

His kiss 371

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Gabriela spun around and discovered Wesley half-sprawled across the sofa, his arm extending with labored effort toward the distant cup.

She hurried to his side. "Mr. Moss, would you like some water? Please, let me assist you."

Wesley regarded her with an expressionless gaze. "I thought you were departing. What brought you back?"

Gabriela was concerned about his condition and overlooked his frigid manner. "Are you okay? Shall I summon a physician to examine you?"

"That won't be necessary." Wesley released several coughs. "This condition has persisted for some time. Medication keeps it manageable."

Gabriela remained troubled, easing him into a comfortable position and helping regulate his breathing. "Beyond your heart, does any other discomfort plague you?"

Wesley raised his eyelids to observe her, his profound eyes harboring a mesmerizing magnetism.

Gabriela's pulse thundered beyond control, and she swallowed with difficulty, her composure crumbling.

Even after spending considerable time around Wesley, she remained powerless against his devastating appearance.

Wesley detected this reaction, and his lips curved with satisfaction.

She obviously cherished him yet maintained a facade of indifference.

Gabriela glanced up to catch Wesley's smile, though it dissolved instantly. She questioned whether her imagination had conjured it.

Wesley suppressed the corner of his mouth, appearing distressed. "I'm running a mild fever."

Gabriela immediately pressed her palm against his forehead to check for fever; his temperature felt normal. "Mr. Moss, are you truly unwell?"

Wesley fixed his gaze upon her, his obsidian eyes unblinking. "I feel dizzy, nauseated, and the urge to vomit overwhelms me."

He felt that awful, and yet his spirits seemed remarkably high.

Despite harboring some doubt, Gabriela tended to believe him due to his previously distant and stern character.

She retrieved a warm cloth to press against his forehead, her care thorough and precise.

Wesley observed her bustling movements, experiencing a melting sensation in his heart alongside a hint of frustration.

Since she clearly harbored feelings for him, why did she persist in rejecting his advances?

Gabriela tended to Wesley until the late hours, eventually succumbing to sleep beside the sofa.

When she stirred the following morning, she found herself nestled in Wesley's bed, bewildered by how circumstances had led to this.

She had arrived to repay a debt and establish clear boundaries between them.

Wesley studied her, offering a greeting accompanied by a smile. "Good morning, Gabriela."

His features possessed natural magnetism, and when he looked at her this way, he always appeared deeply enamored.

Gabriela responded, "Good morning."

Upon speaking, she noticed her lips felt numb, as though something had bitten them. She quickly traced her lips with her fingertips.

Wesley watched her gesture, his eyes darkening, requiring tremendous willpower to resist the urge to capture her mouth for another kiss.

He rose from the bed. "You're bound for the company today, correct? I'll drive you."

Gabriela remained somewhat disoriented. "Mr. Moss, has your condition improved?"

"Indeed." Wesley nodded. "With you beside me through the night, I experienced exceptional rest."

Though Wesley spoke with gravity, the implications were suggestive, and Gabriela's cheeks flushed crimson.

She hastily washed and changed her attire, realizing lateness threatened her schedule.

"Mr. Moss, I cannot prepare breakfast for you today. A meeting awaits me at nine-thirty."

“I’ll transport you to the company,” Wesley declared. “Billy has already arranged breakfast delivery within five minutes.”

Gabriela stood stunned.

So now he could embrace restaurant fare? No longer insisting on her cooking?

Wesley took the wheel himself, while Gabriela consumed her breakfast during the journey.

He cast a sideways glance at her. “Shouldn’t you feed me something since I still haven’t had my breakfast?”

Gabriela immediately offered him the bread.

Wesley chuckled softly. “How can I consume food while navigating traffic?”

Gabriela rolled her eyes before tearing off a piece of bread and guiding it to his mouth.

Wesley accepted it and complained, “I cannot eat without milk to accompany it.”

Gabriela instantly positioned the milk straw at his lips.

She fed him breakfast for the entire journey.

By the time they arrived at the Lakeshore Building, Wesley had nearly finished his meal.

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He expressed his contentment. "Thank you, Gabriela. That was a special breakfast."

Gabriela clenched her teeth in silent irritation.

