

His kiss 501

Chapter 501

Gabriela had once celebrated his striking features and commanding aura, declaring her attraction with such genuine warmth.

Wesley had never before paid much attention to his own appearance. But today, as he dissected his image with surgical precision, pallor dominated his complexion while his lips appeared drained of all vitality.

The vibrant, spirited youth he had once embodied had evaporated into memory. Though only in his early thirties, he lived with the sad knowledge that his time was short, and with it went any hope of marrying Gabriela and sharing a happy life.

When death finally claimed him, would Gabriela soon move on, chasing a new love?

This possibility tortured him beyond endurance, like venomous thoughts consuming his dwindling sanity and awakening irrational desires — he yearned to bind her to his side, even beyond the grave's threshold.

The phone's sudden shriek shattered his dark contemplations.

Wesley seized tissues to blot his damp features and strode out of the bathroom. Billy's voice carried crisis through the connection. "Mr. Moss, there's been an accident. Mr. Saunders is in emergency surgery."

When Wesley arrived at the hospital, Billy was anxiously pacing outside the emergency room.

“Where is Brenden? How severe are his injuries?” Wesley demanded.

“Surgery continues,” Billy responded without hesitation. “Mr. Saunders suffered a bottle strike to his skull and hemorrhaged extensively.”

He then unraveled the evening’s catastrophic events: he had escorted Brenden to a project negotiation, where their client had selected Golden Days as their meeting ground — a playground where the wealthy squandered fortunes while darker, more twisted entertainments flourished in shadowed corners. Brenden’s negotiations had progressed smoothly until he stepped outside and witnessed a man forcibly dragging a stunning young woman away, her struggles and desperate pleas falling on deaf ears. The man proclaimed her as his wife, dismissing their conflict as nothing more than a lovers’ quarrel. The woman bore clear signs of chemical influence and showed no recognition of her supposed husband.

Brenden, having witnessed such predatory behavior countless times, intervened decisively.

Rage consumed the assailant, who seized a nearby bottle and delivered a devastating blow to Brenden’s skull.

Following his detailed account, Billy’s guilt poured forth like a confession. “Mr. Moss, I failed in my duty to protect Mr. Saunders.”

“It’s not your fault,” Wesley assured him with steady conviction. “Brenden was aware of the risks; he made his own choices.”

Moved by Wesley’s understanding, Billy felt a wave of gratitude wash over him, easing his guilt.

Wesley embodied leadership that combined capability with magnanimity, never unleashing fury upon subordinates for circumstances beyond their control.

His gift for handling crises with fairness while refusing to assign misplaced blame explained why no financial offer could tempt Billy away from his service.

“Deploy several investigators to Golden Days immediately. Ensure that animal receives the harshest possible sentence,” Wesley commanded with arctic precision.

He would ensure that anyone foolish enough to harm his cousin paid the price for their actions.

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Billy promptly responded, “Mr. Moss, I’ve already dispatched someone to look into it.”

They learned that the man who had hurt Brenden was named Glenn Schneider. He preyed on young women who were alone in bars, slipping drugs into their drinks and taking them to his residence to assault them.

He had gotten away with it multiple times.

Yet, for various reasons, his victims were too afraid to come forward or file reports with the authorities.

Emboldened, Glenn sometimes collaborated with others on his hunts. Now, apprehended by the police, he faced prosecution once the evidence was fully gathered.

Wesley instructed, "Ensure the attorney stays on top of this."

Billy nodded respectfully. "I've already contacted Benedict."

While awaiting medical updates, Wesley had Billy notify Brenden's parents.

Neither of them arrived; instead, Loretta received the message.

Gabriela joined her.

By chance, Stewart was still at Gabriela's villa and offered to drive them. Loretta had misunderstood, believing Wesley was the one who was hurt, which filled her with dread.

As soon as she entered the car, Loretta's hands and feet trembled uncontrollably.

She murmured, "Wesley's heart gave out once before, and the doctors barely saved him. After a few peaceful years, why is misfortune targeting him again?" Having lost her husband in her middle years and her daughter later on, Loretta's only remaining family was her grandson, Wesley.

Clinging to Gabriela's hand with desperation, she whispered over and over, "Please, he has to be okay."

Gabriela, feeling Loretta's terror, fought back tears.

Her own anxiety surged.

She hadn't yet revealed to Wesley that he had a son.

