

His kiss 421

Chapter 421

Wesley, who had been silent until now, finally spoke. His voice was calm but firm. “What is going on here?”

The sound of his voice snapped Rebecca back to herself. Her stomach twisted as she realized she had just screamed and cursed in front of him.

Horried and furious, she turned and glared at Fiona.

Fiona reacted instantly, pointing at Gabriela. “Wesley, it’s not my fault. You were having dinner with another woman and Gabriela got jealous. A petty, spiteful woman like her? Of course she’d lose it and throw wine.”

“Jealous?” Wesley’s eyebrow lifted slightly. His gaze shifted to Gabriela, sharp and unreadable.

Under that stare, Gabriela felt her confidence waver.

“If I said I did it for money, would you believe me?” she muttered.

She thought — just for a split second — that she saw the corner of Wesley’s mouth lift, almost a smile. But when she looked again, his face was back to its usual icy calm.

Wesley called Billy, who arrived quickly with clean clothes and then drove Rebecca home.

Humiliated in front of Wesley, Rebecca was livid, but she didn't dare cause a bigger scene.

When she got home, she found her parents in the living room in the middle of a conversation. Matthew looked as calm as ever.

Seeing her daughter's expression, Lauren immediately asked, "Becca, who upset you?"

Still shaking with anger, Rebecca grabbed her mother's arm and hissed, "Mom, Gabriela Haynes humiliated me."

For some reason, Lauren tensed the moment she heard the name Gabriela. Even Matthew, who was usually detached, suddenly turned his head sharply in their direction.

Lauren noticed his reaction and her eyes narrowed coldly.

Rebecca, too focused on her fury to notice any of that, launched into a heated retelling of everything that had happened.

Lauren instantly took her side. "That shameless girl has no upbringing. She's only acting out because she knows you're too composed to get down in the mud with her. Next time, I'll make sure someone teaches her a lesson."

Matthew frowned. "This isn't worth it. Two women fighting over a man is already messy enough. Let it go."

Rebecca stomped her foot, frustrated.

Her own father wanted to let Gabriela go unpunished?

She had been cherished her entire life. She couldn't swallow this humiliation. She swore Gabriela would pay.

Lauren's eyes flashed with malice, though she forced a gentle smile. "Fine."

After dropping Rebecca off, Billy returned and said, "Miss Howard was furious. Miss Haynes may run into trouble."

Wesley nodded. "I know. You can go."

Billy was confused.

Wesley had always protected Gabriela. Last year, she had even spent New Year's at his home, which suggested a certain closeness.

So why was he acting so distant now that Rebecca was involved? Had his feelings changed?

Billy wanted to ask, but Wesley's cold expression stopped him.

It wasn't until a week later that Billy understood Wesley had been quietly planning something much bigger.

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Ever since Gabriela had splashed red wine on Rebecca a week earlier, Rebecca hadn't dared show her face around Wesley.

The memory burned every time she thought of it, leaving her seething with resentment.

One day, she went to see Jasper again.

The moment she stepped into the living room, she heard Jasper's furious voice coming from the study. "What is going on? All the paperwork was in order. The groundbreaking for my company's project is supposed to be in a week, and now you're telling me the approval isn't coming through? Find out who's pulling strings behind this. I want answers by the end of today."

The assistant stammered a quiet, “Yes, sir,” before hurrying off.

When Jasper walked out, his expression was dark and severe. Rebecca moved toward him and softened her voice. “What happened?”

Jasper forced himself to calm down enough to explain.

Half a year earlier, their family had won the bid for a prime piece of land in Eventide Vale. The plan was straightforward: get final government approval, build a resort, and make back the billions they had invested within two years.

Everything was in place — heavy equipment secured, workers hired, groundwork prepared. All that remained was the last approval.

And now, at the most critical moment, that approval had suddenly stalled.

If the permit didn’t go through, then the land they had already poured more than three billion into would become nothing but a massive loss. Jasper, tense and on edge, could barely stand still.

Rebecca stared at him, stunned. “Did you offend someone recently?”

Jasper let out a cold laugh. “Who would be reckless enough to go against me?”