As she exited the vehicle and advanced toward the entrance, Wesley called after her, "Gabriela, thank you for last evening. I haven't experienced such restful sleep in ages."

Gabriela struggled for an appropriate response, so she simply murmured an acknowledgment and fled swiftly into the building.

Not far away, Stewart positioned himself beside the roadside, sporting sunglasses with his hands buried in his pockets.

He sneered, "It appears Myah's sympathy-seeking tactics remain inadequate against Wesley's influence."

Erik lingered behind him, speaking in a hushed tone. "Mr. Williams, I have something to say, and I hope you won't hold it against me."

Stewart responded curtly, "Speak your mind."

Erik proceeded with caution. "As CEO of the Williams Group, you stand at the helm of a business empire. The corporation demands constant attention. Why do you conduct yourself like a stalker, perpetually trailing Gabriela? Such behavior reflects poorly upon the company's reputation."

Stewart struck Erik's forehead with his palm. "How dare you address your superior in such a manner!"

Erik cradled his head protectively. "You commanded me to speak freely."

Though Erik's observations stung with their bluntness, Stewart recognized their validity and soon retreated to his vehicle. "We're returning to the office immediately."

Gabriela arrived at the company, conducted her morning conference, then collaborated with Kaleb on the GD Fashion Show arrangements. Her secretary rapped against the door before entering. "Ms. Haynes, a young woman named Myah Espinoza demands an audience with you."

As the secretary delivered this news, Myah swept into the room clutching her white cane. “Gabriela.”

Gabriela dismissed both the secretary and Kaleb, then guided Myah toward the sofa seating. “What prompted this unexpected visit? Has Delia accompanied you?”

“No.” Myah wrenched her hand from Gabriela’s grasp, radiating agitation. “Gabriela, answer me truthfully — did Wesley transport you to the office this morning?”

Gabriela frowned. “Who told you that?”

“You’re not denying it, so it must be true.” Myah suddenly seized Gabriela’s sleeve with desperate intensity. “Have you abandoned all memory of my brother?”

“Of course not,” Gabriela offered gentle reassurance. “Allan was a kind soul. I will always remember him.”

“You’re lying!” Myah erupted in fury. “He perished merely five years ago, yet you’ve already transferred your affections elsewhere!”

Gabriela recoiled in shock. “What are you talking about?”

“I understand that my brother is gone, and you will live your own life. However, if you seek a fresh romantic beginning, it must never involve Wesley! He received my brother’s heart in a transplant, and now he pursues his beloved. Fuck him!”

Myah dissolved into hysterical weeping and shrieking.

Gabriela suddenly comprehended that Myah had completely misconstrued her relationship with Allan.

She clasped Myah’s hands with tender firmness, speaking with heartfelt sincerity. “Allan and I maintained only the deepest friendship. He regarded me as his sister — you’ve misinterpreted everything.”

Myah was stunned. “That cannot be possible! You were his romantic partner. I’ve always considered you family!”

“Myah, I cannot fathom why you believed I harbored romantic feelings for Allan, but I never pursued such a relationship with him.” Gabriela’s voice carried gentle conviction. “Furthermore, I serve as Wesley’s temporary secretary solely for a project. I will never become romantically involved with him. Yet this arrangement bears no connection to Allan whatsoever — do you comprehend?”

Myah’s emotional storm gradually subsided. “Are you speaking absolute truth? You’re not deceiving me?”

“I swear I am telling the truth.”

Having successfully calmed Myah's distress, Gabriela found herself overwhelmed with pressing responsibilities, so she contacted a reliable subordinate to escort Myah safely home.

Shortly thereafter, Stewart received Myah's telephone call, learning of her persuasion by Gabriela's explanations, which left him profoundly frustrated. Myah possessed dramatic tendencies, yet remained fundamentally naive, easily swayed by eloquent reasoning.

Even if Gabriela never cherished Allan romantically, Stewart was still irritated that she cared for Wesley.

He studied the deep-sea city architectural model for an extended period, suddenly conceiving a calculated strategy.

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Stewart rose from his chair and approached the model, his hand trembling slightly as he reached out to snap off a piece of it.

The destruction of something he cherished so deeply sent waves of pain through his chest, yet he forced himself to complete the act.

Wrestling with his inner turmoil, Stewart reached for his phone and dialed Gabriela's number.

