

His kiss 451

Chapter 451

A wave of relief and excitement washed through Gabriela at the news from Tyler. “Tyler, you’ve been incredible this time!”

After discussing things with Benedict, she instructed Tyler to haul the thugs straight to the hospital.

Without hesitation, Tyler dragged the battered men there. They had already been taught a harsh lesson by him earlier, so now they shuffled along meekly, no trace of defiance left.

Once Gabriela pieced together what had really happened back then, she wasted no time. She dialed Vivian, hoping to use her connections to set up a live stream with the influencer Gem.

On the other end of the line, Vivian exploded in disbelief. “Have you completely lost it? Why on earth should I help you with this?”

Gabriela smiled faintly. “Of course you’ll help — because deep down, you’re a decent person.”

Vivian scoffed. “Please. Sweet talk isn’t going to fool me. What are you trying to do this time?”

“It’s about Tessa again,” Gabriela replied. “Trust me, it’ll pull in an audience — and your friend will get the spotlight she wants.”

Vivian muttered under her breath, clearly unconvinced, but in the end she still tapped Gem's number and made the call.

As soon as the live stream connected, Gabriela strode straight into Fulton's hospital room.

Billy trailed close behind, her phone balanced in his hand, the camera already rolling.

Fulton hurled the cup across the room, his face twisted with fury. "Get out! Nothing you say will ever convince me to settle the case with her!"

Gabriela didn't flinch. Her voice stayed calm, almost gentle. "Don't you love Tessa? Why can't you let go and forgive her this one time?"

A crooked grin spread across Fulton's face, dark and unsettling. "Love?" he murmured, eyes glinting. "After I hit her, she refused to forgive me. This time she stabbed me, and I won't forgive her either. That way, no matter what, we'll always be tangled together."

The live stream was already running, the comments flying fast as thousands of viewers stared at the feed, unsettled by the crooked smirk carved across his face.

Gabriela pressed on, her voice firm and cutting. "You once threw yourself into danger to save Tessa. After marriage, she showed you nothing but kindness. Why did you turn to violence?"

“That wasn’t violence!” Fulton snapped, his tone laced with certainty. “That was a husband and wife arguing, that’s all.”

Her eyes hardened, her expression like frost. “I’ll ask you one last time. Did you risk your life back then because you loved Tessa?”

A bitter laugh escaped Fulton, hollow and sharp. “Don’t try to play the emotional card. I won’t change my mind.”

Gabriela gave a measured nod, then turned toward the door, her voice cold and commanding. “Tyler. Bring them in.”

Tyler shoved the three thugs through the door, their footsteps clattering against the sterile hospital floor.

Fulton’s eyes went wide in alarm, recognition flashing across his face.

Before he could open his mouth, one of the thugs, Liam Riley, spat furiously, “Fulton, don’t you dare play dumb. You’re the one who paid us to put on that act, to trap Tessa in that alley and tear at her clothes. Remember? One of us even snapped your leg for real. Without that injury, you think she would’ve agreed to marry you?”

The revelation hit like a bomb. Viewers watching the live stream erupted in disbelief, their comments flooding the screen in shock.

A thin sheen of panic broke across Fulton's expression. His pupils darted wildly as he snapped back, voice trembling with rage, "Rubbish! I don't recognize a single one of you!"

Liam sneered, lips curling in disgust. "Don't recognize us? Then let me jog your memory. You were the one who told us to make it convincing — to hit harder. My guys went too far and snapped your leg, and after that, you refused to pay the rest of what you promised."

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Another thug, Gianni Valdez, stepped up, his voice dripping with contempt. "We let it slide back then. But now you send people after us and dig up the past. What the hell are you trying to pull?"

The third thug, Lowell Dury, let loose a stream of curses, his temper boiling over. "For crying out loud, that was seven years ago! And now you're dragging this crap back up, Fulton? You're out here looking for trouble?"

After hauling these thugs in, Tyler had lied to them, claiming it was Fulton who had sent him after them. If they wanted to walk away in one piece, they were to show up at the hospital and admit their part so the matter could finally be put to rest.

The thugs, gullible as ever, immediately assumed Fulton had orchestrated the whole thing.

Fulton's face drained of color, his voice rising in disbelief. "What are you talking about? I wish I'd never have to lay eyes on you again — why the hell would I send people after you?"

