them.

A wave of fury surged through Gabriela, and she didn’t bother with pleasantries. She hastily stuffed a few clothes into a bag and swept Tessa out the door.

Once they were back in the taxi, Tessa turned toward Gabriela. “Why did you make up that story, Gabriela?”

Gabriela’s voice dropped to a gentle murmur. “You just lost your baby — you need to heal. I can’t see a single decent thing about your in-laws. Why do you let yourself be tormented like this?”

Tessa, a graduate of a top university and the head of the executive office, was Wesley's most trusted aide. With bonuses, her salary exceeded a million a year. How could a woman with such education and success be brought so low by her in-laws?

Tears brimmed in Tessa's reddened eyes. "Please... don't ask me anymore."

Every family bore its own share of hardships, and Gabriela decided not to dig deeper into Tessa's misery.

She leaned closer, her voice soft yet firm. "Why don't you come stay with me for now? Whatever storms you're facing, your health has to come first. If you don't treasure yourself, no one else ever will."

Those gentle words shattered what little strength Tessa had left. Her eyes blurred with fresh tears. It had been so long since anyone had spoken to her with genuine care. Through choked sobs, she managed to whisper, "Thank you... truly, thank you."

Finally, Tessa agreed to leave everything behind — at least for the moment — and stay with Gabriela.

Once they arrived at Gabriela's place, she quietly told Ken and Farley that Tessa wasn't doing well and asked them to keep an eye on her. They both nodded in agreement without a second thought.

After preparing a guest room and waiting until Tessa had gone inside, Farley finally turned toward Gabriela. "So, what did the doctor say?" he asked.

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"My baby is healthy," Gabriela replied, offering the ultrasound photos for him to see.

Farley's eyes shimmered with emotion as he studied the images and thought of Alanna. "You realize your mother wasn't born here in Okburg, don't you?"

Gabriela inclined her head. "My uncle mentioned it once or twice."

He went on, voice low but steady. "Before she passed, her last wish was to return to her hometown. At that time, Marie had complete control of the cemetery, and our hands were tied. But things are different now. It's time we brought your mother back where she belongs."

Gabriela gave a decisive nod. "I'll wrap things up at work first, then take my mother's ashes back to her hometown."

With the choice settled, she went to the company the next day and passed her project over to Kaleb.

"This might keep me away for a long while," she said quietly. "I'm counting on you to handle everything here."

Kaleb, who already knew about her pregnancy, let out a sigh. "If the man who fathered the child won't step up, then you don't need to..."

Life held countless struggles for a mother bringing up her child on her own.

“I decided this child deserves to be born,” Gabriela cut in, her eyes steady. “Who the father is doesn’t matter. If my mom had thought differently back then, I wouldn’t even be here.”

Kaleb worried Gabriela might relive the same struggles her mother had endured, yet when he saw the firmness in her eyes, he kept his concerns to himself. With another quiet sigh, he said, “I’ll manage the company. You just focus on delivering the baby safely.”

He had already proven his ability to keep the company running smoothly during Gabriela’s earlier absence, so she knew she could leave everything in his hands without hesitation.

Shortly afterward, Gabriela carefully carried her mother’s ashes in an urn back to her hometown. Farley and Tessa accompanied her on the solemn journey.

At first, Tessa had wavered, but Gabriela pressed on, her voice coaxing yet urgent. “Please, Tessa, just this once. You already covered for me when Mr. Moss saw the pregnancy test result. If you stand by me again, then at least we’ll have a consistent story when he asks about the baby.”

Tessa’s brows knit together, unease clouding her expression. “But my mother-in-law will keep calling, over and over.”

“Then change your number,” Gabriela replied firmly. “You’ve let your in-laws control you long enough. The longer you let them push you around, the more they’ll assume it’s their right. Take this moment to rest, and make them realize just how much they rely on you.”

Tessa mulled over Gabriela’s words and finally nodded. “Alright. I’ll come with you.”

With Gabriela’s persuasion, Tessa asked Wesley for leave and set off with her to the countryside.

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Alanna was born in a small place called North Village.

With the village head’s assistance, Gabriela selected a serene, well-placed spot in the hillside cemetery to rebury her mother’s ashes. A week had passed by the time the reburial was complete.