"The model has suffered damage again. Would you be able to come and repair it?"

At that precise moment, Erik knocked and stepped through the doorway, his eyes immediately taking in the scene before him. A slight twitch played at the corner of his mouth as he processed what he witnessed.

His boss's behavior had grown increasingly erratic in recent weeks.

Gabriela arrived as the clock struck noon.

Confusion clouded her features as she examined the broken model. "Wasn't this just repaired a few days ago? How did it break so quickly?"

Stewart's voice carried a sharp edge as he sneered. "This creation bears your signature, yet the craftsmanship proves disappointingly fragile. Your after-sales support leaves much to be desired."

Erik remained stationed nearby, keeping his expression carefully neutral while his boss wove his shameless fabrication. His gaze remained fixed firmly on the floor beneath his feet.

Gabriela maintained her characteristic patience and grace. "Please don't let this upset you, Mr. Williams. I promise to have it restored to perfect condition today."

Fortune smiled upon her — she still possessed adequate materials from her previous supply run. She consulted the original blueprint and immediately immersed herself in the delicate restoration work.

Stewart gestured for Erik to depart, then settled into a nearby chair, propping his chin on his hand as he observed her meticulous efforts.

Gabriela had lost some weight recently, yet her skin retained its luminous quality. The way she bent over her work, completely absorbed in the task, possessed an unexpected magnetism.

Stewart found himself recalling Erik's earlier observations.

Throughout his thirty-three years of existence, Gabriela stood alone as the woman who had managed to capture his relentless attention.

Six years had passed since she first approached him, clutching a model in her trembling hands, her voice earnest as she pleaded for his consideration. She had exhausted herself explaining the profound benefits of developing software for the visually impaired.

Back then, her youth made her appear almost childlike in his experienced eyes. Yet every detail of that encounter remained etched in his memory with startling clarity, and somehow, she had succeeded in swaying his decision.

A sudden curiosity seized Stewart — he wondered desperately how Gabriela perceived him within the depths of her heart.

At that exact moment, she lifted her head and met his intense stare. "What compels you to watch me so intently?"

Her eyes sparkled with crystalline clarity, framed by luxurious dark lashes. Her gaze seemed to pierce straight through to his soul, causing Stewart's heart to stutter against his ribs.

He quickly diverted his gaze, stumbling over his hastily constructed excuse. "I was observing your repair techniques."

Beyond Gabriela's line of sight, he pressed his palm discreetly against his racing heart.

The thunderous rhythm betrayed him completely.

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This was the moment of truth.

He found himself falling for Gabriela in spite of himself.

Gabriela devoted more than two hours to reconstructing the building's damaged part with painstaking precision.

"Mr. Williams, if you require nothing further, I shall take my leave." As Gabriela gathered her remaining supplies, she offered a gentle reminder. "Please remember your commitment. Once the pier's city plaza reaches completion, all planning activities must flow exclusively to the Haynes Group."

The exceptionally generous terms Stewart had offered explained Gabriela's willingness to respond to his summons without hesitation.

As Stewart watched her prepare to depart, he blurted out, "Allow me to express my gratitude by treating you to dinner."

"That won't be necessary," Gabriela replied, her smile radiating warmth. "The contract you've provided serves as the most meaningful expression of thanks possible."

With those words, she vanished through the doorway.

The office transformed into a hollow shell of emptiness.

Stewart moved to the exact spot where Gabriela had worked, and her delicate fragrance still lingered in the surrounding air.

Memories of their initial encounter flooded his consciousness with overwhelming force.

She had been merely sixteen then, as fragile and precious as a spring blossom dancing in the gentle breeze, inspiring an almost protective urge to shield her beneath glass from the world's harsh realities.

Despite the passage of countless seasons, every minute detail from that pivotal day remained preserved in perfect clarity within his mind.

Erik entered and spoke with respectful deference. “Mr. Williams, your dinner engagement is scheduled for six-thirty this evening.”

“Cancel it,” Stewart commanded, in no mood for social gatherings as inner turmoil churned within him. “Inform them that urgent business demands my attention.”

Erik hesitated, noting how his employer’s eyes held a complex mixture of bewilderment and yearning. Could this be the unmistakable signature of a man teetering on love’s precipice?

