

His kiss 511

Chapter 511

Gabriela hesitated. “Mr. Williams—”

Before she could finish, Stewart cut in, “Gabriela, I’ve heard of a doctor who’s remarkably skilled at treating blindness.”

Her heart leapt, eyes widening with sudden hope. “Which hospital are they with? We need to take Myah to them right away!”

Gabriela clung to even the faintest chance, desperate for a cure.

Stewart replied, “He’s settled in a quiet little village called Silvermoon Village, out in Xamfield.”

The doctor was eccentric — he had refused to join big hospitals and insisted on practicing only in his own village. Patients needed a personal introduction before the doctor would even consider seeing them, and they had to travel to Silvermoon Village themselves.

He never made house calls, no matter the fee.

Stewart went on, his tone cautious, “I only heard about him through a friend. He’s not a licensed doctor, so I can’t say for sure if he can really help with Myah’s sight.”

Gabriela leaned forward, her eyes burning with determination. “Even if the chance is slim, we have to try. Would you mind taking us there?”

Stewart’s smile softened as he gave a small nod. “Of course not. I wouldn’t have brought it up otherwise. But before we go, you’ll need to let Wesley know first.”

Stewart knew that Wesley had taken it upon himself to act as Myah’s guardian after her brother’s passing. And Wesley must have already spent a fortune seeking out the country’s top specialists, so the mention of an uncertified doctor tucked away in a remote village would surely raise his doubts.

“I’ll speak with him,” Gabriela promised firmly.

That same day, she and Loretta headed to Wesley’s apartment to let him know about the doctor.

The moment they explained, Wesley’s expression hardened with doubt.

He had already taken Myah to see the most celebrated experts in the field, each of whom had delivered the same grim verdict: her blindness was irreversible.

Her eyes no longer perceived even the faintest trace of light, making any surgery or medicine utterly futile.

Gabriela's tone held quiet determination. "Come on, we need to give it a chance."

Loretta quietly echoed her sentiment, unwilling to give up hope.

Wesley finally inclined his head. "Tell Stewart to pass me the directions. I'll come along."

Gabriela frowned, noticing Wesley's pale face. "Those mountain trails are rough, and once we reach the entrance of the village, it's still a long trek on foot. You're not fully recovered yet — it's better if you don't push yourself."

The road to Silvermoon Village was notoriously difficult, buried so deep in the mountains that even GPS signals failed.

The memory of Wesley's recent hospital stay still weighed on Gabriela's heart.

She couldn't bear the thought of him enduring such a punishing journey.

Besides, a crowd might only provoke the temperamental doctor they sought.

Wesley listened to Gabriela's explanation with a deepening frown, his doubts only hardening. For Myah's sake, he was prepared to make the attempt, but the thought of Gabriela traveling alone with Stewart unsettled him.

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"I'll allow you to take Myah to see the doctor, but I'm coming along too," he said firmly.

Just as their conversation hung in the air, the doorbell chimed unexpectedly.

Standing at the threshold was Rebecca.

The moment her gaze fell on Gabriela, her expression cooled. She glided forward with practiced grace, slipping her arm through Wesley's and flashing a gentle smile.

"Gabriela, Loretta," she greeted them, her voice syrupy-smooth. "What brings you here today?"

Gabriela kept her reply clipped and polite. "I'm here to discuss something with Mr. Moss."

"What's there to talk about?" Rebecca asked sweetly, resting her head against Wesley's shoulder. "Maybe I can lend a hand?"

Gabriela kept her expression neutral, unwilling to explain further.

Loretta, less restrained, casually mentioned their plan to take Myah to a doctor.

Rebecca quickly turned to Wesley. "You shouldn't push yourself. Let Gabriela go with Mr. Williams."

"Instead. It won't matter who accompanies Myah for her treatment. And with your health the way it is, I'm worried something might happen on the road. I was terrified the last time you collapsed without warning."

Wesley pressed his lips into a thin line, his gaze darkening as he regarded Rebecca in cold silence.

Loretta interjected softly, "Your health isn't strong enough, Wesley. It wouldn't be right to make Gabriela and Stewart look after you on top of everything else."

Watching Wesley and Rebecca nestled so naturally at each other's side, Loretta's lingering hopes for Gabriela as her granddaughter-in-law quietly withered.

Instead, she began to think this trip might be a chance for Gabriela and Stewart to draw closer.