Steeling herself, she comforted Loretta. "Try not to worry too much. He will be fine."

Stewart, overhearing the quiver in Gabriela's voice from the driver's seat, quietly pressed the accelerator harder.

They soon reached the hospital.

Outside the emergency room, Billy stood alone, keeping vigil.

Loretta staggered forward. "Where is he?"

"He is still in treatment, Mrs. Larson. Please stay calm," Billy said, steadying her.

Just then, Wesley approached from the corridor, having finished a phone call. Spotting Gabriela and the others, he looked surprised. "Grandma? What are you doing here?"

Gabriela, hearing his voice, spun around in a panic and rushed to him. She grabbed his arm. "Wesley, are you okay? Where are you hurt? Why are you walking around like this? Where is the doctor? What did they say?"

Seeing her fear and concern, Wesley froze, then realized she thought he was the one injured.

His throat tightened, and in a low, husky voice, he said, "I'm fine."

Tears spilled from Gabriela's eyes as she stepped forward and hugged him, overwhelmed with relief. "Thank God."

Her hands had trembled the entire drive, gripped by fear. Now, seeing him unharmed, her heart eased, and she could only hold him and cry. Stewart watched Gabriela's tight embrace, his eyes narrowing

slightly. She held Wesley so fiercely; her feelings for him were undeniable. Despite his engagement, her devotion hadn't wavered.

The realization stung Stewart, his fist clenching at his side.

His earlier post mocking Wesley now felt foolish.

Wesley held a place in Gabriela's heart he could never touch.

Wesley's heart stirred as Gabriela clung to him. Instinctively, he wanted to return the embrace.

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But after a moment, he gently pushed her away, his tone tinged with coldness.

"I'm not the one hurt."

Gabriela froze, her tears halting.

Wesley wasn't injured?

Relief washed over her, but embarrassment followed her intense reaction.

Softly, she asked, "Then who is?"

With a calm voice, Wesley answered, "Brenden."

Loretta's briefly settled heart jolted again. "What?!"

Wesley gave a concise explanation, and Loretta immediately cursed Glenn, her anger flaring as if she would confront him herself.

Gabriela, worried Loretta might distress herself further, reassured her, "Don't worry. Mr. Saunders will pull through."

Soon, the doctor emerged.

He announced, "The patient is awake and out of immediate danger. However, he has a mild concussion and some prior injuries, so he will need to stay hospitalized for at least two weeks."

Billy, relieved to hear that Brenden was out of danger, hurried to arrange the admission.

Nurses later wheeled Brenden to a VIP room.

When Brenden regained consciousness and saw so many people around his bed, he was touched.

“Why is everyone here?” Noticing Gabriela’s red-rimmed eyes, he felt even more moved. “Gabriela, were you crying because you were worried about me?”

Gabriela pushed down her swirling thoughts and smiled. “I’m just glad you’re okay.”

Loretta, her panic subsiding, scolded him out of care. “Brenden, you shouldn’t have rushed into things alone. Don’t play hero like that again.”

“It was urgent,” Brenden said. “If I hadn’t stepped in, that guy would have dragged the girl into his car. By the way, Wesley, that man’s dangerous. Get Benedict on this and make sure he is locked up for good!”

Wesley nodded. “I will.”

Brenden, noticing Wesley’s stern expression, felt uneasy.

Since he had disrupted the engagement party, Wesley had been distant. Even with his serious injuries, Wesley hadn’t offered a word of concern.

Feeling down, Brenden asked, “Wesley, are you upset because I didn’t seal the deal today?”

Wesley’s tone was cool. “Don’t overthink it. Just focus on recovering.”

A nurse entered, urging everyone to leave. “The patient needs his medication and rest.”

Brenden’s injuries were significant — a bottle had struck him hard, and it was sheer luck the damage hadn’t done anything serious to his skull.

The others exited the room.

After the chaotic night, it was past 2 a.m. Exhausted, Wesley suggested everyone head home while he stayed.

Stewart slid behind the wheel once more, driving Gabriela and Loretta home.

The next morning, Loretta arrived with breakfast.

Entering the room, she saw Wesley by the window, lost in thought, his silhouette strikingly solitary.

“Wesley, why are you up so early?” she asked with concern.

Wesley turned around. “Old habits. I’m used to getting up this early.”