"Cut the act," Liam shot back with a cruel smirk. "If this blows up and the police get involved, we'll make sure you go down with us."

Gianni leaned in, his tone dripping with menace. "If we end up in jail, you'll be beaten to a pulp. We'll see to it you never leave a wheelchair."

Lowell spat, "Once we're locked up, you're finished."

A shiver of dread finally crept into Fulton's chest, and the throbbing ache in his wound flared sharper than before. His lips trembled as he shot a venomous glare at Gabriela. "You're the one who dragged them here!"

Tyler's fist shot up in warning, his voice a low snarl. "Don't you dare glare at Gabriela."

The fight drained from Fulton instantly. He wilted, swallowing his pride, his tone turning meek. "Alright... what is it you want from me?"

Gabriela gave Billy a quick nod, and he reached over to shut off the live stream. Millions of viewers who had been watching were suddenly left staring at nothing but a black screen.

They grew restless, fumbling with their phones in agitation.

“What the hell? It froze right at the climax? I need to see Fulton’s confession!”

“Unbelievable, so his heroic act of saving Tessa was just a sham? That bastard actually hired thugs to put on a show?”

“And then he twisted that fake ‘favor’ into chains, using it to keep Tessa trapped at his side. Years of manipulation, years of beating her down!”

“If Gabriela hadn’t interfered, Tessa would’ve been condemned to spend her whole life drowning in misery.”

“I owe Gabriela a real apology for pinning the blame on her again.”

Sensing the viewers’ outrage surging in the chat, Gem jumped in quickly, steering the conversation toward practical advice on how young women could protect themselves.

The pivot worked. The topic lit up the comment section, pulling in more and more voices, and Gem rode the surge to gain another wave of followers.

Gabriela, meanwhile, ignored the chaos on screen. She calmly reached into her bag, pulled out the settlement papers Benedict had prepared, and held them in front of Fulton. Her voice was steady, edged with authority. "Sign the agreement, and I'll keep the police out of this."

The thugs instantly fixed Fulton with cold, dangerous stares. "You'd better think twice before you open your mouth," one of them warned.

Chapter 453

Cold sweat broke out on his forehead. Hands trembling, Fulton snatched up the pen and scrawled his name across the settlement agreement.

At that same time, Raven and Sigrid emerged from a well-known influencer's live streaming studio, only to be swallowed by a surge of reporters and flashing cameras.

Neither woman had the faintest idea what had just happened at the hospital. Minutes earlier, they'd still been on air, smearing Tessa, calling her nothing but a wretch.

A tabloid reporter shoved a mic toward them, his tone sharp and taunting. "It's been exposed that Fulton once paid thugs to put on a show just to trick Tessa into marrying him. Were the two of you part of that scheme?"

Raven and Sigrid had always known exactly what happened that night, but the moment the question landed, their composure cracked. They stammered over each other with messy, panicked denials that only made everything worse.

That clip of the interview spread like wildfire online, igniting outrage all over again. Furious comments poured in.

“Fulton and his family are vile! This whole marriage was nothing but a scam.”

“How shameless can they be? Weren’t they just trashing Tessa a moment ago, trying to get us to condemn her?”

“They’re monsters.”

Shaken and desperate to contain the damage, Raven and Sigrid shoved past the reporters, fled the scene, and rushed straight to the hospital.

By then, Fulton had already signed the settlement agreement. When the door swung open, he looked up, startled. “Weren’t you supposed to be on the live stream? What are you both doing here?”

Raven’s face hardened as she demanded, “How did word get out about you hiring people to stage that act?”

Sigrid’s hands shook so badly she almost dropped her bag. “You promised no one would ever know! How did the reporters get hold of it?”

A cold dread shot through Fulton. He grabbed his phone and pulled up the latest headlines. His face went pale as he realized that while he had been arguing with those thugs, Gabriela had been streaming the entire exchange live.

The scheme he had plotted with those hired thugs years ago was now public. The video had already swept across the internet.

The footage showed everything: Tessa cornered in the alley, Fulton swaggering in to play the hero, and the brutal moment when the thugs went too far and snapped his leg.

Nearly a hundred thousand comments flooded beneath the video, each one more venomous than the last, ripping him apart and branding him a monster.

Enraged, he hurled his phone at the wall. The screen exploded with a sharp crack.

“Gabriela, how dare you set me up like this!” he roared, voice raw with fury. “This isn’t over between us!”