"That's settled," Loretta declared with a firm nod. "They'll leave first thing tomorrow."

Faced with Loretta's insistence, Wesley could only swallow his protest and yield.

Early the next morning, Stewart arrived to set off with Gabriela and Myah.

When the news finally reached Wesley, he was in his office, leafing through a contract.

"Erik had wanted to join as well, worried the long drive might be too exhausting for Mr. Williams. But Mr. Williams insisted that Erik remain behind to watch over the company." Billy added with a sharp edge to his tone, "It's hard to say how long this trip will take. Mr. Williams isn't making the slightest effort to hide what he's really after."

Wesley slowly raised his head, his face a mask of ice.

Under the weight of that cold stare, Billy's legs nearly gave out, and he bit his tongue at once.

It had been Wesley himself who ordered him to monitor the Williams Group, yet now — though he had spoken nothing but the truth — Wesley looked ready to explode.

With a flick of his wrist, Wesley hurled the signed contract at Billy. "Leave."

Billy snatched up the contract and bolted from the room, aware his boss's temper was black as thunder. He took his place outside the office like a guard on duty.

Not long after, Rebecca came gliding down the hall with a steaming cup of coffee, but Billy quickly blocked her path.

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"I'm sorry, Miss Howard, but Mr. Moss left explicit instructions not to be disturbed."

Her expression chilled at once.

Who did this fool think he was, trying to stop her? Once she became Mrs. Moss, he'd be the first one thrown out.

Recalling Wesley's earlier warning, Rebecca bit back the sharp retort rising in her throat.

Instead, she leveled Billy with an icy glare before pivoting on her heels, the sharp click of her stilettos echoing down the corridor.

The CEO's office was steeped in silence.

Wesley found himself remembering when Gabriela used to sit across from him as his secretary, her voice filling every corner with chatter. Her words had often been frivolous flattery, yet her animated smile had brightened his days.

Now that she was gone, nothing seemed to hold any color.

With a sharp tug, he loosened his tie and slumped back into the chair, a heaviness pressing down on him.

He shut his eyes, and the image of Gabriela and Stewart admiring flowers together surfaced unbidden.

The memory clawed at him, scattering what little focus he had left.

He had been the one to drive Gabriela away, yet knowing she was by another man's side gnawed at him in a way he could neither ignore nor endure.

Wesley's chest throbbed again, the sharp ache forcing him to pop a pill. Once the burning in his heart eased, he reached for his phone, dialing Gabriela's number again and again.

Each time, the call failed to connect.

Restless and unable to sit still, he snatched up his coat and strode out.

Billy, startled, stepped forward. "Mr. Moss, where are you heading?"

“Silvermoon Village,” Wesley snapped, his voice low and grim.

Silvermoon Village lay tucked deep within a small town in Xamfield. To get there, one had to weave through a narrow valley, then trek across three towering mountains before finally arriving at the hidden settlement.

The road twisted up one mountain and dropped steeply down the next, each curve more nauseating than the last.

Myah, pale and weak, leaned into Gabriela’s shoulder, her stomach rolling from the relentless motion.

Thankfully, Gabriela had packed motion sickness pills. She coaxed Myah to take one, then waited with her by the roadside until Myah’s breathing steadied. After half an hour of rest in the cool mountain air, a bit of color returned to Myah’s cheeks.

“I’m so sorry, Gabriela,” she murmured, guilt weighing on her voice. “I’m slowing everyone down.”

Gabriela smoothed Myah’s hair and offered her a reassuring smile. “Don’t think of it like that. Pretend we’re on a roller coaster — just another adventure. If you’re tired, close your eyes and use my shoulder. Maybe when you wake up, we’ll already be there.”

Myah gave a small, obedient nod. “Okay.”

Stewart remained quiet, his gaze darkening as he studied them.

Myah's reliance on Gabriela was unmistakable, and Gabriela's tender indulgence toward her was just as clear.

It bothered him more than he wanted to admit, seeing them so close.

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Stewart glanced at the sky. Heavy clouds loomed above.

"Let's go," he urged.

His friend had warned him the car could only make it as far as the town. Beyond that, the road was too rough.

They'd have to walk the rest of the way — at least forty minutes.

Since Myah couldn't see anything, it would take even longer.

The village was remote and unfamiliar. If they didn't arrive before dark, anything could happen.

Seeing Myah had regained some strength, Gabriela nodded. "Come on, Myah, let's get moving."

The three of them got back in the car.

