

His kiss 351

Chapter 351

Before Billy could look into what Gabriela had done in the past few days, Delia had already taken the initiative to call Wesley and inform him about Gabriela's visit to Myah.

"Miss Haynes came over the other day," Delia reported. "She clung to Ms. Espinoza like she was drowning, crying her eyes out."

A cold weight tightened in Wesley's chest. "Why?"

"I couldn't say. Mr. Williams kept me at a distance. I couldn't hear what they were saying."

Wesley narrowed his eyes. "Fine. From now on, if anything happens with Myah, you come to me immediately."

"Understood, Mr. Moss!" Delia's answer was quick, almost eager.

The line went dead. Wesley moved to the large picture window, the city's lights bleeding into the glass. Something flickered behind his sharp, controlled expression before settling into a look of cold exhaustion.

A firm knock broke the silence. Billy stepped in. “Mr. Moss, I’ve got the details. In the past seven days, Miss Haynes not only visited Myah but also made a stop at the Williams Group. Later, Stewart rushed her to the hospital.”

The chaos Stewart had stirred up that day still lingered in the company’s halls. It hadn’t taken much digging, just a few pointed questions, to pull the story into the light.

“Why did she need to go to the hospital?” Wesley asked, his tone clipped. “Was she sick?”

“I don’t know,” Billy sighed. “But Miss Haynes was only there for half a day before she left. Didn’t seem too serious.”

He paused before adding, “She also went to the Williams Group today. She was helping Stewart with some kind of model.”

A flicker of restlessness stirred in Wesley’s chest. He waved Billy off, his voice low. “Got it. You can go.”

What was the link between Myah and Stewart? And why, all of a sudden, was Gabriela orbiting so close to him?

Then he remembered something — the accessibility software for the visually impaired.

Six years ago, the Williams Group had poured millions into developing that groundbreaking program. Back then, their entire circle had laughed behind Stewart's back, calling him a fool for throwing money at what they swore was a doomed project.

Yes, there were millions of blind people worldwide, but how many could afford high-end tech like that?

Developing the software alone had been like climbing an unscalable wall; even basic braille data entry and translation nearly broke the project from the start. And yet, Stewart had pushed forward, shutting out every objection, finding the money, and gambling everything on its success.

Was it for Myah? Or... was Gabriela the reason?

Wesley forced a steady breath as he felt a heaviness in his chest.

He hoped the truth was far from what he had imagined.

Meanwhile, in Stewart's office, Gabriela had just completed the delicate repairs on the model. Her craftsmanship was so precise that not a single fracture betrayed where the damage had been.

"You never let me down," Stewart said, his tone smooth with approval. "I've made up my mind: the city plaza project will be done in collaboration with the Haynes Group."

Gabriela's smile was bright, polished. "That's great. Thank you for choosing us."

"By the way, are you free this afternoon?" he asked casually, though his gaze was sharp. "We're launching a new product: reading lamps for the blind. Could you bring Myah along? Think of it as a little favor."

Gabriela had no reason to decline. "Sure, sounds good."

The reading lamp was a niche product, high-end by nature, yet to drive awareness of the software, the Williams Group had kept the price surprisingly low.

At the launch, the venue buzzed with quiet excitement, cameras flashing like restless fireflies. Erik stood at the edge of the crowd, hands tucked into his pockets, calculating the staggering cost behind that software.

He remembered the early days. The desperate hunt for braille books, the endless hours spent borrowing, scanning, and cataloging, each step feeling like a secret operation no one outside the team would ever understand.

After every line of braille was digitized, they faced the next impossible task: translating it into plain text that sighted users could comprehend.

The sheer manpower, the sleepless nights, the relentless pressure had all been an investment beyond any monetary value. And now? Now the product was priced so low that recovering even a fraction of that investment seemed like a distant dream.

Stewart had invested so much money and time into it because he had once accepted a model from Gabriela.

Erik's jaw tightened. The model, despite its exceptional craftsmanship, wasn't worth the price Stewart had willingly paid.

"Erik."