“Certainly, sir,” Erik replied, retreating with quiet efficiency.

Stewart’s confusion proved remarkably short-lived.

His business acumen had always guided him toward his desires with unwavering precision.

After all these years, Gabriela remained the sole woman who had truly claimed possession of his heart—and he intended to win her affection through whatever means necessary.

Stewart summoned Erik back into his presence.

“I require your assistance with a particular matter.”

After absorbing his boss’s detailed instructions, Erik expressed his reservations. “Mr. Williams, doesn’t this approach seem somewhat... questionable?” Given Wesley’s undeniable charm and appeal, Stewart’s chances of victory in this...

Romantic competition appeared slim at best. Resorting to such manipulative tactics struck Erik as genuinely dishonorable.

Stewart seized a nearby file and delivered a sharp tap to Erik’s forehead. “Do you have a better idea?”

His plan involved nothing truly immoral, merely allowing Gabriela to harbor a small misunderstanding. No genuine harm would befall anyone in the process.

With no alternative path available, Erik departed to execute the assigned task. His remarkable efficiency ensured that by day’s end, he had secured precisely what Stewart required.

Acting quickly, Stewart sought out Myah that very evening.

“Myah, summon Gabriela here immediately. I possess a method that will permanently sever her connection to Wesley.”

Myah refused to acknowledge his presence and continued her meticulous pruning of rose branches in the garden's shadows.

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Her blindness rendered artificial illumination unnecessary as she worked with practiced precision, trimming each stem with careful deliberation.

Stewart crouched beside her still form, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper as he unveiled his carefully crafted scheme.

Myah absorbed his words in complete silence until suddenly, her hand slipped, severing a rose and slicing deep into her finger.

Crimson drops splattered across the pristine white petals, creating a scene of unsettling beauty.

Delia rushed forward to tend to the bleeding wound with gentle efficiency.

"Delia, would you contact Gabriela for me?" Myah requested softly.

Gabriela received Delia's urgent call and hastened over upon learning of Myah's injury.

Though merely a finger wound, the cut had penetrated deeply, prompting Gabriela to insist on taking Myah to the hospital.

Myah's resistance proved unyielding. "Gabriela, I refuse to set foot in that place. Allan entered the hospital and never emerged to see another dawn."

The mention of Allan's name pierced Gabriela's heart with familiar anguish.

Allan had represented her sole anchor during those turbulent years of her past. Without his steadfast presence, Gabriela might never have survived those darkest nights.

Moments; he had lifted her from despair's crushing depths. Though romantic love had never blossomed between them, he meant a lot to her. When death claimed him, her world crumbled into devastating ruins.

Drawing Myah into her protective embrace, Gabriela offered tender reassurance. "Don't be afraid. I will never permit harm to touch you. I gave Allan my solemn word that I would cherish and protect you always."

Myah wept extensively within Gabriela's comforting arms.

Eventually, she guided Gabriela to a carefully preserved collection of Allan's treasured possessions.

“These volumes held his deepest fascination, alongside his architectural sketches and cherished photographs.”

Gabriela examined each item with reverent attention, her fingers lingering on the collection of photographs.

The majority captured moments of Gabriela’s life, interspersed with precious group portraits featuring herself, Allan, and Myah together.

Gabriela had convinced herself that after so many passing years, even the return of her complete memories of Allan would not cause her the same grief she had experienced back then.

She repeatedly reminded herself of her responsibilities — caring for her precious child, Farley, and Myah, while managing countless demanding obligations. She could no longer afford the luxury of weakness that had consumed her five years earlier, when amnesia had provided escape from unbearable reality. Her efforts had achieved their intended success, freeing her from dwelling on anything connected to Allan.

Yet now, confronted by these photograph-preserved memories, tears began their silent descent down her cheeks.

Stewart observed from his position nearby, suddenly recognizing the despicable nature of his calculated plan.

He found himself compelled to intervene. “Gabriela, the hour grows late. Please allow me to escort you home safely.”

Gabriela nodded in agreement, carefully returning each precious item to its protective container.

A pristine white document slipped free and fluttered toward the floor.

Stewart’s heart lurched violently as he moved to intercept the falling paper.