The Everglow Group’s subsidiaries stretched across the country, and Jasper’s influence reached into both legitimate business and the underworld. He was not a man people casually challenged.

Who could possibly be foolish enough to move against him?

A sudden thought flashed through Jasper’s mind. His gaze shifted to Rebecca, steady and unblinking.

When Jasper was in a good mood, his eyes held an easy, almost charming warmth. But when he wasn’t, they turned lethal — sharp, merciless. The scar cutting across his left brow made that cold stare even more intimidating. Under that gaze, the air itself felt heavy.

Rebecca’s pulse stumbled. A nervous chill crept up her spine. She asked quietly, “What is it?”

Jasper’s voice cut clean through the air. “How are things between you and Wesley?”

At his question, frustration immediately flared in her. “Every time I see Wesley, Gabriela shows up and ruins it. She throws herself in his face and insults me right in front of him.”

Jasper’s brows drew together. “What exactly happened?”

Rebecca described, in detail, the scene at the hotel — the red wine pouring over her hair and clothes, the humiliation she had suffered in front of Wesley.

Jasper raised an eyebrow.

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That was all he needed.

The stalled government approval wasn't some random bureaucratic delay. Wesley had interfered.

In an instant, it made sense. For the sake of one woman, Wesley had deliberately obstructed his land project. The realization made a cold light flicker in Jasper's eyes. For one brief moment, he even considered teaching Gabriela a lesson himself.

So Wesley dared to pull this kind of stunt. Did he really think Jasper was someone he could play with?

But the impulse passed just as fast.

Gabriela had done nothing to him personally. Picking a fight with Wesley over Rebecca's pride would be unnecessary — and stupid.

Rebecca noticed the long silence and pressed, impatient now. "Jasper, why aren't you saying anything?"

Jasper sighed, the edge in his face softening. "Becca. Stop targeting Gabriela. Leave her alone."

Rebecca stared at him, stunned. "Why should I?"

"You need to trust me," he said, his tone low and steady. "Whatever Gabriela had with Wesley, it's over. She belongs in his past. Nothing more."

A faint unease flickered in Rebecca's chest as Jasper continued. "You've already won. Wesley will be yours. You stand above her. Don't drag yourself down fighting someone who's already lost."

Rebecca knew Jasper favored her because she usually listened.

She forced her anger down, curved her lips into a gentle smile, and said, "Alright. I'll do what you say."

Jasper reached out and smoothed a hand over her hair in approval. "That's my good girl."

But the moment Rebecca stepped out of Jasper's villa, her polite smile vanished. Her expression went cold.

Why was Jasper suddenly being cautious about Gabriela?

Her mind circled back to the stalled land approval. Then the final piece fell into place.

Was Wesley freezing the project on purpose — as a warning, telling her not to go after Gabriela?

Her chest ached with injured pride. “I care about you so much, Wesley. How could you treat me like this?” she fumed silently.

But the humiliation still burned hotter than the hurt. Being drenched in red wine and mocked in front of Wesley — there was no way she was letting that go.

Jaw tight, Rebecca pulled out her phone. Her voice was calm, cold, and decisive. “Help me look into something.”

The following night, a thick file landed in Rebecca’s hands.

She flipped it open, scanned a few pages, and let out a quiet, icy laugh.

Turning to the subordinate who had delivered it, she said coolly, “Get this man out of the police station.”

Her finger rested on a name: Fulton — the source of Tessa's suffering.

Fulton had been locked up for more than ten days. When he finally heard he was being released, he immediately assumed Tessa had arranged it. Fury built in him. He cursed her under his breath for having him held so long and swore he'd make her pay once he got out.

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But when he stepped outside, Tessa wasn't there.

Instead, a stranger was waiting by the exit — a young man in dark glasses, dressed in black.

"You the one who bailed me out?" Fulton grunted, suspicious.

The man gave a single nod and gestured toward the street. A black car with tinted windows was idling at the curb. Without offering a name, he opened the back door and motioned for Fulton to get in.

Fulton narrowed his eyes. "Who the hell are you, and why would you bother getting me out?"

The man slid an envelope into Fulton's hand and spoke in a flat voice. "Make a loud, ugly public scene demanding a divorce from your wife. Make it dramatic and messy. I'll handle the exposure online."