A voice cut clean through his thoughts. Startled, Erik blinked and turned, pulled abruptly back into the present as Stewart's steady gaze locked on him.

"Mr. Williams? What are you doing here?" Erik asked, surprise flickering across his face.

Stewart rarely attended events like this in person.

"I brought Gabriela and Myah along to take a look," Stewart replied evenly. He guided Myah toward Erik. "She's here as our ambassador. Make sure someone takes her onstage later." He smiled as he gently led Myah away.

Gabriela followed, staying close, patiently explaining the lamp's features to her. Myah was quick to learn. She soon figured out how to use the lamp.

By the time she stepped onstage, lamp in hand, she handled the demonstration with surprising confidence, highlighting its many benefits as though she'd been doing it for years.

From below the stage, Stewart's gaze lingered. "Myah is remarkably sharp," he remarked. "If it weren't for her eyesight, she'd be an extraordinary young woman."

The comment made Gabriela's chest tighten. Allan used to say the very same thing, his voice full of quiet pride.

The memory of him flickered, sharp and sudden, and her smile wavered just slightly.

For three days straight, Gabriela stayed by Myah's side as she helped promote the lamp.

By the fourth day, when the flurry of promotional events finally concluded, Gabriela was drained to the bone, while Myah, her cheeks flushed with excitement, radiated happiness.

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Ever since Allan's death, Myah had shut herself away, refusing to step beyond the safety of her home.

Reuniting with Gabriela felt like breathing after drowning — a quiet rebirth that gave her a reason to keep moving forward.

But the past few days with Myah had left Gabriela buried under a mountain of neglected work. She spent two full days at the office, locked in meetings and paperwork, trying to catch up.

That afternoon, Stewart showed up in her office.

Gabriela lifted her head from the stack of documents strewn across her desk, her expression softening into a radiant smile. “Stewart! Aren’t you busy with the city plaza project? How did you manage to sneak away?”

Her easy smile captivated Stewart for a moment. He replied, “Weren’t you planning to visit Myah today? I’m free. I could come with you.”

As she watched Stewart’s eagerness, Gabriela remembered Myah suggesting he had feelings for her — a possible reason for his heavy investment in the reading lamps for the blind. Her smile stayed in place, but something in her voice cooled, a faint distance slipping between them. “No need. I’m swamped. I’ll go another time.”

The air shifted. Stewart’s brows knit together, his usually steady gaze unsettled. He remembered the depth of Gabriela’s feelings for Allan — how intensely she had once cared for him, and how fiercely she had cherished Myah. It was almost like the girl was her own family.

Now that fragments of those memories were trickling back, why was she avoiding her?

A single name appeared in Stewart's thoughts: Wesley. Could Gabriela be putting Wesley above Myah now?

After seeing Stewart off, Gabriela went home to take her son to the hospital for his vaccination.

The little boy was braver than most. He didn't shed a single tear as the needle went in, earning admiring praise from the nurses.

But once they returned to the car, the delayed sting hit him, and his wails finally broke free.

Gabriela was torn between amusement and helplessness. No matter how she soothed him, Truett's sobs wouldn't stop. In the end, she had to ask Farley to step out of the car so she could nurse him.

Only then did Truett's cries subside, his tiny fists relaxing as he nursed himself to sleep.

Gabriela gazed down at his tear-streaked face, her heart aching with tenderness. She brushed his cheek lightly with her fingertip. "From now on, it's just the two of us, building our life together."

As for Wesley... she could only apologize, because she could not return his feelings.

They were just pulling into their neighborhood when Farley, hands on the wheel, spoke up. “Gabriela, Mr. Moss’s car is parked over there.”

Sure enough, at the gates stood Wesley. His tall, commanding figure was impossible to miss.

The moment her car slowed to a stop, Wesley was already striding toward her. Gabriela’s breath caught. With Truett still nestled in her arms, her heart plummeted.

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Wesley knocked on the car window. “Gabriela, we need to talk.”

Gabriela’s heart gave a nervous jolt.

How could she possibly have this conversation while holding a child in her arms?