Though remote, North Village was blessed with stunning landscapes. A clear river, fringed with willows, wound through the village.

After the reburial, Gabriela often found comfort sitting on a riverside bench, watching willow branches graze the water’s surface.

In those quiet moments, she missed Wesley deeply, recalling his handsome features and the way he once embraced her as they slept.

She pulled out her phone and opened WhatsApp, tempted to send him a message. But each time she saw the contact “NotASaunders,” she hesitated and held back.

Tessa, sitting beside Gabriela, noticed her distracted gaze and nudged her playfully. “Spring has long gone, but someone has still got love on her mind.”

Gabriela’s cheeks flushed. “Don’t be ridiculous!”

“Your face says it all,” Tessa teased, pointing at her. “I knew you were smitten with Mr. Moss. But seriously — who’s your baby’s father?”

Gabriela sank back against the bench, half-hiding her face in her arm, dodging the question.

If only she hadn’t gotten drunk that night and stumbled into the wrong room...

As the thought crossed her mind, the baby stirred inside her.

Startled, Gabriela touched her belly.

Was the baby sensing her regret and feeling upset?

She took a deep breath, shoving thoughts of Wesley and her one-night stand with Brenden aside, resolute not to dwell on remorse.

North Village wasn't just beautiful; its crisp air was rejuvenating. After a few months there, both Gabriela and Tessa glowed with health. Tessa, especially, seemed more relaxed and youthful.

The weather warmed in September.

One day, Gabriela suddenly gasped in pain — labor had begun.

Farley rushed to the village head, securing a borrowed car to whisk her to the county hospital.

But after an examination, the doctors discovered the baby was in an abnormal position. The county facility wasn't equipped for the delivery and urged a transfer to a city hospital.

During the journey, Farley and Tessa stayed close, soothing Gabriela. "Don't worry, Gabriela. Breech births are common — you'll be fine."

The pain was searing, like a vise twisting inside her, wave after wave of torment. Gabriela, drenched in cold sweat, felt her body go numb from the pain. She hadn't imagined childbirth could be this brutal.

Farley, gripping her hand tightly, felt her anguish and was distraught. “Miss Haynes, who’s the father? Should I call him to be here?”

Gabriela shook her head firmly.

She had come to the countryside to give birth precisely to keep Wesley and his grandmother in the dark. How could she call Brenden now?

Tessa clasped her other hand tightly. “Don’t be scared, Gabriela. We’ll be at the city hospital soon. The doctors there are top-notch — you’ll be okay.”

Tears rolled down Gabriela’s cheeks as her consciousness began to fade. Her thoughts turned to Wesley, and the longing she had buried surged uncontrollably.

In a faint whisper, she said, “Tessa, I want to talk to Mr. Moss.”

Tessa, eyes brimming, dialed Wesley’s number for her.

Wesley was in the middle of a meeting when Gabriela’s call flashed on his phone. For a moment, he froze — she had left Okburg months ago without a word, and he had assumed she wanted to erase him from her life entirely.

He immediately paused the meeting and stepped outside with his phone. “Gabriela, what’s wrong?”

His tone was guarded, betraying no emotion, but hearing his voice, Gabriela’s tears fell instantly.

Softly, she murmured, “Wesley.”

It was the first time she had used his name, her voice a fragile whisper, like a kitten’s mew, tugging at his heart.

Wesley’s throat tightened, his voice softening. “Yes?”

Another wave of pain gripped Gabriela’s abdomen. She bit her lip, silent, listening to Wesley’s faint breathing on the line.

“Is there something you need?” he asked after a pause.

“No,” she replied, voice still soft. “I’m in my mother’s hometown. The air is clean, and the mountains and rivers are beautiful. I love it here.”

She longed to tell Wesley she loved him — but the words stayed trapped inside.

Wesley muttered under his breath.

The air was nice, and she was content — no wonder she hadn't come back.

After a brief silence, Gabriela added, "Mr. Moss, I won't bother you anymore..."

"When are you returning?" Wesley cut in quickly. "The countryside's nice, but you can't stay forever. What about your mother's company?"