Meanwhile, Benedict moved fast. With Fulton’s signed settlement agreement in hand, he went straight to the station and secured Tessa’s release that very day.

Gabriela, on the other hand, clutched the evidence Tyler had dug up and headed out to confront Rebecca.

Without Rebecca's number, she went directly to Apex Group to find her.

The receptionist let Gabriela through without question.

She rode the elevator up to the twelfth floor, her pulse steadying with each soft chime.

Inside the CEO's office, Rebecca set a steaming cup of coffee in front of Wesley. Seeing him leaning back in his chair, eyes closed in exhaustion, she began to knead his shoulders with practiced gentleness.

Irritation flickered across his face. He was ready to send her away—until he opened his eyes and saw Gabriela step inside.

The dismissal he had been about to give died on his tongue. He paused.

Chapter 454

Gabriela froze.

Her mind went blank for a moment, then flooded with anger.

"It ends now?" she repeated, her voice low and shaking. "Rebecca weaponized public opinion and nearly destroyed Tessa's life. She dragged my company into her mess and fed me to a mob. And you want to say it's over just because Tessa's out of a cell?"

Wesley's gaze remained steady, giving nothing away. "The situation has already been contained. There's no benefit in escalating it further."

Gabriela let out a soft, incredulous laugh. "No benefit for who?"

Her calm cracked. Rage flared hot in her chest.

"You think this is just a minor inconvenience?" she demanded. "Because of her, Tessa was nearly beaten to death. Because of her, I'm still getting smeared online as some home-wrecking manipulator. Because of her, GD pulled their contract with Haynes Group. Do you have any idea how many people that affects? How much damage that caused?"

Her voice wavered at the edges, but she did not back down.

"And you tear up the evidence. Just like that. Like it doesn't matter."

Rebecca lifted her chin, composing herself, her voice adopting a silk-soft hurt. "Gabriela, I understand that you're emotional, but taking legal action against me won't help you. The deal with GD fell apart because of your own reputation. That has nothing to do with me."

Gabriela turned to face her slowly.

“It has nothing to do with you,” she repeated quietly. “You expect me to believe that Fulton went from jail to full media parade status by coincidence? That paid mobs just magically appeared the day GD was preparing to meet with us? That reporters and livestream hosts coordinated themselves out of thin air? You really want to use that voice on me?”

Rebecca’s smile faltered.

Gabriela leaned forward. “You set Tessa up to be torn apart in public, and you tried to use me as the accelerant. You dragged the entire Haynes Group into your personal jealousy. Do you deny it?”

That last word hung in the air.

Rebecca didn’t answer.

Wesley finally spoke again, quiet but decisive. “Gabriela.”

She looked at him, her throat tight.

Without glancing at Rebecca, Wesley said, “You won’t be harassed again. Anyone who tries will answer for it. You have my word.”

Gabriela stared at him.

That was all?

Her pulse pounded in her ears.

“Your word,” she said softly.

It wasn’t gratitude in her voice.

It was disbelief.

Her gaze flicked down to the torn papers on his desk, then back up. “And what about her?” She held Wesley’s eyes. “What does she answer for?”

Rebecca felt her stomach twist.

Wesley paused. For a brief second, something darkened behind his expression.

Then, in a tone almost detached, almost casual, he said, “Rebecca won’t act against you again.”

Rebecca's eyes widened. She turned to him, stunned. "Wesley—"

He didn't look at her.

He didn't have to.

It was a warning.

Gabriela let out a breath and gave a cold little smile. "So the solution is that I keep quiet, pretend none of this happened, and your fiancée promises to behave."

She straightened.

"Understood."

When she spoke again, her voice was even.

"I came here to inform you of something, not to beg for anything."

She looked at Wesley, not Rebecca.

“I’m not dropping this. If anyone so much as touches Tessa again, or drags my name into it again, I’ll go public with everything. Every transfer. Every fake livestream. Every staged performance. I will make sure every last person watching understands exactly how this was orchestrated.”

She tilted her head slightly.

“And I’ll start by naming the one who hired Fulton.”

Rebecca’s face went pale.

“Gabriela,” she snapped. “You’re threatening me in front of Wesley?”

“No,” Gabriela said simply. “I’m promising you.”

Silence cut through the room.

For a long moment, no one spoke.

Then Gabriela gathered what remained of the torn paperwork from Wesley's desk, piece by piece, as if she refused to leave them behind in his office.