As Truett grew, his little face had begun to resemble a miniature version of Wesley rather than Brenden.

Of course, she knew that was because Wesley and Brenden were cousins. It made sense that Brenden’s child would somewhat resemble Wesley.

But how could she explain that to Wesley?

She couldn't reveal who the child's father was to him.

Wesley rapped on the car window again, his voice firmer this time. "Gabriela, get out of the car!"

Gabriela drew in a steady breath.

She made her peace with it — if he learned about her child, so be it. She would deny any connection between the child and Brenden until the very end. The Moss family couldn't simply take her child away, could they?

Lowering the window slightly, she tried one last excuse. "Mr. Moss, I'm not feeling well today. Can we talk tomorrow?"

His tone sharpened with impatience. "Get out of the car."

Gabriela shut her eyes, bracing herself for whatever storm was about to come. She had just placed her hand on the door handle when Tessa suddenly came hurrying over.

"Gabriela, thank you for helping me look after the baby today." Tessa smiled, reaching out to take Truett into her arms before greeting Wesley politely.

Wesley hadn't expected Gabriela to be with a child. The sight caught him off guard, and his gaze instinctively lingered. He could only see the back of the boy's head, but something in him stirred with unexplainable urgency.

He stepped forward. "This child—"

"Mr. Moss." Gabriela quickly cut him off, her voice soft but firm. "The baby is asleep. Please don't wake him."

Tessa offered a gentle smile. "Mr. Moss, I'll take the baby inside. You two can talk."

Wesley pulled his attention away from the boy, though reluctance flickered in his expression.

Gabriela's heart, which had only just settled, began to race again.

She didn't want to discuss anything with Wesley — certainly not now.

Once Tessa and Farley had left with the child, Wesley stepped closer to her, his expression darkening. "Gabriela, you owe me an answer."

Gabriela pretended not to understand, avoiding his eyes. “What do you mean?”

Wesley set his hands firmly on her shoulders. “Before I went abroad, you promised you’d wait for me.”

“Yes, I waited for you to come back.” Gabriela’s lips curved into a smile, her eyes narrowing like crescent moons. “Mr. Moss, about the project you promised me — can we sign it now?”

The air grew heavy, silence pressing in until it felt frozen.

Wesley slowly let go of her, his expression clouded. He began pacing, agitation showing in every step.

Gabriela stood still, not daring to make a sound.

Seeing her unwillingness to engage, Wesley’s interest in pressing further waned. His tone flattened. “Bring the contract to the GD Fashion Week venue tomorrow.”

Without another word, he turned and slid into his car.

Gabriela kept her head bowed until the sound of the engine faded down the street. Only then did she lift her gaze toward the direction he had gone. With a weary sigh, she walked back to the villa, feeling drained to her very core.

Tessa greeted her at the door and returned the baby to her arms. “When Ken called me for help, I was caught off guard. Gabriela, I can’t help but notice... Truett looks more and more like Mr. Moss. What exactly is going on between you two?”

Gabriela gave a quick laugh, cutting her off. “Tessa, you know how greedy I am. If Truett really were Mr. Moss’s son, don’t you think I’d be demanding a fortune from him by now?”

Tessa exhaled softly. She could tell Gabriela was using humor to evade the topic, so she chose not to press the issue.

Her own life was already in pieces — who was she to lecture anyone?

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That night, Gabriela expected to lie awake, her mind restless.

Yet with Truett nestled against her, the faint milky scent of the baby soothing her senses, her worries melted away. Sleep claimed her quickly.

The carefree Gabriela — the one who could sleep her troubles off — returned. Since she had made her stance clear to Wesley, she assumed there would be no more entanglements between them.

That suited her just fine.

As long as she kept Truett out of the Mosses' sight, she believed she could raise him without interference.

Lately, after work, she often visited Myah, trying to persuade her to move into the villa.

But Myah, accustomed to her solitude, always refused.

Unable to convince her, Gabriela simply came by often, helping her tend the rose bushes that bloomed in the garden.

One afternoon, when Gabriela visited Myah again, Delia emerged with a tray of soup, cheerfully urging them to eat. Myah polished off two bowls without hesitation.