Loretta didn’t press, glancing at Brenden, still asleep, and said softly, “Eat some breakfast.”

Wesley grabbed a pancake and bit into it.

The flavor was surprisingly delightful.

Though he hadn’t felt hungry, he reached for another. Loretta smiled and asked, “Tasty, isn’t it? Gabriela made it.”

Wesley paused.

“She woke up early to cook but said she couldn’t come — she had work to handle.” Loretta sighed.
“Yesterday, I saw how much Gabriela cares for you...”

Last night, Gabriela’s public embrace of Wesley had revealed her feelings, and Loretta had sensed the depth of it.

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Loretta's greatest wish was to see Wesley marry Gabriela.

She even regretted once trying to pair Gabriela with Stewart.

Wesley broke into her thoughts. "Grandma, Gabriela and I are just good friends. The only reason she hugged me last night was that she was worried about me. Please don't jump to conclusions; it could hurt her reputation."

Loretta was clearly upset. "I see."

She felt disappointed that Wesley had no romantic feelings for Gabriela. But remembering something else, she let the matter drop.

"Wesley, since your engagement with Rebecca didn't go through, are you holding a grudge against Brenden?"

Wesley frowned slightly. "Why do you ask that?"

"Brenden can be quite reckless sometimes. Despite his pitiable childhood with no parents to care for him, he remains kind at heart — a trait we truly ought to commend. You shouldn't be too hard on him," Loretta said.

Wesley lowered his eyes and stayed silent.

“Your engagement ceremony was interrupted, but you can always pick another day. Don’t hold it against him. From now on, go easy on Brenden, and don’t give him too much pressure. His nature can’t handle it,” Loretta sighed.

“Grandma.” Wesley looked up, his tone firm. “Please don’t interfere with company matters. Brenden’s parents are divorced, and the Moss family barely acknowledges him. Uncle Casper doesn’t care for him. The last time he made a mess, Uncle Casper had him whipped. Now he ended up in the ER, yet still, neither of his parents came.”

Loretta’s expression darkened with pity. Brenden had parents, yet lived as though he had none.

“I’ve given him projects to train him,” Wesley continued. “One day, he’ll need to manage Apex Group. If he doesn’t work hard, how can he take over?”

Loretta’s eyes widened. “Handing Apex Group to him? That’s too much, isn’t it?”

Her affection for Brenden was real, but he wasn’t her blood relative. Apex Group had been built by Wesley — how could it be handed off so easily?

Wesley explained, “My grandfather’s been pressing me to attend meetings at Moss Group headquarters — his way of signaling that he wants me to take over the family business.”

Loretta was even more startled. “He expects you to run the family business?” Given Wesley’s poor health, it was a daunting responsibility.

“Yes.” Wesley nodded. “I can’t manage both Apex and Moss Group. Letting Brenden take Apex is the best choice.”

Loretta sighed. “No wonder you’re pushing him so hard. Well, this is actually a good thing for him since he’ll have real standing. When he returns to the Moss family, his cousins won’t dare mock him.”

Just then, a faint whimper broke the air.

Both of them turned.

Brenden had woken up, tears brimming in his eyes. He’d heard everything.

Choked with emotion, he sat up. “Wesley, you’ve treated me so well. I misunderstood you before. I’m sorry!”

Brenden tried to hug his cousin, but Wesley stopped him with a palm to his forehead. “Don’t cry. It’s ugly.”

Despite Wesley's coldness, Brenden was deeply moved. He turned and clung to Loretta instead.
"Loretta, Wesley is really good to me. I'll study hard and stop causing trouble. I'll repay him!"

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"Alright, I know you're a good boy." Loretta patted his shoulder, then urged him to eat.

For her, his health mattered most.

Brenden happily finished the breakfast.

By midday, Fiona had caught wind of the news and hurried to the hospital.

She scolded Brenden for keeping his serious injury from her.

"I didn't want to worry you," Brenden said.

She glared at the bandages on his head, her voice sharp. "Don't you ever play the hero again! Do you hear me?"

But Brenden brushed it off. "Don't worry. Wesley hired the best lawyer — the man who attacked me won't escape justice."

Now that he knew Wesley was grooming him as a successor, his resentment had turned into admiration.

Every mention of Wesley was now laced with pride.

Seeing he wasn't gravely hurt, Fiona calmed down and asked about the attack. Brenden eagerly recounted the events of the previous night.