Leaning against Gabriela's shoulder, Myah drifted into a light sleep.

In her dreams, the world was full of color again.

She remembered her childhood — her love for drawing, her brother's white shirt, the white roses he planted, the green leaves beneath them.

But after years of blindness, even the boundary between black and white had blurred.

To see the light again, even for one brief day, she would barter away the world without hesitation.

"Myah, Myah — wake up. We're here," Gabriela said, giving her a shake.

Myah's eyes opened to darkness once again, the dream's colors vanishing. She held Gabriela's hand. "Gabriela... do you think my eyes can really be healed this time?"

When Gabriela mentioned taking her to see a doctor, Myah's heart had remained steady, untouched by the suggestion. Wesley had taken her to countless doctors before, all in vain.

Yet now, anxiety stirred inside her.

Gabriela's voice was calm. "We have to give it our best try."

"Okay." Myah nodded.

They climbed out of the car.

A middle-aged man in his fifties approached, dressed in a black cotton jacket.

"Patrick," Stewart greeted at once.

Patrick Strickland, an upright man respected in Silvermoon Village, was a distant relative of Stewart. With his help, seeing the doctor would be easier.

Patrick's eyes fell on Myah. "Is this the young lady in need of treatment?"

Stewart gave a nod.

Myah smiled sweetly. "Nice to meet you, Patrick."

Patrick nodded. "Follow me."

Mountains enclosed the village on three sides, and the winding roads leading in were little more than weed-strewn trails, never graced by a coat of cement. Stewart had pulled up at the entrance to the village, and the group moved forward.

The road was uneven, and Gabriela supported Myah carefully. The sun was sinking.

With no streetlights in the village, darkness made the path dangerous.

"Myah," Stewart offered suddenly. "Let me carry you."

She hesitated. "No need. I'm heavy."

Other than her brother and Gabriela, she wasn't used to such closeness.

Patrick urged, "Let him. The road is treacherous after dark."

Reluctantly, Myah agreed. "Thank you, Stewart."

With Stewart carrying her, their pace quickened. They reached Patrick's home before nightfall.

Patrick's wife, Adalynn Strickland, had already prepared a warm, hearty meal. After dinner, Patrick said, "The spare rooms are ready. Rest for the night — we'll see Dr. Hill tomorrow."

Stewart thanked him repeatedly.

Later, while Gabriela bathed, Myah and Stewart sat in the courtyard.

"Mr. Williams, thank you for helping me find a doctor," Myah said.

Stewart chuckled. "Why so formal all of a sudden?"

"I know what you're after." Her voice lowered, her tone cold. "You're after Gabriela."

Stewart was caught off guard, then smirked. “What if it is? Got a problem with that?”

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“She belongs to my brother,” Myah replied firmly. “I won’t let you two be together.”

Stewart studied her. He remembered her subtle, sly streak — and it unsettled him. “Myah, I went to great lengths to find you a doctor. Is this how you repay me?” he frowned.

“I’m grateful,” she said coldly. “But I won’t trade Gabriela for your help.”

The air tightened between them.

Stewart laughed suddenly. “You’re worried about the wrong person. It’s not me you should watch — it’s Wesley.”

“He is here,” he said, nodding toward the doorway. “Obviously coming for Gabriela.”

At that moment, Wesley appeared, dressed in a black trench coat, Billy following with luggage.

Hearing the footsteps, Myah turned her head. "Wesley?"

"It's me," Wesley said evenly. "I just wrapped up work at the company. I came to see if this doctor is reliable."

"You're so sweet, Wesley," Myah murmured.

Her voice was soft, but her hand clenched into a fist at her side.

Stewart noticed and intentionally added fuel to the fire, stoking Myah's fury. "Mr. Moss, what are you looking for? Gabriela? She's taking a bath."

Wesley withdrew his gaze, his expression calm. "Tell your friend that my assistant and I will be staying tonight."

Stewart's tone chilled. "Sorry. Patrick didn't prepare rooms for you."

"That's fine. I'll ask him myself," Wesley replied coolly.

Even if there were no rooms at Patrick's, there were plenty of homes in the village; he'd find one willing to take them in. And they wouldn't stay for free.

Rain began to fall.

Just then, Gabriela stepped out, fresh from her bath, and stopped short at the sight of Wesley and Billy.
“Mr. Moss? Billy? Why are you here?”

Billy greeted her.