Delia beamed. "Miss Haynes, ever since you started visiting, Miss Espinoza has been noticeably more cheerful."

Myah smiled warmly. "I enjoy spending time with you, Gabriela."

Gabriela patted her gently on the head, returning the smile. "If you moved in with me, we could be together every day."

Myah shook her head firmly. “No need.”

She loved being with Gabriela but refused to become a burden.

That evening, Stewart stopped by, carrying a special reading lamp designed for the visually impaired.

Myah switched it on immediately, sliding her Braille pages beneath the glow.

The machine scanned her work and then began to play it back audibly.

It was a song — full of energy and hope, brimming with optimism.

Gabriela leaned closer, eyes widening in surprise. “I had no idea you could write songs, Myah. That’s incredible!”

A blush spread across Myah’s cheeks. “Thank you, Gabriela.”

Stewart joined in warmly. “It’s really impressive.”

Their laughter and easy chatter filled the garden, but Gabriela's phone suddenly buzzed. It was Kaleb, calling about a detail in the GD Fashion Week contract that needed her confirmation.

She stepped outside to answer, her voice drifting faintly back as she moved away.

Left behind, Stewart intended to help Myah scan two more Braille articles. But Myah stopped him abruptly. The innocent smile she usually wore slipped away.

"Mr. Williams, please keep your distance from Gabriela."

The bluntness of her words made him falter. He raised a brow. "Myah, did you misinterpret something?"

Myah snorted and turned her head toward him. Though her eyes couldn't see, Stewart had the unsettling feeling that she was staring right through him.

It sent a chill down his back.

"You're always here with Gabriela. Do you think I don't know what you're after?"

Stewart let out a short laugh. "And what exactly do you think I'm after?"

His company had pressing issues waiting for him, yet he found himself coming here day after day, wasting precious hours with Gabriela. He wasn't even sure why. Could this young girl really see what he couldn't?

"You like Gabriela!" Myah declared without hesitation. "Don't deny it. You're in love with her!"

Stewart froze.

Did he like Gabriela? The thought had never fully occurred to him.

"Myah, you're mistaken," he said evenly.

"Anyway, I won't let Gabriela be with you," she replied calmly. "She belongs to my brother. No one can take her away."

She was only twenty, her voice soft and composed.

Yet in the fading daylight, Stewart felt an icy ripple down his spine.

This gentle girl carried something far darker — an unsettling obsession.

“Myah, I know your brother loved Gabriela, but he is gone. No matter how much it hurts, that’s the truth. You can’t stay trapped in the past forever.”

Myah shot back, “If it weren’t for my brother, Gabriela wouldn’t even be alive. Her life belongs to him! Even if he isn’t here anymore, she can only love him.”

Stewart glanced toward the setting sun, unease knotting in his chest.

Did Gabriela have any idea that Myah harbored such terrifying thoughts?

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Stewart masked his astonishment behind a playful grin. “What happens if Gabriela’s heart wanders to another man?”

“Impossible!” Myah’s voice rang with unwavering conviction. “Gabriela adores my brother beyond measure — no one else could ever capture her affection.”

Stewart smirked, his eyes gleaming with mischief. “Actually, Gabriela already belongs to Wesley now. She’s over your brother.”

“You’re fabricating lies!”

The mention of Wesley's name ignited a fierce rage within Myah. Her arm swept across the table in a violent arc, sending the reading lamp crashing to the floor, where it exploded into countless glittering fragments.

The thunderous crash drew Gabriela rushing into the room. She immediately seized Myah's trembling hand, her eyes scanning for injuries. "What just happened? Did you hurt yourself?"

"I'm perfectly fine, Gabriela." Myah pressed her palm against the fresh wound, her voice dropping to a whisper. "Mr. Williams never intended for this to happen. Please don't hold it against him."

Stewart's jaw dropped as he finally noticed the crimson drops trailing from Myah's palm.

"This wasn't my fault..." He began his protest, but Gabriela's disapproving frown silenced him before she turned to instruct Delia to retrieve the medical supplies for Myah's care.