Fulton let out a harsh laugh. “Are you out of your mind? Tessa’s young, gorgeous, and makes money. Why would I ever divorce her? You planning to hand me a hotter wife or a pile of cash?”

Scowling, he ripped the envelope open — and froze.

Inside was a check.

His eyes followed the long string of zeros. His throat tightened.

“Who the hell are you really?”

The man’s expression didn’t change. “Don’t ask questions. Do as I say, and there will be more.”

For the right price, even arrogance could bend. Fulton’s anger dissolved into greed. He leaned in, grinning. “So, what exactly do you want me to do?”

The man moved closer and laid out a few specific instructions in a low voice.

Fulton’s eyes lit up. “Understood. Consider it done.”

Clutching the check, he went straight to the bank, cashed it without hesitation, and headed home.

The moment he stepped through the door, Raven rushed toward him, face full of relief. "Fulton, you're finally back! Let me see you — how did you get so skinny? Did they treat you badly in there?"

She circled him anxiously, fussing and rambling without pause.

Fulton barely listened. He brushed past her, looked around the house, and asked flatly, "Where's Tessa?"

Raven scoffed, her lip curling. "You gave her one slap and she's been hiding in the hospital for more than ten days, refusing to set foot back here."

Sigrid added bitterly, "Tessa acts like we're made of money. She'd rather waste it on hospital bills than buy my son a toy. When she finally drags herself back here, Fulton, make sure she learns her place."

Fulton's mouth twisted into a cold grin. "Forget her. I'm starving. Make me something decent."

Raven immediately jumped up and hurried to the kitchen.

Fulton dropped onto the worn couch and let his gaze drift over the cramped living room. He pressed a hand against his injured leg, and his smile turned darker.

Tessa wouldn't be the only one to pay. Gabriela had backed the wrong side — and he would make sure she regretted it.

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Tessa's cheekbone had been shattered so badly that it took more than ten days in the hospital before she was even barely stable.

Not a single relative came to visit. Not even her own father set foot in the hospital.

Coleman had only called her. "Fulton shouldn't have hit you, but letting anger drive you to refuse reconciliation — sending him to jail, giving him a criminal record — that's an even bigger disgrace."

The threat was obvious. If she didn't back down, he would never forgive her, and her mother would be forbidden from seeing her.

When discharge day finally came, only Gabriela and Aubrey accompanied her as she hobbled out.

Aubrey crossed her arms, her glare sharp. "Even if Fulton once saved you, hitting you is unforgivable. If you go back there, you're just lining yourself up for the next beating."

Gabriela slipped an arm around Tessa's shoulders and spoke gently but firmly. "Tessa, stay with me instead. My place has more than enough guest rooms, and you won't have to live in fear."

Moved by the sincerity of her two friends, Tessa was just about to nod when a shadow moved toward her.

Fulton. No question.

The sight of him hit her like ice water. Her breath caught, and she stumbled back in panic.

Wasn't he supposed to still be in jail? How had he gotten out?

Gabriela immediately stepped in front of Tessa, narrowing her eyes. "What are you doing here?"

Fulton wore a light brown coat. He looked a little thinner than before, and oddly put together, with a strange new intensity in his face.

He limped toward Tessa and dropped his voice like he was soothing a child. "Sweetheart, I came to take you home."

Tessa pressed herself against Gabriela's back and refused to move. "I'm not going with you. Leave now."

Putting on a sorrowful expression, Fulton murmured, “Tessa, I’ve missed you every single day. You know I love you. If I didn’t, I never would have risked my life to save you back then.” His eyes were red as he pleaded, “Please, just give me another chance. I swear I’ll never hit you again.”

Tessa hesitated.

In all their years of marriage, Fulton had never apologized like this — never lowered himself like this, never promised to change.

Had those days in a cell really shaken him enough to force regret into him?

Seeing that flicker of softness in Tessa’s eyes, Gabriela leaned in and whispered, urgent and sharp, “Tessa, don’t fool yourself. Abuse always comes back, no matter what it sounds like at first. Once it starts, it never really ends. You can’t just trust his promise.”