Gabriela's consciousness was slipping. She whispered, "I'll stay for another month. Goodbye, Mr. Moss."

She hung up and passed out.

Wesley stared at his screen, frustration flaring.

He had let her go because she'd said she needed to take over the family business. Now she had boldly retreated to the countryside, staying there for half a year. He missed her so fiercely his heart ached. Yet she seemed so at ease, wanting another month. When she returned, he would find a way to keep her close, never letting her slip away again.

As Gabriela lost consciousness, they reached the city hospital. After a quick examination, the doctor frowned. "Her water has broken, and she's unconscious. We need an immediate C-section."

Farley was at his wits' end, agreeing to whatever the doctor suggested. "Alright, let's do the C-section."

The doctor presented a consent form. "We need the father's signature."

"The father's not here," Farley said. "I'm her friend — can I sign?"

"A relative needs to sign," the doctor replied.

"She has no parents, no family left," Farley said, eyes red. "I'm the closest she has."

Given the urgency, the doctor allowed Farley to sign the document.

During surgery, Gabriela suffered heavy bleeding, teetering on the edge of danger.

Tessa, like Farley, was a nervous wreck, sweating anxiously.

Night fell. Wesley sat in his private garden, staring at a pot of wilted orchids.

A sudden, sharp pain stabbed his chest, like a needle piercing his heart.

Miriam approached with a glass of juice, hoping Wesley would drink, but when she saw him pale and slumped against a stone pillar, alarm surged through her. She hurried to steady him.

“Mr. Moss, are you alright? Is your heart troubling you again?”

After a brief moment, the heavy ache in his chest eased, and he reassured her, “I’m okay.”

“The weather is getting chilly,” Miriam said with a note of concern. “You shouldn’t be out in this breeze. Your heart is fragile, and you’ve been staying up late. You need more rest.”

Wesley stayed quiet, his brow creased, as an inexplicable unease stirred within him.

After a pause, he pulled out his phone and called Gabriela, but no one answered.

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Gabriela endured three grueling hours in the operating room, her body receiving several bags of life-sustaining blood transfusions.

Both Tessa and Farley trembled with terror, their legs buckling beneath them. Fortunately, shortly after the transfusion concluded, the doctor emerged wearing a relieved expression. "Mother and child are safe."

Farley's strength abandoned him completely, and he collapsed onto the hospital floor. "Thank God!"

Tessa steadied herself and, after expressing gratitude to the doctor, absorbed every word of his careful instructions.

In the recovery room, Gabriela stirred awake and immediately craved the sight of her child.

Tessa approached with the baby cradled in her arms.

The newborn appeared impossibly tiny, swaddled in pristine white blankets, eyes sealed shut against the world. Such an exquisite and fragile miracle.

Gabriela shifted slightly to study the baby, her gaze overflowing with maternal tenderness.

This was her child, her precious treasure for all eternity.

She nestled the baby's delicate hand within her palm and laughed softly. "He's looking pretty wrinkled and homely."

"The doctor assured us all newborns appear that way." Tessa's laughter filled the room. "You're stunning, Gabriela. The baby will certainly blossom into beauty."

As they conversed, Farley arrived carrying nourishing soup for Gabriela's recovery.

Suddenly, Gabriela's phone buzzed, revealing that Wesley had attempted contact multiple times.

She answered quickly.

Wesley's impatience crackled through the line. The moment the call connected, he demanded, "Why the delay in answering? Has something gone wrong?"

Gabriela responded with practiced gentleness, "I dozed off moments ago."

Wesley's brow furrowed. Why would she sleep so early?

The baby stirred then, releasing a cry that resembled a tiny kitten's mewl. Hunger likely prompted the sound — so small and fragile it pierced straight through one's heart.

Wesley's chest constricted, and he asked roughly, "Who's making that noise?"

Gabriela forced casualness into her tone. "I'm visiting Tessa at the hospital today. Some baby here is crying."

Tessa's eyes darted toward her immediately.

Wesley remained silent for several heartbeats before speaking. "Gabriela, I hope you come back to Okburg soon."

His unusually tender words warmed Gabriela's eyes. "I'll be back soon — I promise."