Wesley, straightforward as ever, said, “I’m worried about Myah.”

Gabriela glanced at him. The mountain path was rough, and his health was poor. He looked pale, his lips bloodless.

Concern overtook her irritation. Without hesitation, she took his arm and drew him inside.

Watching, Stewart bent low and whispered into Myah’s ear, “He’s holding Gabriela’s hand.”

Myah’s brow furrowed, though her voice stayed even. “Wesley has a fiancée. Gabriela wouldn’t like him.”

Stewart scoffed. “That fiancée? Just a business deal. And their engagement ceremony was nothing but a fiasco. Why else would he travel all this way if not for Gabriela?”

Myah ignored him and went inside.

In the living room, Wesley sank onto a chair. He didn't look well at all. Gabriela hurried to Adalynn, borrowed a kettle, and boiled hot water.

She handed Wesley a cup and urged him to have some water. Color gradually returned to his face.

With Patrick's approval, Gabriela prepared two rooms for Wesley and Billy.

Their house was large, with space to spare.

Gabriela bustled about making the bed for Wesley, while he stood watching.

The sight of her warmed his chest.

When Gabriela turned, she caught his lingering gaze. She paused.

The sound of rain tapping against the window filled the silence, soft and suggestive.

She took a step closer, tilting her head up. "Wesley, why do you look at me like that?"

He quickly looked away.

But Gabriela pressed on, her voice steady. "Wesley... you still like me, don't you?"

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"I don't like you," Wesley said, his composure swiftly returning as he fixed Gabriela with a cool, steady gaze. "I've been clear about my feelings. The engagement with Rebecca will be rearranged."

The spark in Gabriela's eyes faded slowly.

Wesley's resolve hardened as he added, "Stop asking such foolish questions, or Rebecca might get the wrong idea."

Gabriela's throat tightened, her voice barely a whisper. "I get it. I'm sorry."

She hurried out, her heart heavy with distress.

Unseen by either, Stewart lingered in the shadows outside the room, his fists balled tightly.

That night, sleep eluded them all.

Gabriela rose early the next day to assist Adalynn with breakfast.

Adalynn, fond of Gabriela, showered her with compliments. "I had no idea you were such a talented cook. This is remarkable!"

Gabriela smiled. "Thank you, Adalynn. Have some more if you enjoy it."

Adalynn's affection grew, prompting her to ask, "Are you seeing anyone?"

Caught off guard, Gabriela paused, then replied, "Not at the moment."

Adalynn's face brightened as she eagerly pitched her son. "My son, Levi, is around your age. I bet you would hit it off, but he's away for work right now."

Gabriela felt a quiet relief at his absence.

Adalynn pressed on. "You two could connect on WhatsApp for now. Maybe grab a meal when he's free."

She pulled out her phone, added Gabriela on WhatsApp, and sent her son's contact.

With no other choice, Gabriela reluctantly added Levi Strickland.

Wesley's and Stewart's displeasure was palpable.

Everywhere she went, she seemed to draw unwanted suitors.

As guests, however, neither could voice their irritation in Adalynn's presence.

After breakfast, they headed to Dr. Fred Hill's office.

His home was modest but immaculate, with honeysuckle vines sprawling across the yard.

Fred was drying herbs as they arrived.

Patrick greeted him first.

In his early sixties, Fred had a stern, no-nonsense demeanor that suggested he wasn't one for idle chatter. He seemed difficult to approach.

Fred's gaze swept over the group, pausing briefly on Wesley, then settling on Myah.

"Come inside," he said curtly.

Patrick had already briefed him, so Fred skipped introductions and went straight to examining Myah.

After the checkup, his expression grew grave. He inquired, "Your blindness has persisted for years, hasn't it?"

Myah nodded. "About eleven years."

Fred shook his head. "It's challenging. There's no light perception left."

Myah wasn't shocked, only quietly saddened, her grip tightening on Gabriela's hand.

Wesley had consulted top specialists, all without success. How could a rural doctor possibly succeed?

"It's okay. Thank you, Dr. Hill," Myah said softly.

Fred gave her a lingering look. "Have there been any other symptoms with your eyes lately?" he asked.

"A few days ago, Myah experienced eye pain and visited the hospital," Gabriela interjected quickly. "The doctor prescribed some painkillers." She even produced the prescribed medication for Fred to inspect.

He glanced at it briefly. "There's still a chance."

Gabriela's and Wesley's faces lit up with hope.