Suddenly, Fulton dropped to his knees with a hard thud and clung to the hem of Tessa’s coat. “Tessa, if I didn’t care, I never would have thrown myself into danger for you that night. Look at me now — half a man, limping everywhere, barely able to make money. I’m not even worthy to stand next to you.”

His voice shook, carefully broken.

Even pitiful like this, he was still striking — his sharp features softened by pain, his eyes lowered in practiced misery. He looked like someone begging to be forgiven.

Against her will, Tessa's mind dragged her back to that terrible night: the ripping of fabric, the choking fear, the certainty of what was about to happen. If Fulton hadn't shown up, she might not be alive.

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That memory cracked something in her.

Her lashes went wet. Tears gathered and slipped down as she whispered, unsteady, "Please... get up."

But Fulton stayed on his knees, shoulders shaking. He lifted his face, voice rough. "Does that mean you've really forgiven me?"

Tessa gave a small nod. "Alright... I'll go back with you."

Fulton's whole body trembled with relief. He jumped to his feet and grabbed her hand like he would never let it go, spilling gratitude in a rush. "Thank you, Tessa — thank you. When we get home, I'll cook your favorite dish myself..."

Gabriela saw the decision in Tessa's eyes and swallowed everything she wanted to say. With a quiet sigh, she tugged Aubrey toward the car and left the couple behind.

As the engine started, Aubrey frowned and muttered, "How did Fulton even get out of jail? And seriously — do men like that ever actually change?"

Gabriela's hands tightened on the steering wheel. The memory of Fulton's cold, calculating gaze flickered in her mind, and a chill ran through her. Change? She doubted it.

Still, with Tessa choosing to go back, all Gabriela could do now was hope he wouldn't show his cruelty again.

Tessa followed Fulton into the house.

Raven and Sigrid both shot her sharp, contemptuous looks.

Raven curled her lip. "So. You finally crawled back home?"

Sigrid added coolly, "Perfect timing. There are dishes in the sink. Go wash them."

Not wanting to argue, Tessa turned to Fulton instead. "Fulton, I'm feeling a little worn out. I'd like to go lie down in the room—"

Before she could finish, Fulton's hand struck her across the face.

The sound cracked through the air. Blood rose at the corner of her mouth.

Tessa stumbled and clutched her cheek, stunned. Her voice shook. “Fulton... why would you hit me?”

“How dare you ignore my sister?” Fulton snarled. “You think just because you bring home a paycheck and a little money, you get to look down on us?”

He grabbed a fistful of her hair and yanked, forcing her head back so she had to look at him. “Listen carefully. In this house, I’m the one in charge. I don’t care how capable you think you are — you’ll never change how this home is run.”

A cold tremor gripped Tessa’s chest. Tears spilled down her face. “You swore you wouldn’t hit me again!”

His expression twisted with cruelty. “I promised not to hit you, yes — but look at how you treat my family. If you showed them proper respect, I wouldn’t have to lay a hand on you.”

Tessa’s voice rose, desperate and shaking. “They insult me and throw sarcasm at me every day. How am I supposed to treat them kindly?”

Fulton’s tone turned flat and icy. “You will respect my mother no matter how she treats you, and you will obey her every order.”

In the next breath, his boot slammed—

...into her knee. “Earlier, you refused to come home with me, so I had to kneel in front of strangers and beg you. Now it’s your turn to pay for that humiliation.”

Sigrid’s voice cut in from the side, vicious and eager. “Fulton, don’t forget — she called the police and had you thrown in jail. Teach her a real lesson.”

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Raven’s tone was ice. “Show her who runs this house. Make sure she remembers it in her bones.”

Shoved to the floor, Tessa curled in on herself as a storm of fists and kicks fell on her, every blow harder than the last.

That night, the sky split open again and rain hammered down in sheets.

Gabriela was jolted awake by the shrill ring of her phone. She shot upright in bed. The clock on her nightstand glowed past two in the morning, and the caller ID showed Tessa’s name.

She grabbed the phone immediately. “Tessa, what happened?”

On the other end came Tessa’s shaking, broken whisper. “Gabriela... help me...”

Gabriela's heartbeat kicked hard. She threw on clothes with frantic hands.