After Gabriela ended the call, Tessa declared, "Gabriela, you constantly use me as your cover story. I don't mind, but I demand to become the baby's godmother."

Gabriela agreed without a moment's hesitation.

After she finished the soup, they debated potential names for her baby boy. Eventually, Gabriela settled on a choice — Truett Haynes.

“Truett.” Tessa grasped the baby’s miniature hand, smiling as she cooed, “Did you catch that? From this day forward, you’ll be Truett Haynes. I’m your godmother. Remember when you mature, you must honor not just your mother but me as well.”

Gabriela remained hospitalized for seven days before earning her discharge.

After they returned to North Village, Farley cooked a variety of delicious dishes for Gabriela every day, wholly focused on restoring her strength.

By the completion of her recovery period, Gabriela had gained healthy weight, her skin achieving a luminous softness.

But her petite frame transformed the additional curves into captivating allure. Tessa stared in amazement. Given Gabriela’s striking looks, surely the baby’s father would want to take responsibility — unless Gabriela had refused him.

The more Tessa pondered this possibility, the more logical it appeared, and she resolved to find the right moment to uncover the child’s father’s true identity from Gabriela.

Forty days later, Gabriela returned to Okburg with her baby.

By this time, the baby had blossomed into adorable beauty, his features becoming defined.

As Tessa observed, she suddenly commented, “Why do I sense Truett resembles Mr. Moss somehow?”

Gabriela’s blood turned to ice at those words.

Brenden and Wesley were cousins, sharing similar family traits, so the baby resembling Wesley wasn’t beyond possibility.

She whispered urgently, “Tessa, please never speak such thoughts again.”

Tessa understood Gabriela’s deep feelings for Wesley. But the child’s existence created an insurmountable barrier between Gabriela and Wesley.

After all, a family like the Mosses demanded perfect social matching in marriage, and Gabriela — lacking status and having a child with another man — fell short in every way.

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Tessa felt profound sympathy for Gabriela, squeezing her hand firmly. “Gabriela, once you’ve chosen a path, regardless of its difficulty, we can only walk forward.”

Later, Tessa lingered at Gabriela’s place briefly before departing for home.

She knew a vicious storm likely awaited her arrival.

But fear no longer controlled her.

Spending these past six months in North Village alongside Gabriela had delivered the happiest period of her existence. No matter how challenging the future became, she stood ready to confront it.

Gabriela rested for half a day before resuming her company duties the following morning.

The moment she returned, she encountered Trenton within the elevator.

Trenton immediately brightened with malicious energy. “Ms. Haynes, you’ve finally graced us with your presence! Did you thoroughly enjoy your overseas adventure? I’ve mentioned before, being CEO carries serious weight. You’ve vanished for ages, leaving the entire burden crushing Kaleb. Doesn’t guilt consume you?”

To hide her pregnancy, Gabriela had told the company she was abroad for market research — but she’d actually gone to her mother’s hometown to deliver her baby.

Gabriela arched an eyebrow with calculated precision. “Mr. Diaz, what makes you assume I was indulging in pleasure?”

Trenton responded swiftly, “Our company focuses primarily on domestic markets, with minimal activity abroad. What kind of market research could take half a year, huh?”

His aggression blazed openly, apparently having forgotten his previous humiliation.

The elevator reached the fifth floor precisely then.

Gabriela smiled with elegant composure. “If you have any questions about my work, please address them during our upcoming meeting.”

After speaking, Gabriela dismissed his reaction entirely and strode directly to her office.

There, she discovered Kaleb awaiting her arrival.

“Gabriela, welcome back.”

After a brief exchange, Gabriela instructed her secretary to arrange a meeting. During the gathering, Gabriela faced renewed attacks from Marie’s devoted supporters.

They branded her young, reckless, and self-indulgent.

Gabriela offered her explanation. "I traveled abroad to conduct market research and explore new business opportunities, though I also took a few personal days for rest."

The Haynes Group specialized in wedding coordination and major event planning. Gabriela expressed her ambition to capture the GD Fashion Week planning contract.

Trenton's sneer cut through the room. "Ms. Haynes, you excel at shirking responsibility and crafting convenient excuses."