Every person in the room gravitated toward Myah, leaving Stewart completely forgotten.

He stood there, stunned.

A young girl had thoroughly outmaneuvered him. Unbelievable.

Once they had successfully stemmed the flow of blood from Myah's wound, Gabriela's gaze settled on Stewart with unmistakable hostility as she observed Myah's ashen complexion.

Frustration coursed through Stewart's veins, particularly because Myah's continued defense of him made clearing his reputation impossible.

Deep into the evening hours, he drove Gabriela back to Rosemont Gardens in contemplative silence. Unable to contain himself any longer, he spoke up. "Myah's injury had nothing to do with me."

Gabriela offered a gentle nod. "I understand it was accidental. I harbor no resentment toward you."

Stewart's eyes rolled skyward in exasperation.

As Gabriela prepared to exit the vehicle, he quickly stepped out and caught her arm. "Gabriela, you must listen to what I'm saying. Myah's psychological condition appears unstable. You should consider taking her to see—"

A brilliant beam of light suddenly pierced the darkness around them.

Gabriela turned to discover a familiar vehicle positioned nearby.

That was Wesley's car.

Gabriela swiftly pulled her hand free from Stewart's grasp.

Wesley emerged from his vehicle and approached them with measured steps. His movements carried an air of refined grace, yet his expression remained frozen in displeasure, resembling a winter frost that made Gabriela feel uneasy.

Wesley's attention bypassed Stewart entirely, focusing solely on Gabriela. "Have you been pushing me away because of this man?"

Stewart's eyebrow arched upward with interest.

Despite the misunderstanding, he found the scenario rather entertaining.

He interjected smoothly, "Mr. Moss, I was merely concerned about Gabriela traveling home unaccompanied, so I offered to drive her back. Please don't jump to incorrect conclusions."

His explanation only deepened the shadows across Wesley's features.

Stewart positioned himself protectively in front of Gabriela. "Mr. Moss, if you have grievances to air, direct them toward me. Leave Gabriela out of this."

Gabriela remained positioned behind Stewart, maintaining her silence. She understood that Wesley's refined upbringing would never permit him to cause her physical harm.

Stewart was deliberately provoking the situation, yet she felt no inclination to offer clarifications.

Her only desire now was to sever all connections with the Moss family and ensure Truett remained permanently beyond their reach.

Wesley's penetrating stare remained fixed on Gabriela as he spoke with controlled composure. "Come here."

Gabriela abandoned her previous pattern of obedient compliance. She lowered her gaze and replied quietly, "Mr. Moss, exhaustion weighs heavily on me. I need to return home and rest."

With that, she pivoted and headed toward her villa.

Wesley moved to follow, but Stewart intercepted his path once again.

"Gabriela has demonstrated no romantic interest in your advances. Continuing this futile pursuit seems beneath your dignity."

Wesley studied Stewart for several tense moments before delivering his warning in an icy tone. "Maintain your distance from her."

“Gabriela doesn’t belong to you. You are in no position to dictate her choice of companions.”

Observing Wesley’s expression darken further, Stewart experienced a surge of triumphant satisfaction.

He finally grasped the motivation behind Myah’s earlier theatrical performance.

Stewart released a melodious whistle into the night air. “Unless you have pressing business to discuss, I’ll take my leave. Lurking outside Gabriela’s residence like this — particularly for a gentleman of your standing — creates quite the unsavory impression of a stalker.”

Wesley’s laughter emerged cold and sharp, then his hand suddenly pressed against his chest as he called out desperately, “Gabriela!”

Gabriela, who had nearly vanished into her villa, found herself powerless to ignore Wesley’s voice and turned around.

The sight of him clutching his chest transformed her expression into one of pure terror, and she rushed back without hesitation.

Her hands found his arm, steadying him. “What’s happening? Has your heart condition flared up again? Where did you put your medication?”

Wesley's voice was strained. "Inside the car."

Gabriela sprinted to retrieve the pills, her feet flying across the pavement, before she returned and pressed two tablets into his palm.