When she turned to leave, Wesley's voice followed her.

"Gabriela."

Her footsteps stopped, but she didn't turn.

Chapter 455

After a beat, he said quietly, "Go home. Rest. Tessa will be fine now."

Gabriela closed her eyes for a moment.

When she opened them, her voice was calm.

"Tessa will never be fine. Women like her don't 'end up fine' just because the police sign a paper and someone powerful snaps their fingers."

Her shoulders lifted and fell.

His silence told her he heard it.

She didn't look back again.

The door shut behind her.

Rebecca stood frozen in place, her hands clenched so tightly her knuckles had gone white.

When she finally spoke, her voice shook with anger she was barely able to hide. "Wesley, why didn't you defend me just now? You know she hates me. She'll say anything to turn you against me."

Wesley leaned back in his chair, eyes cold.

"You will stay out of Gabriela's way," he said, each word measured and precise. "From this point forward, you won't involve yourself in her life, Tessa's life, or Haynes Group. Not directly. Not quietly. Not through anyone else. Do you understand me?"

Rebecca's lips parted.

The finality of it hit her like a slap.

Her throat tightened. “Wesley... are you really talking to me like this because of her?”

For the first time since Gabriela had walked in, Wesley raised his gaze fully to hers.

“No,” he said. “I’m talking to you like this because of me.”

Rebecca’s heart steadied the moment she realized Wesley wasn’t swayed by Gabriela.

Tilting her chin with smug confidence, she leveled a superior look at Gabriela. “Miss Haynes, I won’t blame you for this, but take my advice — don’t pull such stunts again.”

Rebecca’s words slid past Gabriela, who kept her eyes locked on Wesley. “The evidence I brought is real. Do you honestly believe her over me?”

“She’s the woman I intend to marry. You were nothing more than a secretary I once employed.” His expression didn’t budge, and his eyes stayed ice-cold. “Of course I trust her more.”

At his words, the light in Gabriela’s eyes guttered, and she gave a small nod. “I understand.”

Experience told her she couldn’t afford to cross either the Moss family or the Howard family.

Wesley wasn't wrong. Tessa had finally freed herself from that monster, and Gabriela knew she should let the matter go.

There was no way someone like her could stand against two powerful families.

Pivoting on her heel, she took long, purposeful strides out of the office.

When she reached the lobby, she ran into Brenden.

A flicker of surprise crossed Brenden's face as he said, "Gabriela, what brings you here?"

Still weighed down by sorrow, she swiped a thumb across her damp lashes as his voice reached her. "Fancy seeing you here, Mr. Saunders."

Concern gathered between his brows. "Hey, what's with the tears? Did someone upset you?"

"No big deal. My eyes are acting up today." Gabriela told a lie. "I only stopped by to sort out a few things with my former colleagues. I'll be going now."

Without lingering, she slipped out of Apex Group's headquarters, heels tapping a quick retreat.

Something about it prickled at Brenden — this wasn't as simple as it looked.

Years of dating had left him practiced with women.

He could tell that Gabriela was not being truthful. Heartbreak had carved itself across her face.

Brenden suspected that Wesley was the cause of Gabriela's tears.

Without hesitating, he aimed for the twelfth floor, his stride long and clipped. Moments after driving Gabriela away, Wesley felt a vise-like pain clamp around his chest, twisting tightly until spasms shuddered through him.

His hand clutched his chest as he dropped hard onto the sofa.

Startled, Rebecca rushed to him, palm bracing his shoulder. "Talk to me — what's happening? Do you feel sick? Don't be upset about the stunt Gabriela pulled."

Without warning, Wesley swung toward her, his eyes flat with frost. "I will never marry Gabriela."

A small shiver crept up Rebecca's spine under that stare, and she breathed, "I trust you."

“Get this straight — keep sneaking around behind my back and I won’t choose you either,” Wesley said, his voice flat.

Chapter 456

Rebecca’s teeth dug into her lip until the color drained, and after a long silence she finally whispered, “All I’ve ever wanted is a peaceful life with you. I never set out to hurt anyone.”

“You’d better remember that.” He snatched up his coat, clearly ready to walk out.

Startled, she hurried to intercept him, her hand brushing his sleeve. “You’re not feeling well. Let me help you put it on,” she offered quickly, her voice trembling between anxiety and hope.