Gabriela replied evenly, "I'll pursue this project with complete dedication." She refused to squander energy battling their petty accusations.

After enduring half a day of contentious meetings, Gabriela coordinated future assignments with Kaleb.

The moment lunch hour arrived, Gabriela rushed toward home.

The baby required feeding, and she needed to return for nursing.

As soon as she stepped out of the building, she spotted a familiar vehicle positioned across the plaza. Gabriela froze momentarily.

Wesley emerged from the car, crossing to her in determined strides.

Gabriela immediately produced a flawless smile. "Mr. Moss, what draws you here?"

Wesley studied her intently. "I came for you."

In reality, he had learned of Gabriela's return yesterday but had restrained himself from seeking her out.

He wanted to discover whether she would contact him first.

Predictably, she hadn't initiated any communication, exactly as before.

Gabriela smiled until her expression nearly cramped. "Your schedule stays impossibly busy. How do you find the time..."

"You understand perfectly why." Wesley cut through her words, pinning her with an intense stare. "Stop pretending ignorance."

Gabriela couldn't bear meeting his gaze.

Her chest constricted painfully. Her baby boy was hungry, and she urgently needed to return for Truett's feeding.

She laughed nervously, redirecting the conversation. "Mr. Moss, urgent matters await me at home. I really must leave."

Wesley examined her carefully and couldn't suppress a derisive sound.

He had ached for her throughout the past six months, often lying sleepless or losing his appetite, which had resulted in some weight loss.

Yet she had abandoned him for such an extended period and somehow managed to gain healthy weight.

Though she appeared more radiant now, it didn't diminish his blazing fury.

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A sudden, reckless thought flared in Wesley's mind.

He felt an urge to keep Gabriela close, to hide her away where no one else could reach her. He wanted her world to revolve solely around him.

But just as quickly as it came, the thought scattered like smoke.

Wesley, ever composed and unfailingly courteous, would never impose, especially when Gabriela's heart clearly held no space for him.

Sensing the quiet stretch between them, Gabriela offered a brief farewell before slipping into the car she'd booked in advance.

She really needed to get her own car. This constant back-and-forth between home and the office was wearing thin.

After returning home and feeding her baby, Gabriela lingered for a moment, savoring the quiet, before reluctantly heading back to the office.

She and Kaleb spent the afternoon polishing a proposal before heading to meet with a representative from GD Fashion Week.

Though the Haynes Group was modest in size, it had a solid reputation, having successfully organized several well-regarded domestic fashion shows.

And Gabriela, always strategic, had offered competitive rates sharp enough to pique the interest of GD Fashion Week's representative, Addie Larson.

"Miss Haynes, I'll present your proposal at our meeting and get back to you as soon as we reach a decision," Addie said with a professional smile.

“Thank you, Ms. Larson,” Gabriela replied.

Once the meeting wrapped up, Gabriela felt a flicker of confidence. The profit margin on the project wasn’t much, but the opportunity to step into the international market was worth every concession. Landing this deal could open doors to bigger contracts.

But by the third day, that optimism came crashing down.

Gabriela froze when she received Addie’s polite but firm rejection.

“Sorry, Miss Haynes,” Addie said. “We’ve decided to go with a partner who’s a better fit for this project. Hopefully, we can work together another time.”

The words stunned Gabriela.

Addie had seemed genuinely impressed with her proposal, and Gabriela was certain no other company of Haynes Group’s size could have matched the terms she’d offered.

Someone must have swooped in and stolen the deal, but who could it be?

Keeping her voice steady, Gabriela asked, “Ms. Larson, if you don’t mind me asking, which company did your team decide to partner with?”

The answer hit her like a slap. It was the Apex Group.

For a moment, Gabriela just stared at her phone in disbelief. Wesley? Of all people, why him?

When the call ended, frustration welled up inside her like a storm she couldn’t contain.

She had sworn during a board meeting that she would land the GD Fashion Week project.

Noticing her distress, Kaleb spoke gently, trying to ease the sting. “It’s okay. We’ll find another business partner. And our project with Bradley is almost wrapped up. Once the final payment is received next month, the executives will have no reason to criticize you.”