Hearing there had been a knife, Fiona's heart lurched with fear.

"Brenden, if you ever involve yourself in something like that again, I'll cut ties with you!" she snapped.

As they spoke, a knock sounded at the door.

"Come in," Brenden called, assuming it was a nurse.

But a young, pretty woman walked in instead. She went straight to his bedside and suddenly knelt.

Brenden jumped in alarm. "Who are you? What do you think you're doing?"

“Mr. Saunders, thank you for saving me!” she cried.

The woman was Daisy Scott, the one nearly dragged into a car last night. Upon hearing her rescuer had nearly died from his injuries, she rushed over in gratitude.

Brenden quickly waved her up. “It was nothing — please stand.”

But Daisy refused.

Brenden finally asked Fiona to help her.

With clear reluctance, Fiona yanked her up. “Get on your feet.”

Daisy rose, her gaze lingering on Brenden. Even with his bandages, his charm hadn’t dimmed, and her heart raced.

“Mr. Saunders,” she said firmly, “you were hurt because of me. I owe you everything.”

“No worries.” Brenden smiled warmly. “But as a young woman, you shouldn’t go to such places alone.”

Fiona's patience snapped. Her tone turned icy. "And how exactly do you plan to repay him?"

Daisy blushed, her voice softening. "I really want to take care of you. Would you like me to be your girlfriend?"

Brenden froze.

Fiona's face went dark.

She shouldn't have asked that. Given his nature, Brenden was surely thrilled, though he tried to hide it.

Fiona cut in sharply. "Brenden already has a girlfriend. Calling yourself repayment isn't gratitude — it's shameless."

Daisy's expression fell. "Mr. Saunders, is that true? Do you really have a girlfriend?"

Brenden nodded at once — he didn't want her as his girlfriend.

He was pursuing Gabriela, and if she agreed, he'd marry her without hesitation.

“Who is she?” Daisy pressed. “Is she prettier than me?”

Before Brenden could answer, Fiona slipped her arms around him and rested her head on his shoulder, her voice cold and edged with warning. “Don’t you think I’m prettier than you?”

Daisy’s cheeks flushed with shame.

It was only then that she realized she had just tried to steal a man right in front of his girlfriend.

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Daisy offered a quick, airy apology. “I’m sorry, Mr. Saunders. I didn’t realize you were already taken.”

With a playful tilt of her head, she added, “No pressure, but if you ever change your mind, I’m here. I’d love to be your next.”

Fiona’s cheeks burned crimson as her glare sliced toward Brenden like a dagger.

Brenden floundered, his words tumbling out in a rush. “Don’t wait for me. I’m not breaking up. Ever!”

A flicker of disappointment crossed Daisy's face, but she didn't falter. With a knowing smile, she slipped him a folded slip of paper. "Here's my number. Call me anytime, even at three in the morning. My phone stays on. Always."

With a casual wave, she walked out of the hospital room.

Brenden stared at the digits in his hand, his mind adrift. He knew he was attractive, but he hadn't expected admiration this direct and unwavering. A spark of smug satisfaction curled in his chest. If only Gabriela could be swayed so easily.

Fiona's glare lingered, sharp and unrelenting, pinning him exactly where he sat.

The moment she caught sight of Brenden grinning like a fool at the scrap of paper, her temper ignited. In one swift motion, she yanked it from his hand, shredded it to confetti, and tossed it straight into the trash.

Brenden blinked, stunned. "What the hell, Fiona? What are you doing?"

Her voice dripped with biting sarcasm. "Oh, don't play innocent. Were you actually planning to call her? Didn't you say you were going to change? Turn over a new leaf?"

Her eyes blazed as she pressed on, every word sharp as a blade. "A random admirer bats her lashes and suddenly you're giddy? Have you decided to give up on chasing after Gabriela as well?"

Each syllable ratcheted up her fury, her thoughts darkening.

A shameless womanizer like Brenden must have loved every second of Daisy's attention. If she hadn't walked in when she did, he'd have been chasing that girl before the ink on the phone number had dried.

"I am trying to win Gabriela's heart!" Brenden shot back, his voice rough with frustration. "I think about her every damn day. But she's never shown the slightest interest in me. I just don't know what to do."

Fiona scoffed, her anger sharp and unyielding. "If you ever want her to take you seriously, maybe start by quitting the flirting and stop acting like every woman you meet is an option."