After Wesley swallowed the medication, he spoke with careful deliberation. "Given my current state, returning to the Moss Manor seems unwise. I have no desire to alarm Grandma and Miriam with my condition. My apartment would be more suitable."

Gabriela weighed his words carefully before responding, "I'll accompany you there."

The thought of allowing Wesley to face this alone filled her with unbearable anxiety.

Following a heart transplant, the specter of organ rejection haunted every moment, and Wesley's relentless work schedule — burning through nights like candles — only amplified the danger.

If another attack struck while he was alone...

Gabriela refused to entertain such terrifying possibilities. She wrapped her arm around Wesley's shoulders, guiding him into the vehicle before sliding in beside him. "Mr. Moss, promise me you'll prioritize rest and abandon these marathon work sessions."

Wesley settled into the seat's embrace, offering a subtle nod before his gaze drifted toward Stewart, who stood frozen.

Stewart observed the entire performance with his mouth agape, stunned into complete silence.

He had always believed Wesley possessed too much refinement and dignity to stoop to such theatrics.

Tonight had shattered every assumption.

Stewart collapsed into his own vehicle, drowning in waves of dejection.

After falling victim to Myah's cunning strategy, Stewart had attempted to mirror her tactics, only to watch Wesley surpass them both with masterful precision.

Damn it. He wasn't actually that stupid, was he?

Stewart's sour disposition persisted through the following dawn, casting shadows across his features even during the morning executive meeting.

Everyone at the Williams Group understood their leader's occasional vindictive streaks, competitive nature, and collection of peculiar interests — yet beneath these surface quirks lay a fundamentally fair-minded executive.

Never before had they witnessed such blatant displeasure radiating from his every gesture.

As the meeting dissolved, Erik walked over and ventured, "Mr. Williams, is anything wrong with the city plaza project?"

Stewart sank deeper into his chair's leather depths, his jaw clenched as he voiced the question that had tormented him throughout the sleepless hours.

"Erik, do you think I'm stupid?"

Erik's eyes widened in bewilderment. "Why would you ask that?"

"Skip the diplomatic dance." Stewart let out a snort. "Give me the unvarnished truth."

"Mr. Williams, your attention to detail, executive capabilities, and natural brilliance speak for themselves." Erik's assessment carried genuine conviction. "Williams Group's prosperity under your leadership provides irrefutable evidence."

Stewart absorbed this validation with visible relief.

Erik proceeded with careful curiosity. “Has someone made inappropriate comments in your presence?”

Stewart launched into a detailed recounting of yesterday’s encounter with Myah’s theatrical manipulation.

“Help me understand this situation — would Gabriela actually accept Myah’s version of events?”

“Whether Gabriela believes Myah’s performance remains unclear to me.” Erik’s expression grew contemplative and serious. “However, you might not recognize a crucial truth — you put too much weight on Gabriela’s opinion.”

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Erik’s insight took Stewart by surprise.

Stewart had never been one to engage in casual encounters, never placed much faith in something as ephemeral as love. During his college years, he had dated sporadically, only to discover that most women pursued his status rather than his character — the predictable chase grew tedious, prompting him to sever those hollow connections.

After assuming control of the company, he had courted a starlet. She presented herself as guileless yet harbored calculating ambitions beneath that innocent facade, relentlessly pressuring him to invest capital and leverage his influence until she achieved stardom. Nevertheless, she ultimately abandoned him for a fresh face in the industry.

The reality remained stark — he had never formed genuine emotional attachments to any woman who had crossed his path. They served merely as temporary diversions during moments of restlessness. Since none had ever offered authentic affection, their departures had always been swift and uncomplicated.

This marked the first occasion anyone had dared suggest he cared too much about a woman's opinion.

"Why don't you break it down for me? How exactly do I care so much about Gabriela?"

To Stewart, Gabriela — so youthful and naive — was unlike any mature woman he'd ever been with.

He cared for her? Impossible.

Erik leaned closer, his voice barely audible. "You must promise not to lose your temper."

Stewart cast him a sideways glance and laughed softly. "Very well."