At that exact moment, Brenden strode through the doorway and froze — his eyes narrowing as he caught sight of Rebecca holding Wesley’s coat. The sight alone told him everything — no wonder Gabriela had been so sad.

“Hold on, Wesley.” Brenden frowned. “Gabriela was...”

Without missing a beat, Wesley cut him off, his gaze going cold. “Got time to loiter? No work to do?”

Under that sharp stare, Brenden swallowed the rest. He shot Rebecca a dark look, then turned on his heel and left.

Back at her place, Gabriela drifted through the door with a hollow ache settling in her chest.

On the sofa, Loretta and Miriam traded quiet conversation.

Shaking her head, Miriam murmured, “Hard to believe Wesley’s getting engaged this fast.”

With a small nod, Loretta said, “I almost didn’t believe it when his grandfather called.”

News had followed quickly: Jasper came in person to negotiate, and Roger agreed that Wesley and Rebecca would hold their engagement before the year was out.

Miriam said with a gentle smile, “That truly is happy news. From what I’ve heard, Miss Howard is gentle, well educated, and beautiful.”

Relief loosened Loretta’s shoulders. “Knowing he has someone beside him lets me breathe easier.”

The thought of Gabriela cast a small shadow.

Both Loretta and Miriam still cherished Gabriela and had always hoped she would be the one to end up with Wesley.

Mid-conversation, they pivoted toward the doorway to find Gabriela standing there, staring blankly as if the light had been drained from her eyes.

A flicker of awkwardness crossed Loretta's face. "Oh — you're back, Gabriela."

Back then, eager to push Wesley and Gabriela into the same bed, she and Miriam had tried various ways. Even so, their scheming never brought the two together.

With a small, steady smile, Gabriela said, "Today went smoothly. Once the court sentences Fulton, Tessa will finally be free of him for good."

When the brief chatter ended, she hurried up the stairs to her room.

Behind her bedroom door, Gabriela collapsed onto the bed, hugged a pillow to her chest, and cried into the cotton until her breath hitched.

All along, she had known she and Wesley lived in different worlds, and their story was bound to end badly.

After she had discovered that Wesley was the man she had slept with, she'd thrown herself into fighting for a chance with everything in her.

Not until this moment did she understand she never even had a chance to fight.

From the crib, Truett stirred awake, ready to let loose a wail. The instant he spotted Gabriela beside him, the pent-up cry melted into gurgling giggles, his tiny hands and feet wriggling in a frenzy.

At the sight, Gabriela's tears broke into soft laughter, warmth easing the tight ache in her chest.

With a steady breath, she lifted Truett into her arms, breathing in his scent.

"Hey, Truett — your dad's about to get engaged to someone else, and honestly, I wasn't sad about it at all. Because letting go of an adorable, handsome little boy like you — that'll be the biggest loss he ever takes."

On the ground floor, a soft hush had settled over the living room.

Catching the regret in Loretta's eyes, Miriam squeezed her hand and murmured, "Don't dwell on it. Gabriela's gorgeous — plenty of good men will like her."

Even so, the worry still clung to Loretta.

Turning to Miriam, she said, “From this point on, we need to start keeping an eye out for outstanding young men. If someone truly fits, we’ll introduce him to Gabriela.”

Chapter 457

After leaving the company, Wesley didn’t allow Rebecca to follow him. He spent hours at a corner table in Golden Days, downing a considerable amount of liquor.

Wesley’s striking good looks and graceful demeanor were undeniable, his every gesture radiating sophistication. With his tie loosened in a relaxed manner, he carried a magnetic, almost dangerous charm — tempting enough to make someone want to approach.

Throughout the night, multiple women tried to engage him in conversation, only to be curtly turned away by Billy.

Wesley kept drinking, glass after glass, with no sign of stopping.

Normally composed and self-disciplined, tonight he was unmistakably intoxicated.

Billy, growing increasingly worried, grabbed the glass from Wesley’s hand. “Mr. Moss, you have got to stop drinking like this!”

Wesley looked up, his tone flat and emotionless. “Put it back.”

Clutching the glass tightly, Billy pleaded with urgency, “Your heart condition can’t handle this. If you keep going, it could give out.”

Wesley’s lips curled into a bitter, mocking smile.

Yes, he had a heart condition — so what?

No amount of restraint or caution could change his fate.

Turning to the bartender, he said, “Six more shots, please.”

The bartender promptly delivered a tray of six tequila shots.