Brenden's expression hardened, though there was a flicker of hurt beneath his bravado. "That's not fair. I'm not like that, not really."

Before Fiona could deliver another cutting retort, the door creaked open and a nurse stepped in, wheeling the IV stand toward Brenden.

As the nurse finished adjusting his IV, she formed a small heart with her fingers and flashed him a sweet smile. "Take care and get well soon, Mr. Saunders."

Brenden froze for a beat, caught off guard, before managing a polite, "Thank you."

From her chair in the corner, Fiona's sneer deepened.

Even flat on his back in a hospital bed, the man couldn't stop attracting attention. Typical.

When the nurse finally left, Fiona folded her arms and let the sarcasm drip. "Well, well. Your charm knows no limits, doesn't it? Popular everywhere you go."

The jab was sharp, deliberate.

Brenden turned toward her, bewildered and a little frustrated.

He'd barely spoken to the nurse, much less flirted.

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"I didn't even say anything! Other than 'thank you' and 'please come in,' I swear I kept my mouth shut."

But Fiona wasn't buying it. She rolled her eyes, refusing to dignify his defense with an answer.

A sharp rap on the door cut through the tension, followed by the click of the handle. Another nurse stepped inside, cradling a bouquet of fresh roses. "Mr. Saunders, these are for you," she said with a cheerful smile, "wishing you a speedy recovery."

Brenden blinked at the flowers in his hands, completely lost. “Wait, do patients get flowers now?”

The nurse laughed softly. “Not usually. A girl named Daisy asked us to deliver them.”

As the explanation spilled out, the situation became absurd. Daisy had been parading his name around the hospital, telling anyone who would listen about his heroic deeds.

The nurses were now smitten, and Daisy had arranged for daily flower deliveries for the next two weeks.

Across the room, Fiona’s expression darkened, her simmering irritation settling into a quiet, dangerous calm.

Brenden stared down at the roses, caught between amusement and panic, unsure if he should keep them or toss them straight into the trash.

The air between them grew thick and tense.

Lowering his gaze, Brenden’s eyes caught on Fiona’s glossy, perfectly shaped nails, with delicate lettering etched across them. His face brightened, as if he’d stumbled on the perfect way to break the icy silence.

“Hey,” he said, his tone almost hopeful, “where’d you get your nails done? The lettering’s really nice! Maybe you could take me to get mine done too.”

Fiona just stared at him, utterly speechless.

Was he serious? Of all things, nails? Right now?

She had no patience for his nonsense, not with her temper still simmering. Turning sharply, she yanked open the door, desperate to get out of the room, only to nearly collide with Gabriela.

Gabriela, holding an elegant fruit basket, blinked in surprise. She'd been meaning to visit Brenden. After all, he had saved her more than once, and courtesy demanded at least a quick check-in.

What she hadn't expected was to run straight into Fiona.

Fiona's eyes darted to the basket, her expression souring like spoiled milk.

Her voice turned sharp and cold. "And what exactly are you doing here?"

"Mr. Saunders is injured," Gabriela replied evenly. "I came to see how he's doing."

Without waiting for a response, she stepped past Fiona and into the room with quiet grace.

Brenden's face lit up the moment he saw her. "Gabriela! What a surprise. What brings you here?"

"Loretta mentioned you weren't well," Gabriela said softly, placing the basket on the bedside cabinet. "I thought I'd stop by and check on you. Are you feeling any better?"

"Much better now," Brenden said, warmth flooding his voice. "Oh, and that sandwich this morning? Amazing. Loretta said you made it."

"I was up early, so I figured, why not?"

A faint blush touched Gabriela's cheeks. The truth was, the sandwich had been for Wesley. Brenden's share was merely an afterthought.

"It was better than anything I've bought. I wouldn't mind another one tomorrow," Brenden said with a boyish grin.

"If I wake up early enough, I'll make one and ask Loretta to bring it over," Gabriela replied, her tone light but kind.

Their conversation flowed with an ease that made the room hum with quiet harmony.

Except for Fiona, who stood frozen on the sidelines as her irritation stirred within her. “Brenden, I’m leaving.”

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Brenden didn’t even glance her way. “Alright. Goodbye.”

Fiona let out a cold snort. Her anger toward him only intensified.

What was so special about being able to make a sandwich?! She could hire ten chefs, each one better than Gabriela, without blinking an eye.