Erik continued carefully, "When we first encountered Gabriela again, we were unaware of her memory loss. She declined to assist you with the model repair, and you concluded she had moved forward, erased Allan from her mind, which triggered your anger."

Stewart found that explanation insufficient. "In the past, Gabriela devoted herself completely to Allan — she would have sacrificed everything for his sake. I don't—"

"Of course I begrudge her seeking a new man after Allan's death. But her pretending that none of our shared history held any meaning? That is what infuriated me."

"That is precisely the problem!" Erik declared. "Mr. Williams, you and Gabriela never shared an intimate bond. Her romantic choices should be irrelevant to you. Why does her personal life provoke such a strong reaction in you?"

Stewart's body went rigid. Abruptly, he seized the book resting in his palm and delivered a sharp blow to Erik's forehead. "Have you lost your senses, addressing your employer with such insolence? Since when am I forbidden from caring?"

Erik massaged his wounded head, grumbling, "Gabriela doesn't belong to you. So what gives you the right to dictate her life?"

"Are you determined to challenge me further?" Stewart lifted the book once more, then suspended it mid-strike.

Six years earlier, he had willingly risked hundreds of millions for her benefit, funding the development of software with virtually no commercial promise. Now, because of her, he found himself outmaneuvered by a young woman. He truly knew very little about Gabriela. If anything, he remained merely the fool who had squandered a fortune on a worthless business venture.

Observing Stewart toss the book back onto his desk, Erik recognized that his words had finally penetrated his employer's defenses. He exhaled with profound relief. "Mr. Williams, you invest too

much emotional energy in Gabriela. When she fails to meet your expectations, disappointment consumes you. You are behaving completely unlike yourself today.”

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Stewart inquired, “How does this connect to Myah’s scheme against me?”

“Because you anticipated that Gabriela would trust your innocence, but she proved incapable of doing so, leaving you profoundly disappointed,” Erik elaborated. “Consider this carefully. You share no intimate history with Gabriela, so why should she extend her trust to you?”

Stewart’s jaw tightened with mounting frustration. Although Erik’s assessment rang true, why did his anger only intensify after hearing such a logical analysis?

“Then explain to me what is happening inside my head right now? And Wesley, who projects righteousness while harboring deception. I cannot digest this burning resentment!”

Erik cleared his throat. “Mr. Williams, the most constructive advice I can offer is for you to pay less attention to Gabriela.”

Stewart fixed him with a withering stare. “What exactly are you implying? Are you suggesting I possess less appeal than Wesley? That I cannot surpass him?”

Erik shook his head with desperate vigor.

He privately harbored that exact belief, but he would never voice such dangerous thoughts aloud.

Stewart's gaze drifted toward the intricate model of the deep-sea city positioned beside him.

Gabriela was simply a young woman who excelled at crafting miniature worlds. He could easily maintain his distance from her moving forward.

Regardless, he would never entangle himself with love — not during this lifetime.

Gabriela remained completely oblivious to the fact that she had condemned Stewart to a sleepless night of torment.

She had barely awakened when Wesley requested that she change her attire. "Today marks Miriam's sixty-first birthday. Come share dinner at the manor with me."

Gabriela felt genuinely startled. "Why didn't you inform me yesterday? I haven't purchased a gift."

"She initially expressed a preference for avoiding elaborate birthday celebrations," Wesley clarified. "The plan truly involves nothing more than preparing several delicious dishes and bringing everyone together for a shared meal. She wants to maintain simplicity and abandon any excessive ceremonial gestures."

Gabriela voiced her disagreement. "I should still acquire a gift."

Wesley volunteered to accompany her shopping, but Gabriela declined his offer.

Gabriela returned to her villa first.

After spending a full day separated from his mother, Truett erupted into tears the moment he detected the familiar milky fragrance surrounding her. Gabriela cradled and soothed him patiently, nursing him until the exhausted infant gradually surrendered to sleep.

She notified Farley of her evening plans at the Moss Manor and mentioned she might return quite late tonight.

Farley reassured her that he would take care of Truett.