Unable to sway his boss, Billy decided to reach out to Gabriela.

“Miss Haynes, Mr. Moss is drunk!” he exclaimed over the phone.

Gabriela had just finished bathing Truett and was helping him into his pajamas. Hearing the panic in Billy’s voice, her heart sank slightly, though she masked her concern with indifference.

“What does that have to do with me?” she replied coolly.

“Mr. Moss’s heart is weak,” Billy said, his voice breaking with worry. “He has been in a dark mood lately, drinking heavily. I’m scared something terrible will happen if he doesn’t stop, but he won’t listen to me.”

Gabriela responded, “Call his fiancée. She can deal with him.”

Billy’s voice trembled with emotion. “You used to care so much about what he ate or drank! Why are you acting indifferent now? He has already had nearly two dozen shots of tequila. His heart can’t take much more.”

“I’m sorry, Billy, but I need to rest,” Gabriela said firmly, cutting the call.

Billy couldn’t fathom how Gabriela could be so detached about Wesley’s condition. Desperate, he sent her their location with a message. “Miss Haynes, Mr. Moss won’t admit it, but I know he wants to see you!”

Gabriela ignored the text, focusing on dressing Truett.

Suddenly, Truett’s tiny hand grasped her finger, his bright eyes sparkling as he made soft, sweet cooing sounds. A wave of sorrow washed over Gabriela. This was Wesley’s son.

“Truett, should Mommy go check on Daddy and tell him to stop drinking? I don’t want him to get sick, do you?”

Truett giggled, his toothless smile wide and joyful.

Gabriela sighed. “Alright, for you, Truett, I’ll see what’s going on with him.”

She entrusted Truett to Farley’s care, then headed to the kitchen to whip up some snacks and a glass of honey water to help sober Wesley up. Packing them into a small container, she rushed to Golden Days.

Following Billy’s directions, she located Wesley and hurried toward him. But in an instant, she stopped dead in her tracks.

Rebecca was there too.

Wesley reached out, pulling Rebecca into a tight embrace.

Chapter 458

Gabriela’s eyes welled up with tears.

What game was Wesley playing?

She had accepted that he didn't want her because of Allan.

She had accepted that he had chosen a poised, elegant fiancée because they weren't compatible.

But why summon her in the middle of the night just to flaunt their affection? Did he enjoy humiliating her?

It was pouring outside, and her fingers were numb from the cold by the time she arrived.

Wesley clung to Rebecca, murmuring softly, "I'm sorry, please don't leave me."

Rebecca, delighted, wrapped her arms around him, relishing the feel of his strong frame. "I'm not going anywhere, Wesley. I love you so much," she replied.

She was well aware Wesley had mistaken her for someone else, but she had no intention of correcting him. This was the perfect opportunity to solidify her place in his life and erase Gabriela from his thoughts.

Gabriela's pent-up anger boiled over, her grip tightening on the container of snacks.

She had gone out of her way to bring him sobering treats.

In a fit of rage, Gabriela hurled them at Wesley's head.

Her aim faltered, and the treats struck Rebecca instead, bursting on impact and splattering her outfit.

Startled, Rebecca swiped at the mess, inadvertently sending it flying onto Wesley.

"Who dares throw food at me? Show yourself!" Rebecca shouted, furious.

Gabriela ducked beneath a nearby booth, using the chaos to slip away unnoticed.

As she fled Golden Days, she collided with someone.

Fiona, knocked to the ground, snapped, "Watch where you're going!"

Spotting Gabriela, her expression soured. "You again? Why are you always in my way? Such bad luck! Help me up, now."

Gabriela, her hands sticky with honey water and crumbs, initially ignored her.

Fiona sneered, "I heard GD dropped your company. Your reputation is in the gutter. Help me up, and I might not make things worse for you."

"You asked for it. Don't blame me," Gabriela muttered, extending a hand to pull Fiona up.

Fiona's hand instantly became coated in sticky honey water and crumbs, the mess clinging unpleasantly to her fingers. "Gabriela, you're disgusting!" she spat, repulsed.

Without a word, Gabriela brushed past her and hurried off.

Fiona grumbled, "What's wrong with—"

Before she could finish, an angry voice cut through. "Fiona, was that you?"

Turning, Fiona saw Rebecca storming toward her.

Grabbing Fiona's sticky hand and seeing the crumbs, Rebecca accused, "So it was you!"