Seething, Fiona stormed out of the hospital, her heels clicking sharply against the polished floor.

When she arrived home, the image of Brenden’s hungry, almost childlike grin replayed in her mind. Before she knew it, she was marching into the kitchen, demanding the chef teach her how to cook.

By mid-afternoon, two pots lay ruined, the counter looked like a war zone, and the air was thick with the acrid smell of something very, very burnt. The chef, pale and wide-eyed, barely escaped with his life.

With Daisy’s testimony and the undeniable evidence, Glenn was found guilty of abduction.

Thanks to Benedict's relentless efforts, the sentence was handed down to six years behind bars.

The moment the news broke, Fiona wasted no time in coming to the hospital and telling Brenden about it.

Brenden practically lit up. "Wesley is awesome!"

Fiona's lips curved into a small, satisfied smile. "With such good news, it's only right we celebrate with food."

Brenden's grin faltered, replaced with a thin, uneasy smile. "I'm not really hungry yet."

Despite having vowed never to step foot in a kitchen, Fiona had somehow taken it upon herself to learn how to cook.

That, in itself, wasn't the problem.

The problem was that every lesson ended with Brenden being drafted as her official taste tester.

And honestly? Each bite was a brush with death.

Fiona's frown deepened. "Well? Are you eating or not?"

Brenden forced a cheerful grin. "Of course! I'll eat!"

With a flourish, Fiona opened the food box.

Inside was a neat row of delicate, golden-yellow cookies, each one sandwiching what looked like a soft layer of lemon filling.

Brenden exhaled in relief.

At least today's creation looked normal. It even smelled good.

Maybe, just maybe, her cooking had finally turned a corner. He reached for a cookie, cautious hope in his eyes.

The moment he bit into the cookie, his smile froze mid-chew. His eyes widened, disbelief written all over his face, and he slowly turned to glare at Fiona. Fresh from her first few lessons in the kitchen, Fiona beamed with anticipation. "Well? How is it? Is it good?"

Brenden chewed twice, deliberately forcing himself to swallow the asphalt-like, overly sweet bite.

With a strained grin, he said, "It's okay."

The cookie clung stubbornly to his teeth, and the flavor was aggressively sticky. Fiona had somehow perfected the art of making something truly inedible. "If you like it, have a few more," she said brightly, grabbing another cookie and holding it toward him like a proud mother.

Just then, Wesley walked in.

Relief washed over Brenden. "Hey, Wesley! You're finally here!"

Wesley barely glanced at him, indifferent as ever.

Brenden offered, "Fiona made these herself. They're actually pretty good. Want to try one?"

If he had to endure this torture, he thought, they might as well suffer together.

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A wave of unease washed over Fiona as Brenden offered Wesley the cookies she had made.

She knew her cooking skills were nothing to boast about — certainly not something she'd want Wesley to taste.

Brenden could be her guinea pig, but Wesley was different. He was the man she loved, and the last thing she wanted was to embarrass herself in front of him.

Thankfully, Wesley only glanced at the box of cookies before looking away.

"No, thanks. Those look amazing, but I couldn't eat another bite," he said.

In recent days, Gabriela had been preparing meals for Loretta to bring to the hospital. Wesley enjoyed her cooking; it made him feel cared for by the person he truly wanted.

Brenden, however, was disappointed.

The only reason he dragged Wesley into this was that he couldn't believe anyone would praise something so unpalatable.

If Wesley dismissed it, maybe Fiona would abandon the idea of cooking altogether.

Seeing his plan fail, Brenden tried another angle. “Wesley, did you want to talk to me about the project?”

In the past, he dreaded project proposals and reports more than anything. But after enduring Fiona’s food, nothing seemed daunting anymore. Nothing — truly nothing — could be more punishing than choking down Fiona’s food.

“Don’t worry about it,” Wesley replied calmly. “Focus on recovering.”

He had only come to check Brenden’s condition.

But Brenden said eagerly, “I think I’m fine now. I can be discharged today!”

Wesley frowned. Before this, Brenden had whined to Loretta about company projects. Why the sudden change?

Just as Brenden was about to insist further, Wesley’s phone rang.

It was Delia, who was responsible for taking care of Myah.

“Mr. Moss, Miss Espinoza’s eyes suddenly hurt so badly she’s rolling on the floor in pain!”