But Gabriela knew it wasn’t enough. As the CEO who had all but vanished right after taking charge, she needed more accomplishments to establish her presence in the company.

“Uncle Kaleb, I will speak with Mr. Moss,” she said, her tone sharp with resolve.

Kaleb blinked, surprised. “Do you really think there’s a chance?”

“There is,” Gabriela replied with quiet certainty. “He was my boss once. Maybe there’s still some goodwill left.”

For Apex Group, the GD Fashion Week project was barely a blip on the radar.

For her, it was everything.

Once her mind was set, Gabriela headed to Apex Group that very afternoon.

Billy greeted her in the lobby and guided her to the reception room.

“Miss Haynes, please wait here for a moment,” he said politely.

A faint flush colored her cheeks. “Billy, you can just call me Gabriela.”

But Billy only offered a practiced smile. “You’re the CEO of Haynes Group now; it’s only proper I address you as Miss Haynes.”

In truth, she was someone Wesley valued, and Billy made sure to treat her with care.

The hours dragged by as Gabriela waited, her confidence slowly eroding with the setting sun.

It was almost dusk when the quiet hum of the building was broken by the sound of footsteps.

Wesley's stride carried an air of quiet dominance, each step deliberate.

Listening to those steady steps approach, Gabriela felt a flicker of unease.

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What made her think he'd give her the project?

Was it because he had confessed his feelings more than once?

Or because, back when she worked in sales here, she'd helped him seal that nearly impossible deal with Mason?

She drew in a slow breath, steeling herself. If this meeting went south, she would leave without another word.

Then the door opened, and there he was. Wesley's gaze found her instantly.

It was late October, the air just starting to sharpen with the bite of autumn. Gabriela stood in the room in a pale pink suit and short skirt, layered with a light gray trench coat, looking radiant and composed.

Wesley couldn't ignore it. After six months away, Gabriela carried herself with a quiet maturity that made his pulse spike if he let his gaze linger too long. He forced himself to look away, his tone cool and detached. "Miss Haynes, what brings you here?"

His voice wasn't as sharp as she'd feared. Gabriela drew in a steadying breath to compose herself. "Mr. Moss, I came to ask if you'd consider letting me handle the GD Fashion Week project. I can trade it for another deal if you'd like."

A low, amused sound slipped from Wesley. "And what project does the Haynes Group have that could possibly interest me?"

His words were sharp, but Gabriela held her ground, her voice calm, almost pleading. "That project is nothing to Apex—"

"You want it that badly?" Wesley cut in, his voice dropping, steady and deep.

Gabriela nodded firmly. "Yes."

“Unfortunately, I’m not interested in any of your company’s projects.” With unhurried movements, Wesley lowered himself onto the sofa, crossing one leg over the other with casual authority. “But you can offer me something else.”

Her brows knit slightly. “Then, what do you want, Mr. Moss?”

His eyes swept over her, his tone deceptively relaxed. “You.”

Gabriela froze, clutching her coat tighter around her as though it could shield her from his gaze. “Mr. Moss, you know I don’t have romantic feelings for you. You can’t force me to—”

“That’s not what I had in mind.” A dry scoff escaped him. “I just want you to come work for me. Be my personal secretary, and the project is yours.”

Her mind stalled, shock rendering her momentarily speechless. “But why?” Wesley had no shortage of capable staff. Tessa alone was among the sharpest in the industry. Why her?

His lips curved, calm but deliberate. “I’m very satisfied with your cooking.”

Gabriela blinked, momentarily thrown, unable to mask her surprise.

Was that all she was to him? A cook?

She was completely fine with cooking for him, but balancing her company duties with a child at home made the prospect daunting. It would be asking too much of her.

After a pause, she finally spoke. "Mr. Moss, I can take the role, but only part-time. As the CEO of my own company, I must maintain some dignity amongst my employees."

Wesley arched an eyebrow, waiting for her to continue.

"I can assist you as a personal secretary, but only after work hours. Would that be acceptable to you?" she added carefully.

He considered her for a moment, then nodded. "Very well."

He extended his hand, enveloping hers in a firm, warm grip. "Welcome aboard."

Gabriela forced a tight, polite smile, her hand stiff in his.