Gabriela recalled Miriam occasionally mentioning morning neck stiffness, so she selected a therapeutic pillow designed for optimal comfort.

When she arrived at the manor, Wesley had not yet returned, so Gabriela presented the gift directly to Miriam.

“This pillow promotes better sleep quality and features memory foam technology. It provides exceptional comfort when resting,” Gabriela explained, feeling slightly self-conscious as though she were delivering a sales presentation.

Miriam radiated genuine joy, lavishing praise upon Gabriela’s considerate nature.

Loretta even expressed playful envy, requesting that Gabriela select something equally thoughtful for her birthday.

The two elder women engaged Gabriela in lengthy conversation, creating an atmosphere of warmth and genuine hospitality. Wesley soon stepped into the dining room with Myah.

Chapter 360

Miriam and Loretta showered Myah with devoted attention, insisting she occupy the seat directly beside them.

Upon hearing Gabriela’s voice, Myah hurried across the room toward her. “Gabriela, I want to sit beside you.”

Gabriela’s face brightened with warmth. “Of course, I can assist you with your meal.”

Myah nodded eagerly and settled into peaceful silence at Gabriela’s side.

Miriam chuckled with genuine amusement. "When did Myah develop such a strong attachment to Gabriela?"

Myah clasped Gabriela's hand with tender determination, offering simply, "I adore Gabriela."

Gabriela stroked her hair with gentle affection. "I'm quite fond of Myah as well."

Miriam and Loretta shared a meaningful glance across the room.

Wesley observed the touching scene with quiet contemplation.

Delia had briefed him regarding Myah's recent circumstances, and while Wesley found himself perplexed by Gabriela's sudden bond with the girl, he deliberately chose not to probe deeper out of respectful discretion.

As twilight deepened, additional guests began streaming through the manor doors.

Although Miriam served merely as a housekeeper, she had lovingly raised Wesley from childhood and commanded tremendous respect within the Moss family, drawing numerous guests bearing elaborate gifts.

Fiona made her anticipated appearance.

Both the Vasquez family and the Williams family dispatched their representatives carrying carefully selected offerings.

The arriving guests eventually occupied five generously appointed tables.

Gabriela and Myah took their places alongside Wesley at the prestigious main table, while Fiona brazenly positioned herself next to Loretta's welcoming side. This particular seating arrangement attracted persistent scrutiny from the assembled guests.

Gabriela especially, having secured the coveted billion-dollar contract with Alphacom Electronics, had established herself as a formidable presence within industry circles. Nevertheless, she remained unable to match someone like Fiona when considering social standing.

In their eyes, Gabriela would likely never surpass Fiona's inherent advantages.

Gabriela paid minimal attention to these calculating stares, periodically placing choice morsels onto Myah's plate with maternal care.

"You should nourish yourself properly as well."

Without warning, Wesley selected a tender piece of beef and placed it deliberately upon Gabriela's plate. Wesley's distinguished position transformed this simple gesture into something that appeared deeply intimate, igniting wild speculation among the watchful guests.

Gabriela found herself trapped in an uncomfortable predicament, uncertain whether consuming the offering would send an unintended message.

Myah suddenly leaned closer, whispering, "Gabriela, may I have that piece?"

Gabriela swiftly transferred the beef to Myah's waiting plate with obvious relief.

Fiona's eyes blazed with unmistakable jealousy, and she adopted a petulant expression, pleading, "Wesley, I desire some as well."

Her distant seating position rendered reaching the serving dish completely impossible.

Wesley maintained his composure, deliberately ignoring her request. Fiona experienced crushing embarrassment and directed a venomous glare toward Gabriela.

Gabriela released a weary sigh into the charged atmosphere.

Myah absorbed every nuance of the surrounding tension with acute awareness, bowing her head to consume the beef methodically. Some troubling thought crossed her mind, causing her delicate features to contort with visible distress, her entire demeanor darkening precipitously.

None of the adults noticed her left hand, which she had clenched beneath the table's edge with such desperate force that her fingernails carved painful crescents into her tender palm.