Gabriela’s reflexes proved superior, her hand closing around the document first.

Bold lettering across the white paper’s header declared its contents — Body Donation Consent Form.

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The signed and sealed consent form declared in bold print: “I willingly donate my corneas and body to medical institutions.” Allan’s signature sprawled across the bottom.

Something struck Gabriela like lightning.

Myah murmured, “Gabriela, why did you stop? What did you find?”

Gabriela slipped the paper into her pocket, her movements quiet and deliberate. “Nothing.”

She gathered Allan’s remaining belongings with trembling hands, then turned to face Myah. “Keep that wound dry. I’ll check on you tomorrow.”

“Of course.”

Gabriela then approached Delia. “Watch over her these next few days. Please.”

Delia nodded without hesitation. “You have my word.”

Stewart drove Gabriela home through empty streets. Neither spoke. The silence stretched between them like a taut wire.

Her phone buzzed halfway home. Wesley’s name flashed on the screen.

“Will you come tonight?” His voice carried that familiar expectation.

“I can’t make time today, Mr. Moss. I’m sorry.”

She ended the call before he could respond.

Stewart's eyes found hers in the rearview mirror.

She leaned her forehead against the cool window, city lights painting shadows across her skin. Her expression vanished behind those shifting patterns of light and dark.

The woman who usually blazed with energy now looked completely drained.

Wesley knew nothing of her exhaustion. He only understood how to consume her warmth, how to bask in the joy she brought him. Stewart believed Wesley didn't deserve her devotion.

His knuckles whitened against the steering wheel. His throat constricted before he finally broke the silence. "I learned about Wesley's hospital treatment over four years ago. The Moss family mobilized half the city searching for a compatible heart."

Gabriela straightened like she'd been struck. "What exactly are you suggesting?"

"Allan registered as an organ donor. What if the Moss family discovered his information somehow?"

Her frown deepened into fury. "Don't make wild accusations without evidence."

Stewart hadn't anticipated such fierce resistance, especially her instinctive defense of Wesley.

The reaction stung more than he'd expected.

Bitter thoughts consumed him. Wesley had suffered heart failure five years ago. The world's finest doctors had delivered their grim verdict: conservative treatment was his only option. Death had been inevitable.

Wesley should have died five years ago. Stewart had known Gabriela first. How dare Wesley compete for her affections?

Stewart's composure finally cracked. "I'm stating facts. Why does that upset you?"

Gabriela gave him nothing but silence.

Her mind drifted to those secret hospital visits after Allan's accident, after his heart had found its way into Wesley's chest.

She hadn't known Wesley then, but she'd believed him worthy of Allan's final gift. She'd trusted Wesley was a good man.

Now the possibility of conspiracy loomed before her. The thought was suffocating in its horror.

Once the car arrived at her place, Gabriela climbed out without a word.

Stewart called after her, "Gabriela, everything I said was true."

She turned back, her voice steady despite the turmoil behind her eyes. "Promise me you won't mention any of this to Myah. Whatever you believe happened."

"You have my word."

Despite her attempts to maintain faith in Wesley, sleep brought no peace. Each night, Allan's broken body haunted Gabriela's dreams. Blood pooled around him in her memory, and his dying words echoed: his willingness to donate his heart to save a stranger's life.

The images pursued her even into nightmares. Allan appeared again and again, soaked in crimson.

She avoided Wesley for days, refusing even their weekend arrangements at his condo. The distance felt necessary, though it solved nothing.

Wesley sensed the shift immediately.

Gabriela had always worried about his heart condition. She'd always yielded the moment he feigned illness.

But now, even his practiced displays of vulnerability met with polite excuses and firm refusals.

"I'm swamped here, Mr. Moss. Call your doctor instead."

The line went dead before he could protest.

Wesley stared at the darkened screen, his reflection ghostlike in the black glass.

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Loretta settled nearby. She'd witnessed the abrupt end to his call. "I suggested you return to the manor, but you refused. You claimed Gabriela would come cook for you. Now she won't even spare time for conversation?"

Wesley maintained his composed mask despite the hollow ache spreading through his chest. "I can manage alone, Grandma."

The manor stood empty and cold, stripped of all warmth. Gabriela had lived there briefly once, filling the place with laughter and life. After her departure, he'd never adjusted to the vast emptiness she'd left behind.