Fiona was stunned. "Rebecca, let go! What the hell are you talking about?"

Rebecca shot back, "You moron! You couldn't even handle Gabriela, and now you're coming for me? Unbelievable!"

"How dare you call me a moron!" Fiona snapped, grabbing Rebecca's hair. "Apologize, or you'll regret it."

Rebecca had been savoring her moment with Wesley, only for it to be ruined when a bag of snacks hit her. She was already furious.

Now the culprit had the nerve to act superior? Her polished demeanor shattered as she stomped her heel onto Fiona's foot. "You're begging for trouble!"

Fiona yelled in pain, intensifying the brawl by yanking at Rebecca's hair and dress.

Rebecca's eyes burned with rage, and she dove forward without hesitation. In a flash, the two elegantly attired women were embroiled in a heated scuffle, grappling and ripping at each other's outfits.

The doorman, shocked by the chaotic scene, hurriedly summoned the bar manager.

Chapter 459

The manager of Golden Days hadn't arrived yet, but Brenden had.

It had been ages since he last came here, and in his foul mood, he decided a drink was exactly what he needed.

What he didn't expect was to walk straight into a scene of pure chaos. His eyes swept over Fiona, her hair tangled and messy, before he immediately reached out and pulled Rebecca aside.

Up until then, Rebecca and Fiona had been locked in a stalemate, neither giving ground. With Brenden stepping in, Rebecca suddenly lost her balance, and Fiona seized the advantage without hesitation.

Fiona's grip tightened, yanking out strands of Rebecca's hair in clumps, while the sound of fabric tearing followed as two buttons popped from her collar.

Rebecca cried out in pain. "Fiona, you'll regret this!"

At last, the bar's manager arrived, quickly scattering the curious crowd that had gathered.

But Fiona and Rebecca were still entangled in their vicious fight.

Not wanting to take sides, the manager turned pale and hurried off in search of Wesley.

Seeing Fiona pressing her advantage, Brenden finally stepped forward and pulled her back.

She kicked and struggled against him, her voice sharp with fury. “Let go of me, Brenden! I need to teach her a harsh lesson!”

Both women were daughters of wealthy families, proud and stubborn, neither willing to bow her head.

Leaning close, Brenden spoke quietly. “Rebecca’s here, which means Wesley might be too. Do you really want him to see you like this?”

The words hit their mark. Fiona froze, her breath heavy, then hissed through clenched teeth, “Then why are you still standing here? Get me out of this place!”

Without another word, Brenden guided her out to the parking lot, slipped her into his car, and drove her home. Once there, he arranged for someone to deliver fresh clothes.

After a hot shower, Fiona stepped out with her hair still damp, looking refreshed and renewed. “Thanks for today, Brenden.”

Though his reputation as a flirt preceded him, she had never thought much of his charm. Yet, for once, she had to admit—he seemed like a decent man when he teamed up with her against Rebecca.

Her thoughts drifted back to how she had once played matchmaker, pushing Brenden toward Gabriela, realizing that the woman owed her a thank you for it.

Hearing her words, Brenden's expression dimmed. A pang of sorrow cut through him. "I only ever wanted to stand up for Gabriela."

He had once merely suspected Gabriela had feelings for Wesley. Now he was certain—one hundred percent certain.

He said, "Wesley once had Gabriela working as his secretary, and later as a chef at his manor. Turns out he was stringing her along the whole time. Now that she's finally fallen for him, he's preparing to marry someone else. If I had known that back then, I would've stayed in Okburg and devoted everything to pursuing her. But unfortunately, she doesn't feel the same way about me."

Fiona's brow furrowed at his long, self-pitying speech. "Do you really think you can compare to Wesley? You've had more girlfriends than anyone can count and scandals trailing after you. If I were Gabriela, I wouldn't pick you either!"

Most of all, he had been a complete fool.

Back then, she had gone out of her way, scheming and arranging to match him with Gabriela. But he was such a disappointment, unable to make Gabriela fall for him.

In the end, Fiona summed it up bluntly. "You're such an idiot! That's why Gabriela didn't choose you."

“Wesley didn’t choose you either,” Brenden shot back, his frown deepening. “So that makes you an idiot too!”

Fiona froze, staring at him in disbelief.

Was he insane? How dare he throw such crude words at her!

Her anger flared. With a sharp kick, she caught Brenden off guard, and he went crashing to the floor.