"As long as there's a possibility, cost is no issue," Wesley said.

"It's not about money," Fred replied, his tone sharp. "She needs to stay here for two weeks under specialized care. If there is a reaction, we can proceed with targeted treatment."

Myah eagerly agreed. "I'm willing to give it a try!"

No doctor had ever provided such a glimmer of possibility. Perhaps Fred truly had a solution.

Fred stated, "She must remain here for the duration so I can monitor her progress and responses."

Gabriela volunteered instantly, "I'll stay to look after her."

Fred frowned. "I prefer minimal company. She stays alone."

"But Myah is blind. It might be inconvenient for you to look after her..." Gabriela felt a twinge of apprehension.

After all, this was their first encounter with the doctor, and she knew little about him.

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Fred sensed Gabriela's reluctance and snapped, "If you're not on board, leave."

He wouldn't have taken on such a hassle if Myah didn't seem so innocent and vulnerable.

Myah quickly interjected, "Dr. Hill, I'll do as you say!"

She murmured to Gabriela, "Don't worry. I can handle myself."

With a heavy heart, Gabriela glanced at Wesley for his take.

He gave a curt nod. "I respect Myah's decision."

Gabriela softly urged Myah to reach out if she needed anything.

Myah nodded.

Ultimately, Myah remained at Fred's house, while the others had to depart for the time being.

Fred abruptly turned to Wesley. "Stay back. I need a word with you."

Wesley stayed as the group stepped outside.

Noticing Gabriela's anxious look, Patrick reassured her, "Dr. Hill has got a bad temper, but his expertise and integrity are solid. Myah is in good hands. And his wife is kind. They will take good care of Myah."

Stewart added, "Dr. Hill is quirky, but he seems trustworthy."

Gabriela felt a bit more at ease.

After more than an hour, Wesley emerged from Fred's house, his face noticeably drained of color.

Whatever words had passed between them, he appeared shaken.

Billy swiftly stepped forward to offer support.

Gabriela paused but held herself back from approaching.

Since Fred forbade them from staying, they had no choice but to head back to Okburg.

At the village's entrance, Wesley and Stewart spoke in unison. "Get in the car, Gabriela."

Their words clashed, followed by sharp, icy glares.

Recalling Wesley's cold words from the night before, Gabriela forced a smile. "I arrived with Stewart, so I'll ride back with him."

Under Wesley's frosty stare, she climbed into Stewart's car. Before sliding in, Stewart cast a smug glance at Wesley.

When Gabriela and Stewart arrived in Okburg, it was close to midnight.

Both were starving.

Stewart teased, "I went all out helping today. How about you treat me to a midnight bite?"

Gabriela couldn't decline. "Sure thing."

She guided him to a vibrant street, still humming despite the late hour.

Stewart, in his sleek suit, radiated a polished air that set him apart from the crowd.

As they entered a pasta shop, their striking looks and refined presence drew immediate attention. Stewart's evident high status pulled curious glances from women.

Some bold ones even approached to ask for his number.

After turning down two women, Stewart looked at Gabriela and pleaded, "I've never encountered this kind of situation before. You will have to help me out."

“How do you want me to help?” she asked.

Just then, a man approached Gabriela, asking for her contact. She froze.

Stewart grinned. “Sorry, she’s taken.”

The man backed off, too embarrassed to press further.

Stewart’s casual claim of Gabriela as his girlfriend left her slightly uneasy.

He shrugged it off, saying, “It’s the fastest way to end it.”

Gabriela saw his point and let it go, choosing not to linger on the discomfort. After ensuring Stewart could handle spice, she ordered two plates of fiery pasta.

Moments later, two steaming dishes arrived.

Gabriela took a bite and grinned brightly. “It’s exactly as I remember from my college days. I was a regular here.”

Stewart sampled his and flashed an approving thumbs-up. “Impressive! I didn’t expect a place this unassuming to pack such flavor.”

Gabriela chuckled. “Coming from a rich family, you’ve probably never set foot in spots like this. If not for me, you would miss out on this kind of treat forever.”

Her eyes gleamed under the lights, her smile radiant and captivating.

Stewart, enchanted by her expression, felt his spirits rise.

“Wesley is also from a wealthy family,” he said abruptly. “Have you ever brought him here?”

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A hush enveloped Gabriela and Stewart. She didn’t want to respond to his question.

Stewart instantly regretted asking.