"Perfect timing," he said with a mischievous grin. "I'm about to head out for dinner. Join me."

Reluctantly, Gabriela followed him to a restaurant.

This time, Wesley hadn't reserved a private room. He had chosen the main hall instead.

Whether by design or sheer mischief, nearly every dish he ordered was packed with celery and onions.

Even the fish soup came with a generous sprinkle of cilantro.

Gabriela had to remove the ingredients he didn't like for him.

Her worry for her baby at home made her speed up.

She quickly stripped every stalk of celery from the beef.

Wesley, seemingly satisfied, lifted his fork, ready to eat.

Out of nowhere, a young woman appeared beside their table. "Miss Haynes? What a coincidence running into you here!"

Gabriela froze mid-motion.

Of all days, on her very first stint as Wesley's part-time secretary, she had been caught red-handed by her own employee.

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Gabriela had once debated several executives and won with her argument that women's work performance was no less than men's. That was why this young employee revered her so deeply.

Now the employee stared in surprise at the mountain of celery beside Gabriela. She dropped to a whisper, "Ms. Haynes, you don't eat celery?"

Gabriela was unsure how to respond. She spotted Wesley across from her lifting a piece of beef with his fork. Without thinking, she reached out and smacked his hand.

Wesley's fork clattered to the table.

Gabriela swept the beef onto her plate, her voice sharp with complaint. "You were supposed to remove what I don't like. Look — there's still celery all over it!"

The employee's attention snapped to Wesley.

He radiated an almost dangerous handsomeness, his presence commanding the entire space. When Gabriela and Wesley had sat together earlier, she had seemed diminished beside him. The employee could barely summon the courage to meet his gaze.

Yet here he was, supposedly Gabriela's newly hired assistant.

The employee burst out, "Ms. Haynes, you're incredible — having such a gorgeous assistant."

Wesley let out a snort. He folded his arms and watched Gabriela with lazy amusement.

Ice crawled up Gabriela's spine.

After the employee finished her excited chatter with Gabriela, she departed with a spring in her step.

The smile playing at Wesley's lips made Gabriela's pulse stutter. She offered a soft explanation. "Mr. Moss, I've just assumed the CEO position. Being seen doing side work wouldn't look professional."

Not only would it shatter her image before her employee, but it would also undermine her authority.

Wesley leaned closer to her. "So I'm your assistant?"

“Absolutely not!” Gabriela’s tone turned syrupy with flattery. “I’ll always respect you — you’re the big boss.”

Gabriela had intended to appease him, but something in her words triggered his displeasure. His expression darkened like storm clouds.

An uneasy tension hung over them.

Wesley ate with deliberate slowness, while Gabriela fidgeted with urgency to return home, constantly stealing glances at her watch.

Wesley’s frown deepened. His voice turned glacial. “Gabriela, this is still your working time. Neglecting your duties during work hours — don’t you want that project anymore?”

Gabriela hastily pocketed her phone, not daring another distraction.

Wesley released a soft snort, and only then did his expression thaw slightly.

In the following days, Gabriela trailed Wesley to dinner after work, arriving home well past dark.

Sometimes Truett had already finished his formula and drifted to sleep, leaving Gabriela to pump extra milk alone.

This exhausting routine stretched through an entire week.

That evening, after dinner, Gabriela pressed Wesley eagerly about when they could finalize the project.

Wesley remained silent, pinching the bridge of his nose with visible discomfort. "I've been battling insomnia lately. Sleep keeps eluding me."

Gabriela's concern flared immediately. "Is your heart condition acting up again? Have you seen a doctor?"

"You're worried about me?" Wesley studied her face. "Stay with me tonight."

At those words, Gabriela's fork crashed to the floor.

Thankfully, they had reserved a private room, so no one witnessed their conversation.

She stammered desperately, "Mr. Moss, we're... we're just employer and employee. This crosses every line."

Wesley savored her panicked expression, finding it particularly entertaining. “If you don’t come over tonight,” he threatened with mock seriousness, “you can abandon all hopes for the project.”

Hearing this ultimatum, Gabriela gathered her resolve. “Fine. I’ll come over.” She comforted herself with the thought that it was no big deal — after all, they had shared a bed before.