Human nature was cruel that way. Once they'd tasted happiness, its absence became unbearable torment.

"You haven't been caring for yourself properly. Look at you — you're nothing like the vibrant man you used to be," Loretta observed, her voice thick with concern. "Since you have time today, let me accompany you to the hospital. We need to have you examined."

Wesley released a weary breath. "I understand my own body better than anyone else could. There's nothing wrong with me."

"Those were your exact words five years ago." The memory sent a visible shiver through Loretta. "If something happens to you again, I'll be heartbroken, you know."

Wesley pressed his fingertips against his temples as pain began building behind his eyes. "All I want is to rest quietly at home today, Grandma. I'll arrange for a physician to visit instead."

He placed the call immediately, scheduling the appointment while Loretta watched.

Only then did her rigid posture soften with acceptance.

Afterward, Loretta prepared several simple dishes and remained until Wesley had finished eating every bite. Then she finally departed.

Wesley retrieved a book and settled into his chair, attempting to lose himself in the pages.

He'd always been able to calm his restless mind through reading before, but forty minutes passed without absorbing a single sentence. The words blurred together, becoming meaningless scribbles on the page.

He had no idea what was truly troubling Gabriela.

Exhausted by this endless game of avoidance, he shot to his feet and headed directly for her villa.

Wesley had visited Rosemont Gardens frequently enough that security recognized his face instantly. They waved him through without requiring registration.

At her door, he pressed the bell with determined fingers.

The maid knew him well and ushered him inside without hesitation.

Gabriela sat curled on the living room sofa, cradling Truett while shaking a colorful rattle above his face.

Truett's enormous eyes tracked the sound with fascination, releasing delighted giggles that filled the room with warmth.

Wesley froze in the doorway, transfixed by the tender scene before him.

Farley emerged from the kitchen carrying a prepared bottle and startled at the sight of Wesley lingering by the entrance. "Mr. Moss? What brings you here?"

Farley's words hit Gabriela like ice water. Her entire body went rigid, terror preventing her from turning around.

Her mind raced desperately for an excuse — any reason that would allow her to slip upstairs with Truett and disappear without raising questions.

But Wesley was already crossing the room toward her with purposeful strides.

Truett, confused by the sudden absence of his rattle's music, swiveled his bright eyes around the room until they landed on Wesley. His expression transformed with wonder, as if he'd discovered something miraculous. The baby burst into delighted laughter, stretching his tiny arms outward in an unmistakable plea to be held.

Gabriela's heart hammered against her ribs with such violence she feared it might burst.

Anyone with eyes could see that Truett's features mirrored Wesley's almost perfectly. The resemblance was unmistakable.

Would Wesley notice the similarities?

Gabriela felt completely unprepared to face Brenden's questioning, and the absolute last thing she wanted was for the Mosses to discover this child's existence.

Wesley's gaze locked onto Gabriela with laser intensity, his voice dropping to a dangerous whisper. "Who does this child belong to?"

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Gabriela steadied her nerves the instant Wesley's voice reached her ears.

With a polished smile, she said, "Mr. Moss, this is Tessa's child. She has been swamped with work lately, so Farley is pitching in since he's retired and has time on his hands."

Farley jumped in to back her up. "Exactly. There's not much to do these days. Helping with the kid keeps me busy and fills the hours."

Wesley's frown deepened. "Tessa's child?"

Something felt off. When the boy's eyes met his, an odd pull stirred in Wesley, urging him to draw closer.

He settled beside Gabriela, hesitating before asking, "Can I hold him?"

Reluctantly, Gabriela passed the child to him.

Wesley, unaccustomed to holding infants, moved with rigid caution.

Truett rested in his sturdy arms, staring up with wide, innocent eyes.

A rush of warmth flooded Wesley. He gently touched the boy's cheek, which was soft and delicate.

Truett didn't flinch; instead, he grinned, his sweet giggles tugging at Wesley's heartstrings.

Unable to help himself, Wesley asked, "What is his name?"

A shiver ran through Gabriela, but she kept her tone even. "His name is Truett."

Wesley murmured the name, holding the boy for a long moment before grudgingly handing him back.