He cried out miserably. “Damn you! You kicked me even after I saved you!”

Fiona’s voice was cool, almost bored. “Are you even a man? You scream louder than Rebecca after just one little push.”

“Help me up!” Brenden wailed, his face twisted in pain. “I fell on a cactus! Damn it—my back!”

Fiona rolled her eyes.

Still, she crouched down and helped him to his feet, only to find his back covered in cactus spines when she lifted his shirt.

She let out an exasperated sigh. “Seriously? You keep a cactus that size in here?”

The thing was enormous—bigger than a basketball.

Brenden glared at her, his expression dark. “Either you start pulling these spines out right now, or I’ll head straight to the hospital and then tell Wesley you pushed me down!”

Fiona’s glare met his, both stubborn and unyielding.

Eventually, she relented. She fetched a pair of tweezers and began plucking out the spines one by one.

Brenden yelped in pain every few seconds, his voice echoing through the room.

“Can’t you be gentle?” he complained through clenched teeth.

Fiona rolled her eyes yet again. “Can you keep your voice down?”

Brenden winced and threatened, “I will call Wesley right now!”

Fiona finally gave in. “Fine.”

Just then, Loretta walked in and froze at the sight of Brenden, shirtless, asking Fiona to be gentle.

Fiona, sitting patiently to the side, worked with a surprisingly soft expression. Loretta’s eyes widened in shock, and she instinctively sidestepped as if she had stumbled into something she wasn’t supposed to see.

Noticing movement, Fiona glanced toward the doorway, puzzled. “Did you hear something just now?”

Meanwhile, Brenden’s back throbbed and itched, every prick of pain making him grit his teeth. “Focus,” he muttered. “Stop looking for excuses to get away.”

Her own embarrassing memory from the last time at Brenden’s place suddenly flooded back—she had fainted in fright, thinking there was a ghost present. The thought still made her uneasy, as though it had left a lasting scar. She quickly shoved the memory aside and concentrated on her task.

Loretta, however, slipped quietly out of Brenden’s house, letting out a heavy sigh as she went.

She couldn’t shake the thought of Brenden’s obvious feelings for Gabriela, so she had rushed over intending to urge him to pursue her more seriously. In Loretta’s mind, if Brenden did marry Gabriela, Gabriela could help keep him grounded and stop his wandering eye.

But after witnessing what had just happened between him and Fiona, her plan was in shambles. Were they dating now?

Distracted and upset, Loretta walked on without paying attention. When she reached the curb, she missed the step and twisted her ankle with a sharp jolt of pain.

She was just about to pull out her phone and call Wesley when someone hurried forward to help her up.

“Are you alright, ma’am?” a man asked with concern.

Loretta lifted her gaze and found herself staring at a handsome, energetic young man.

She quickly forced a smile. “I’m fine. Thank you.”

The man was Stewart.

He offered gently, “A sprained ankle can be more serious than it looks. Let me take you to the hospital.”

In the end, Loretta couldn’t refuse his insistence, and he escorted her to the hospital.

After a brief examination, the doctor confirmed it—a sprained ankle.

The doctor prescribed medicine for the pain and swelling, then turned to Stewart with instructions. “Make sure she applies the ointment regularly and avoids walking too much.”

Stewart nodded patiently, even requesting the doctor to add calcium and bone-healing supplements to help her ankle recover faster.

Loretta couldn’t help but notice his refined manner and the quiet nobility that seemed to surround him.

A thought crossed her mind, prompting her to strike up a conversation.

“You’re a kind-hearted young man. Thank you for your help,” she said with genuine praise.

Stewart smiled warmly. “You’re welcome.”

“What’s your name?” Loretta asked curiously.

Stewart answered without hesitation.

She tilted her head, pondering. “Your name sounds familiar. I’m sure I’ve heard it somewhere before.”

Her questions shifted to his family—his parents, then his grandparents.

Though he found it a little unusual, Stewart responded earnestly to each inquiry. Finally, when he mentioned the name of a distant uncle, Loretta’s eyes lit up in recognition.

“Ah! I know his wife. You’re Stacey’s distant nephew! No wonder I thought I’d heard your name before!”

In the village, she often heard her neighbor Stacey Williams boast about her nephew, Stewart Williams—a CEO of a major company.

Stewart, however, was left puzzled. Stacey? Who was she?

What was this elderly lady talking about?