Wesley’s face darkened. “Did you call an ambulance? Get her to the hospital immediately.”

“I’ve already called one — we’re waiting for it now,” Delia said.

Even with an ambulance on the way, Wesley was restless.

He drove straight to Myah’s place, arriving just as she was taken to the hospital.

Loretta and Gabriela, brought again by Stewart, also rushed over.

After Gabriela had cleaned Stewart’s clothes, she’d planned to return them to his office, but he insisted on picking them up himself. Conveniently, he offered to drive them to the hospital.

When Wesley saw Stewart again, irritation flickered across his face.

Why was this man always hovering around Gabriela?

But Myah's condition demanded his full attention, a responsibility that forced him to rein in his emotions.

Once she received a painkiller, Myah calmed down.

She couldn't see, but she sensed the crowd around her and said, "I'm sorry for worrying everyone."

"It's fine — really," Gabriela reassured, sitting beside her and taking her hand. "If you ever feel uncomfortable, promise you'll tell us."

Myah nodded faintly, leaning into her warmth.

The test results came quickly.

"The pain was caused by a foreign object irritating her eyes," the doctor explained. "Keep her eyes clean, and stick to a bland diet."

Wesley and Gabriela listened carefully.

Myah had been diagnosed with uveitis at three. After seven years of failed treatments, she had lost her sight completely.

Allan had taken her everywhere for help, and later Wesley did the same, but no doctor had ever given them hope.

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Wesley asked, his voice tight, “Doctor, could this pain mean her sight is coming back?”

At his words, Myah’s head snapped up, a glimmer of hope flashing across her face.

But the doctor shook his head. “Once blindness from uveitis sets in, recovery is virtually impossible.”

Myah’s shoulders slumped again.

She had known this all along. Good fortune had never been hers.

Gabriela squeezed her hand. “Don’t be afraid, Myah. We’ll always be with you.”

Myah responded with a soft, “Mm.”

The doctor prescribed medication and allowed her to go home.

Back at the house, Myah asked to be left alone.

She had accepted her blindness years ago, but Wesley's question had reignited a fragile hope, only for the doctor to snuff it out. Bitterness welled up inside her.

Why had life been so cruel — taking her sight, her brother, and now even threatening to take Gabriela away?

At the hospital earlier, she had heard Wesley call Gabriela's name, the care in his voice unmistakable.

He was trying to steal Gabriela, the woman her late brother had cherished most.

Myah clenched her fists. She would never allow it.

That night, she sat outside in the cold, lost in thought.

Delia tried to coax her in, but when Myah refused, she finally called Gabriela. "Miss Espinoza always takes your words to heart. Please, could you speak with her?" Delia pleaded.

The night air was bitterly cold, and Myah had lingered outside far too long.

Delia fretted she'd catch a chill.

Gabriela rushed over, heart twisting at the sight of Myah in the yard.

"Myah," she said softly, kneeling beside her wheelchair. "It's too cold. Let's go inside, alright?"

Myah tilted her head. "Gabriela? Why are you here?"

"You've always seen me as a sister," Gabriela smiled. "So will you listen to me, just this once?"

After a long silence, Myah whispered, "I will."

She would abide by whatever Gabriela said, for her brother's deepest affection had always been reserved for Gabriela.

Gabriela wheeled her back in.

Delia turned up the heat and brought warm milk.

Gabriela gently persuaded her to take a bath, and Myah followed every word.

Later, Myah lay in bed, clutching Gabriela's hand as she drifted into sleep.

Gabriela stayed awake, her thoughts heavy.

Myah kept everyone at a distance — even Wesley and Loretta.

If she stayed this withdrawn, it would only hurt her in the long run.

Gabriela knew she had to find a way to help her open up.

The next morning, after preparing breakfast, Gabriela finally left.

Outside, she noticed a red Bugatti parked there with Stewart behind the wheel.

Surprised, she asked, "What are you doing here?"

Stewart pressed a finger to his lips. "Shh. I just arrived. Get in."

Gabriela glanced at the car's roof.

A tall, beautiful silk floss tree stood by the roadside, its branches full of pink flowers.

If he had just arrived, how had so many flowers already fallen across it?

How long had the car really been parked under the tree?

Gabriela felt a strange unease. No matter how she tried to dismiss it, the possibility remained — that Stewart held a secret affection for her.