Gabriela let out a sigh of relief and promptly asked Farley to take the baby for his bottle feeding.

Wesley finally revealed why he had come. “Gabriela, we need to have a conversation.”

Outside the villa, they stepped onto an open lawn, their shadows stretching under the glow of the lights.

Wesley moved closer, his presence almost overwhelming. “Gabriela, has something been going on with you lately?”

He had always sensed she had feelings for him, convinced that with time and persistence, she would accept him. But recently, she had been avoiding him.

Gabriela met his intense gaze, nearly blurting out a question about the heart donation, but she caught herself. “Mr. Moss, my company has been slammed with work. If you’re not a fan of takeout, you could hire a top-notch cook. I’m sorry, but I can’t keep doing part-time work for you.”

“I’m not here about the job,” Wesley said, his eyes locked on hers. “I have one question — do you like me or not?”

Gabriela hesitated, then answered evenly, “You’re good-looking and rich. What woman wouldn’t be drawn to you?”

“Cut the flattery,” Wesley snapped, a hint of frustration in his voice. “Just answer — do you like me?”

Gabriela admitted candidly, “I respect you, but I have never had any romantic feelings for you.”

“You once told my grandmother you had someone else in your heart. Was that true?” Wesley pressed, studying her every expression. “Are you still holding on for him?”

Gabriela took a deep breath, meeting his gaze without wavering. “Yes.”

“I see.” Wesley turned sharply. “Don’t worry, I won’t trouble you again.”

With that, he strode off.

Gabriela stood frozen, watching him disappear without a backward glance, her eyes lingering for what felt like an eternity.

She cared for him, but it changed nothing.

Brenden, Brenden’s child, and Allan stood between them.

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They could never be together.

With a sigh, Gabriela returned inside.

Time crawled by, and late December brought colder days.

Gabriela assumed her firm words had ended things with Wesley for good.

One day, a message from Fiona arrived.

It was a selfie of Fiona, dressed extravagantly, with Wesley in the background, reading on a sofa in the corner.

Gabriela instantly recognized the setting as Moss Manor's living room.

Fiona followed with a text: "Mrs. Larson invited me for dinner. She must believe I am the perfect match for Wesley. A decent family really does matter, doesn't it?"

Gabriela was holding Truett, who was drinking his formula.

Once full, he toyed with the bottle until he suddenly let out a wail.

Her fleeting sadness was overtaken by the baby's cries, demanding her focus.

It turned out his diaper was soiled.

Raising children was really troublesome, with a never-ending stream of tasks to handle.

Between taking care of Truett and running her company, Gabriela had no energy left for heartache.

She set her phone down and swiftly changed his diaper.

Meanwhile, Fiona, elated by Loretta's invitation, had dressed elegantly, striving to embody grace.

But Wesley remained distant, his indifference stinging her.

Feeling aggrieved, Fiona wanted to lash out.

She finally managed to snap a photo with herself and Wesley, hoping to rub it in Gabriela's face, but Gabriela didn't even reply.

Frustrated, Fiona unleashed a torrent of messages. "Why aren't you answering? Aren't you good at arguing?"

"Cat got your tongue? Jealous, are you? Well, a woman with no status or connections like you will never end up with Wesley."

Gabriela, done changing Truett's diaper, read Fiona's flood of texts, which poured in like the ravings of a lunatic.

She fired back, "Are you so alone you've got no one else to boast to? Has the Dewitt family vanished, huh? What does your relationship with Wesley have to do with me?"

Fiona was enraged by Gabriela's jabs. How dare she!

As Fiona prepared to strike back, a voice nearby asked, "What are you doing?"

Without looking, Fiona answered, "I'm arguing with a love rival."

Then she suddenly realized the voice was Wesley's.

Her blood ran cold, her scalp prickling. She wanted to vanish.

Wesley's tone was sharp. "Who's your love rival?"

Fiona, trembling, handed him her phone.

He stared at Gabriela's reply, his face like ice.

Fiona felt the air itself turn frigid.

She cursed her impulsiveness.

Every time she tried to provoke Gabriela, she ended up on the losing end.

Fiona vowed to steer clear of Gabriela from now on.

With Fiona's messages finally stopped, Gabriela breathed a sigh of relief. With Truett's diaper changed, he was lively again, his tiny fingers tugging at the bracelet on Gabriela's wrist.