Her first instinct — the one that rose before she could even think — was to call Wesley. But the memory of him sitting across from Rebecca, the easy closeness between them, flashed through her mind. Her hand froze.

Her thumb hovered, then moved past his name.

Instead, she hit Tyler's contact.

"Tyler, I'm sorry to call you this late..."

Tyler didn't hesitate.

He stormed into Fulton's house with Gabriela, ready to take Tessa out of there.

Tessa was on the cold floor, bruised and shaking, tears sliding silently down her face.

Fulton staggered out of the bedroom, cursing. "Who the hell said you could walk into my house like—"

Tyler's temper snapped.

His fist drove straight into Fulton's face and sent him crashing to the ground. Leaning over him, Tyler pressed his knuckles to Fulton's cheek and growled, "You think you can raise your voice at me? Before you start barking, maybe ask around who Tyler Jordan is."

Broad-shouldered and solid with muscle, Tyler towered over him like a storm cloud. The tattoos coiling down his arms made him look even more dangerous.

Raven and Sigrid stayed silent.

Fulton, face dark with rage and humiliation, didn't try to fight back.

Tyler scooped Tessa into his arms and carried her straight to the hospital for examination.

Thankfully, the doctor confirmed that although Tessa's injuries were painful, none were life-threatening.

Determined to end it for good, Tessa stayed in the hospital for three more days. Then, with Gabriela beside her and medical evidence in hand, she went to court and filed for divorce. Afterward, she moved into Gabriela's villa.

"Gabriela, let me stay here for a little while. I'll move out as soon as I find an apartment," she said.

Before Gabriela could answer, Loretta cut in, brisk and decisive. “Why bother moving out? Gabriela’s villa has more than enough rooms. You can stay here as long as you want.”

Loretta spoke like she was Gabriela’s real grandmother, managing the house as if it were hers.

Tessa blinked at her, startled by how direct she was.

Gabriela didn’t mind at all. With a small smile, she said, “Mrs. Larson is right. Stay. I’ll have company, and you’ll have somewhere safe.”

Relief washed over Tessa’s face. “Then I’ll stay for now.”

Just as the mood in the room began to settle into something warm, the landline rang sharply, cutting through the air. Gabriela picked it up. It was the guard at the gate.

“Miss Haynes,” he said, uneasy, “there’s a man outside named Fulton Ortiz. He says he won’t leave unless you come out to see him.”

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The weather was bitterly cold. In a chilling tone, Gabriela directed the guard, “Disregard that man.” Fulton could linger outside for as long as he pleased—Gabriela was utterly indifferent.

As Gabriela ended her call, Tessa's phone buzzed with a call from her father. "Come outside, I'm here with Fulton," he said.

Tessa could tolerate Fulton enduring the harsh cold, but the thought of her aging father suffering was unbearable. Reluctantly, Gabriela joined Tessa as they stepped outside.

A fine drizzle fell, and the frigid air numbed their hands. Coleman stood there, clad in a heavy, pale gray overcoat, his glasses perched on his nose. His silver-streaked hair lent him a scholarly air, unmistakably a man of refined education.

Seeing the bruises on Tessa's face, Coleman's brow furrowed slightly, though his face remained stern as he scolded, "What's wrong with you? Instead of staying in your own home, you're crashing at someone else's place?"

"Dad, the moment I got home, Fulton hit me," Tessa said, her face emotionless. "That evening, the rain was torrential, and the cold was biting. He beat me until I collapsed on the floor, after which he retreated to the bedroom to sleep. If Gabriela and her friend hadn't intervened to rescue me, I might not have survived."

That night, Tessa lay on the icy floor, feeling that her home was colder and more inhumane than the sterile hospital ward. Her mind spiraled into a storm of memories.

She remembered the brilliant young man she had admired in college before ever meeting Fulton, how she had pushed herself to excel academically just to feel worthy of someone so seemingly unattainable.

She recalled her dreams of becoming a powerful, self-reliant woman, thriving in her career.

She thought of the cruel remarks from Fulton's family after each of his violent outbursts and her parents' callous advice to endure rather than leave.

Despair consumed her.