She added, “But first, I need to return home. I want to collect some clothes and personal items.”

Wesley offered, “I can drive you.”

“No need!” Gabriela replied hastily. “You’re far too busy. I can summon a cab myself.”

Wesley fixed his gaze on Gabriela, his words deliberate and measured. “I’m not busy.”

“Very well then.” Since Wesley insisted, Gabriela didn’t dare protest further.

## Chapter 340

After dinner, he drove her home.

Upon reaching Rosemont Gardens, Gabriela bolted from the vehicle. “Mr. Moss, please wait here for just a moment. I’ll be lightning fast.”

Wesley arched an eyebrow. "It's been ages since I've seen Ken and Farley. Since I'm already here, I might as well go in with you and say hello."

Gabriela was speechless.

When did Wesley get so familiar with Ken and Farley?

Yet she couldn't refuse him and managed only a strained smile as she invited him inside.

Fortunately, she had already texted from the car, instructing Farley to take Truett upstairs immediately to avoid Wesley.

Inside the living room, Gabriela murmured, "Mr. Moss, please make yourself comfortable. I'll grab my clothes and be right back."

Wesley settled onto the sofa with practiced ease.

Ken appeared with freshly brewed coffee, the rich aroma filling the space between them.

Wesley lifted the cup to his lips, then froze mid-sip.

His gaze locked onto a tiny bowl adorned with cheerful cartoon animals, a miniature spoon resting beside it on the coffee table.

His eyes swept the room methodically.

There — draped across the opposite sofa — lay a small baby bib, its soft fabric unmistakably designed for an infant.

Feigning casual interest, he rose and wandered a few steps.

The trash bin revealed a used diaper.

The diaper still carried the faint scent of baby powder. Wesley frowned, lost in thought.

Meanwhile, Gabriela raced upstairs and burst into the bedroom.

Truett wailed in Farley's arms, his tiny face flushed red with hunger and frustration. Tears streaked down his chubby cheeks in endless streams. The moment he spotted Gabriela, his cries shifted into desperate reaching — little fingers grasping for the comfort only his mother could give.

Gabriela swept Truett into her arms, pressing a tender kiss to his damp cheek. Her voice dropped to an urgent whisper. “Farley, I need to feed him. Mr. Moss is downstairs — please keep him occupied.”

Farley nodded and slipped out.

Gabriela quickly locked the door and began unbuttoning her shirt with practiced efficiency.

The moment Truett caught the familiar scent of milk, he nuzzled eagerly against her, latching on like a hungry kitten. Soft, contented sounds filled the quiet room — sweet music to Gabriela’s ears.

Warmth flooded her chest as she gazed down at her son. She made a silent promise to herself: whatever it took, she would earn enough money to give Truett every happiness this world could offer.

Farley descended the stairs with careful, measured steps and offered Wesley a polite smile. “Mr. Moss, it’s quite late. What brings you by tonight?”

Wesley’s response carried the weight of authority. “Gabriela and I are collaborating on an important project. We’ll need to travel for business soon, so I drove her home to collect her things.”

The words “business trip” hit Farley like cold water. His expression shifted. Though Gabriela sometimes used formula, several days away from home could prove difficult for both mother and child.

Wesley seemed to read his concern. “Don’t worry, it’s only a short trip to the neighboring city. Close enough that returning won’t be a problem if needed.”

Farley’s shoulders relaxed a fraction.

Then he noticed Wesley’s attention had shifted to the coffee table. Those sharp eyes lingered on the tiny bowl with the focus of a detective examining evidence. Farley’s brief relief evaporated instantly.

Wesley’s voice carried deceptive casualness. “Farley, is there a baby living here?”

Farley’s mind went completely blank.

Gabriela had never prepared him for this scenario. How could he possibly respond?

Wesley’s gaze sharpened to a razor’s edge. “Is it that hard to answer?”

Another thing he couldn’t understand was why Gabriela was taking so long; she had supposedly gone upstairs only to pack a few clothes.

Wesley rose with fluid grace. “Well, if you can’t discuss it, I’ll simply ask Gabriela directly.”

He began moving toward the staircase with determined purpose.