Her eyes lingered on it, remembering how she had once teased Wesley for being cheap when he gave it to her.

After settling Truett in his crib and lulling him to sleep, Gabriela slipped into bed.

In the dead of night, her phone jolted her awake.

Half-asleep, she answered, hearing Wesley's voice on the line.

"Gabriela, what am I to you?"

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Wesley's voice came through from the other end, hoarse and low, and Gabriela immediately sensed that something was wrong.

"Mr. Moss, have you been drinking?" she asked cautiously.

Wesley didn't respond to her question. Instead, his tone carried a sharp edge as he questioned her. "If you don't care for me, then why did you slip into the hospital to check on me? Why did you join my company? Why did you make meals for me? Why did you sleep with me?"

Wesley had never once bombarded her with so many questions, revealing his frustrations.

Gabriela was now certain that he was drunk.

“Mr. Moss, where are you right now?” she pressed, concern creeping into her voice.

“I am at my apartment,” Wesley slurred from the other end. “My grandmother keeps thinking I’m not into women, pushing me into these awful blind dates, shoving Fiona in my face. I couldn’t stay at the estate for another moment. Gabriela, she has no clue how much I care about you...”

His words hit Gabriela like a sudden jolt, stirring a mix of emotions she couldn’t untangle.

She asked softly, “Your heart condition is not stable. Why are you drinking so much?”

The line went quiet.

Worried about his health, Gabriela couldn’t bear the thought of leaving him alone in this state. She apologized to Farley as she woke him, asking him to watch Truett, then rushed to Wesley’s apartment.

Her fingerprints were still in the system, so the door unlocked with ease. Stepping into the living room, she spotted an empty wine glass and a bottle half-drained of its contents. Wesley was nowhere in sight.

“Mr. Moss? Where are you?” she called, her voice echoing as she searched the apartment.

She scoured the living room before heading upstairs.

The bedroom door stood slightly open, and as she nudged it wider, a powerful grip yanked her inside.

Suddenly, she was wrapped in strong arms, lips crashing against hers in a flurry of desperate kisses.

Stunned, Gabriela pushed back, struggling against his hold.

Wesley’s strength was unrelenting, his passion so intense it felt like he wanted to fuse their bodies together. She couldn’t break free.

As her resistance weakened, Wesley lifted her onto the bed, leaning over her, his fingers grazing the buttons of her shirt.

The air was thick with the scent of masculinity and wine, pressing heavily around her.

His warm, steady fingertips brushed her skin, sending her heart into a chaotic rhythm, her body trembling with confusion.

Then, a vivid memory of Allan, bloodied and broken, flashed through her mind.

Her eyes stung with tears. In a surge of emotion, Gabriela bit down hard on Wesley's shoulder and delivered a sharp slap across his face.

The sound of the slap rang out, freezing the moment.

"Mr. Moss, you're drunk," she said quietly, pulling her shirt back into place.

Wesley's drunken haze lifted slightly, but his eyes burned with a darker, fiercer intensity.

He didn't let her go, still hovering over her. "Gabriela, don't you dare say you feel nothing for me. If you don't care, why show up at my place in the dead of night?"

"You want the truth? Fine." Gabriela's expression grew calm. "I'm here because I'm worried about you. That heart beating in your chest — it belonged to Allan. He gave it to you and saved your life. You owe it to him to take care of yourself."

Her words struck like a sudden thunderclap.

The room fell eerily silent, as if every sound in the universe had vanished.

Wesley's drunken fog dissipated entirely. He stared at her, as if seeing her for the first time.

Gabriela held his stare with unwavering composure.

Wesley slowly let go of her, his voice finally breaking the silence. "You know."

"I do," she replied, rising to her feet and smoothing her tangled hair. "I'm also aware that Allan agreed to donate his organs, and within six months, he died."

"Gabriela!" Wesley's voice trembled, still reeling from the bombshell of her connection to Allan. Her next words sent his heart plummeting.

Normally so controlled, his tone sharpened with fury.

"You had better explain exactly what you're suggesting!"

No longer bothering to hide her doubt, Gabriela asked coolly, "Did you have access to Allan's Body Donation Consent Form?"