At Tessa's words, Coleman's face showed a flicker of shock — a brief spark of real concern breaking through. "Tessa, you—"

Sensing that shift, Fulton immediately dropped to his knees in front of Tessa. He slapped himself in the face over and over as tears streamed down. "Tessa, I only lost control because you disrespected my mother. I know my family isn't as good as yours, but you didn't have to treat her so coldly. She's getting older and her back hurts all the time, and you still kept dumping chores on her. It's too hard on her. I'm sorry. I swear I'll never touch you again. Tell me what you want my mother to do and I'll make sure she does it. Please, give me one last chance."

His twisted version of reality made Tessa's stomach turn. She looked away and snapped, "Get out of my sight."

Fulton clung to her sleeve like a child and whimpered, "Tessa, is this because I'm disabled? Do you look down on me because of my leg? Is that why you want a divorce?"

Those fake tears sent a cold shiver down her spine. She yanked her arm free and said, ice in her voice, "Leave. We're finished. This divorce is final."

Whatever debt she had owed him for the past was already paid — in years of her life and in money.

The moment those words left her mouth, Coleman struck her across the face.

Gabriela, who had been standing a few steps back, rushed forward. "Mr. Ramsey, Tessa just got out of the hospital. She's still recovering. How could you hit her?"

"Be quiet," Coleman snapped. "You young people are always shouting about divorce and poisoning her mind. In my time, marriage was for life. You stayed married no matter how hard it was."

He turned on Tessa. "Fulton damaged his leg saving you, and now you want to leave him because he's disabled? You're ungrateful. You're disgracing our family."

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Gabriela started to speak again, but Tessa lifted a hand to stop her. "Gabriela. Let me handle this."

She faced her father. "Dad," Tessa said, voice shaking but firm, "I never once looked down on him because of his leg. I want a divorce because he beats me. He hit me. He burned me with cigarettes. He dumped food on me if dinner wasn't perfect."

Tears streamed down her face as she rolled up her sleeve and showed him the scars. Her voice broke. "There isn't an inch of me he hasn't marked. Dad, this is too much."

Gabriela's eyes filled. Tessa's pain echoed the pain she had lived through as a child. In that moment, she made herself a promise: she would get Tessa out.

Coleman hesitated for a moment, moved in spite of himself, but the fear of judgment hardened his voice. "That's not a reason to get divorced. You should forgive him."

Tessa's heart ached, but her resolve didn't bend. "Dad, even if you cut me off, I'm still getting this divorce."

With that, she turned and ran back into Gabriela's villa.

Fulton cried after her, "Tessa, I was wrong, please, just give me one more chance..."

Gabriela caught up to Tessa and quietly took her hand.

Tessa broke down in Gabriela's arms, sobbing. "Gabriela, I don't have a home."

In that moment, she looked like a lost child.

Gabriela held her and said softly, “It’s alright. Mrs. Larson and I are here. You still have us.”

That night, a video appeared online and spread fast.

In the rain, Fulton was kneeling, slapping himself and crying, “Honey, I don’t want a divorce. Please don’t leave me. I can’t lose you.”

The fifteen-second clip, stripped of all context, immediately captured attention.

“Who is this guy? Is he an actor? He’s not bad-looking. Is this from some drama?”

“That crying looks real. I kind of feel sorry for him.”

“This doesn’t feel scripted. If it’s real, why is his wife trying to leave him?”

With paid boosts behind it, the video didn’t just spread on one platform — it flooded several. By the next afternoon, it had already climbed into the top three trending topics.

As people speculated about the identity of Fulton’s wife, another video surfaced. It showed Fulton at the hospital, begging Tessa to come home. The footage clearly showed Tessa’s face, Fulton’s limp, and even Gabriela in the background.

Not long after, someone posted a full thread. “Here’s the situation — his name is Fulton Ortiz, and his wife is Tessa Ortiz.”

The post laid out their history in detail. It said Fulton had injured his leg protecting Tessa from an assault back in college.

It included photos of Tessa at work, looking polished and composed in a fitted suit, designer bag in hand.

The post quickly ignited outrage online, pushed even harder by paid accounts.

“So he saved her life, and now she’s dumping him just because he’s disabled?”

