

His kiss 43

Chapter 43

Wesley had barely begun typing his reply to Gabriela when his phone rang, displaying an incoming call from his grandmother, Loretta Larson.

“Wesley, it’s your birthday today. Come have dinner at my place tonight,” Loretta said, her voice warm and expectant.

After his mother’s passing, Loretta had stepped in to raise him, and their bond ran deep.

“I’ll be there,” Wesley promised.

He ended the call, noticing it was nearly five o’clock, and told Billy to get the car ready.

Loretta’s home was tucked away in the quiet suburbs, a long drive from Wesley’s company. By the time the car eased into her driveway, the sky had already turned a deep blue.

Stepping out, Wesley immediately spotted Brenden standing by the porch with his hands shoved into his pockets. Wesley’s eyes narrowed, the faintest crease in his brow betraying his annoyance.

Brenden, as oblivious as ever, waved him over with boyish enthusiasm. “Wesley! I knew you’d show up for dinner tonight. It’s been a long time since I saw Loretta, and since it’s your birthday, I thought I’d crash the party too.”

Brenden's father was the younger brother of Wesley's father, making them cousins by blood. After his parents split, Brenden had ended up with his mother—who was rarely around. Growing up, he'd attached himself to Wesley, trailing after his older cousin through childhood and spending more time under Loretta's watchful care than with his own mother. Maybe that was why he and Loretta connected so deeply. Wesley merely acknowledged him with a brief nod.

Sticking close, Brenden fished a gift box from his bag—wrapped meticulously, ribbon and all. "Happy birthday, Wesley."

The date never failed to weigh on Wesley; his birthday landed on the same day his mother had died. No one in the family ever made a fuss about it.

Still, Brenden had always insisted on bringing a present each year.

Wesley accepted it, his voice level. "Thank you."

Billy quietly stepped in to take the box, handling it with care.

They moved forward together, the three of them passing into the living room. Loretta was mid-conversation with a young woman, her animated gestures filling the room with lively energy.

As footsteps echoed across the polished floor, Loretta glanced up, and her whole face lit with joy. Rising from her seat, she reached out to take Wesley's hands in her own, her eyes shining with unmistakable grandmotherly affection. "Wesley, you've gotten so thin! Are you eating enough?"

A rare, gentle smile softened Wesley's features. "Grandma," he greeted, his voice low but fond.

Brenden arrived a beat later, eager to get in his own greeting. Loretta pulled him in for a hug, treating him with the same radiant affection.

With a delighted little flourish, Loretta turned to the young woman at her side. "Wesley, do you remember this lovely girl? This is Fiona Dewitt. You two were in elementary school together—doesn't that bring back memories?" Wesley's brow furrowed, an uneasy suspicion flickering in his eyes.

So much for a simple family dinner. Was he being set up on a blind date?

Fiona stiffened for a heartbeat, caught off guard by the sight of Wesley in person. She had researched thoroughly before agreeing to meet him. She understood Wesley had a reputation as a rising titan in the business world. What she hadn't anticipated was his sheer presence—he commanded the room effortlessly, and he looked even more striking than she remembered. Quickly masking her surprise, Fiona folded her hands in her lap and waited, poised and silent, for Wesley to break the ice.