“Reality is cruel. He saved her life and now she’s throwing him away.”

“She’s gorgeous but completely cold.”

“Maybe she wants a divorce because her husband can’t satisfy her in bed...”

The comments got uglier from there. The video filled with insults and hate. Soon, Tessa became the villain of the story.

Aubrey, who was always online and quick to catch trends, recognized Fulton in the clip and rushed straight to the villa to warn Gabriela and Tessa.

At first, everyone assumed Fulton was just trying to pressure Tessa — using public sympathy and outrage to force her back under his control.

Gabriela never imagined that Fulton's real target wasn't Tessa at all.

It was her.

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Because Fulton had once thrown himself into danger to save Tessa, he ended up with a permanent injury in his right leg. Holding down even a modest job became difficult.

When Tessa pushed forward with the divorce, the internet branded her a cold-hearted bitch.

The backlash only grew. Strangers flooded the internet with insults and curses aimed at her.

Meanwhile, Fulton's name blew up online. People poured sympathy on him. They told him to stay strong. They said Tessa would eventually pay for abandoning him.

By the third day, the frenzy hit its peak. A major influencer brought Fulton onto a popular livestream to share his side.

“Hello, everyone. I’m Fulton Ortiz,” he began, voice tight with nerves.

He wore a white shirt under a light gray plaid jacket. His posture was a little stiff. There was a worn-out look in his eyes, and the sharp lines of his face only made him seem more pitiful. Viewers felt for him instantly.

Turning to the camera, Fulton said, “Tessa is my wife, and I truly love her. All these years, she’s lived frugally and taken care of me without complaining. She’s gentle and kindhearted, and I hope everyone will stop attacking her. Tessa, if you’re watching this, please unblock me and call me. I miss you. I just want to hear your voice again.”

As his words trailed off, Raven appeared on-screen.

Her clothes were plain, and her posture was tense. Forcing her voice to stay steady, she said, “Tessa is so lazy that after work she never does any housework. But she does bring in money, so maybe she’s earned the right to act like she’s above everyone. My son Fulton is disabled, after all. He’s not really worthy of her.”

Then Sigrid leaned in toward the camera, her tone sharp and hostile. “Hello, everyone. I’m Fulton’s sister. Just because Tessa brings home money, does that mean she can order us around like servants? My brother was a top student in college. If not for that accident, he’d have a respectable job by now, and we wouldn’t have to swallow her attitude. Mom, all that heavy housework is hurting your back. She earns close to a million a year, and she’s still too stingy to hire help. Who knows if that money even goes to this family — or if she’s spending it on some boy toy.”

Raven, her face tired and drawn, cut in. "That's enough, Sigrid."

Together, the family painted Tessa as selfish and cruel, twisting the story until she looked like the villain.

The livestream audience reacted with outrage. Shock turned fast into disgust, and the comments section flooded with insults aimed at Tessa.

Then Sigrid shifted her tone. "Still, aside from those flaws, Tessa never once disrespected my brother all these years. But ever since she started hanging around Gabriela, she's changed and now she wants a divorce. Gabriela, with her little company and her cash to throw around, keeps dragging Tessa to nightclubs and bars to burn money. Watching her flirt with handsome guys is honestly disgusting."

Fulton cut in with a pained expression. "Sigrid, that's enough."

He then apologized to the viewers for airing private matters in public and ended the stream. The whole family went offline.

The viewers were stunned.

Gabriela? Who was that?

Almost immediately, paid accounts began digging up and spreading Gabriela's personal information.

The moment her name went public, the internet ignited. People started connecting her to an older scandal — the infamous fight with Marie — and everything caught fire.

"Oh, I knew she looked familiar. It's her."

"She's running her own company now? Guess that fight with her aunt paid off."

"She's unbearable. Why is she trending again? Is she just desperate for attention?"

The attacks were harsh, but not everyone piled on. Some people remembered Gabriela as the one who'd been framed in the past.

"Marie faked that suicide attempt to set Gabriela up. That incident alone tells you Gabriela isn't the monster people say she is. Don't rush to judge her — wait and see."

"And what if she actually is like that? Maybe what she went through as a kid messed her up so badly that she can't stand seeing anyone else happy."