He knew he was killing the mood, yet curiosity gnawed at him — he wanted to know everything about Gabriela and Wesley.

Only after speaking did he realize something: he was jealous of Wesley, jealous that Gabriela cared for him so much. And it stung because he had met her first.

After a beat, Stewart gave a dry laugh. “I guess not. A pampered heir like Wesley would never show up in a place like this.”

Gabriela quickly corrected him. “No, it’s because he has a heart condition. He can’t eat spicy food.”

Even if she and Wesley couldn’t be together, she still defended him instinctively. She wouldn’t let someone like Stewart belittle him.

Noticing her mood sink, Stewart pushed down his envy and forced a joke. “Well, his loss. Such good food, and he’ll never taste it.”

Gabriela steadied herself. “Come on, eat. Once we’re done, I’ll buy you an iced latte.”

At the corner, there was a café known for lattes brewed with premium beans — fragrant, rich, best served over ice.

After their late-night snack, they stopped by for lattes to go.

“Let’s drink them at home,” Stewart suggested. “It’s cold out.”

Gabriela noticed the weariness in his eyes; he had been driving for over seven hours in the past two days. A pang of guilt touched her. She urged, "You should head home. I'll take a cab back."

"No way." Stewart smiled. "I'm not letting you ride a cab alone this late. Get in!"

Gabriela gave in.

Soon, they reached Rosemont Gardens.

Gabriela hesitated, then offered, "Want to come in for coffee?"

"No need." Stewart lifted the latte beside him. "This is enough."

Gabriela stepped out. "I'll head in. Thank you for everything."

"You're welcome."

Gabriela had barely walked a few steps when Stewart noticed a black Mercedes parked down the street. His jaw tightened. Wesley again.

If Wesley didn't want Gabriela, why linger around her?

Stewart abruptly got out of the car. "Gabriela — wait."

She turned.

He strode over, stopping close, his eyes locked on her. "Gabriela..."

Nearly ten years her senior, yet he carried himself so well it was hard to guess his age. His bright, intent eyes locked with hers, intense and unyielding.

Flustered, Gabriela turned her face away.

Stewart chuckled, brushing a leaf from her hair. "Look at me. Why are you turning away?"

Not far away, Wesley sat in his Mercedes, watching silently, his hands gripping the steering wheel until his knuckles whitened.

Realizing she had overreacted, Gabriela felt awkward. "You must be exhausted. Go home and rest."

She gave a quick farewell and dashed toward her house.

Stewart stayed until her figure vanished, then crossed to the black car. He said with a smile, "Tell me, Mr. Moss — does your fiancée know how much attention you've been paying to Gabriela?"

Wesley's gaze lifted, cool and dangerous. "Stay away from Gabriela."

Stewart, unbothered, simply smiled. "May I ask — what exactly is your relationship to Gabriela?" He suddenly lifted his chin. "My business is none of your concern. Maybe you should be worrying about whether your fiancée's upset."

With that, he got back in his car and left.

In the mirror, Wesley caught sight of Rebecca standing on the roadside.

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His eyes darkened.

At a moment like this, she would expect an explanation. But he was in no mood.

He pressed the accelerator and left without a word.

Rebecca's eyes widened in disbelief as his taillights disappeared.

She stood frozen for a long time before slowly turning in the direction Gabriela had departed.

She had considered stopping her efforts to make things difficult for Gabriela. But now? Impossible.

Taking a sharp breath, Rebecca got into her car and had the driver take her to Jasper's place.

At Jasper's house, she vented her rage. "Jasper, Wesley is driving me insane. He did nothing when Brenden ruined our engagement. In the past two days, he has accompanied Myah to some remote village! As the CEO of the Apex Group and in his poor health, why would he go to such a place unless Gabriela lured him? She's shameless, using her charms on everyone. You have to help me put her in her place!"

Jasper poured her juice. "Can you calm down and listen?"

Rebecca's anger still simmered, but she kept it bottled up and lowered her head.

She hissed, "I don't want to lose my temper, but Gabriela is really getting under my skin."

Jasper sat beside her. “Brenden’s already been taught a hard lesson by his father and spent half a month in the hospital. What more do you want?”

Rebecca almost snapped back that Brenden had landed himself in the ER after a bar fight — but she held her tongue.

Jasper went on, “As for the engagement, the year’s almost over. If we reschedule, it’ll be after New Year. Don’t you agree?”

Her anger slowly cooled. She nodded. “You’re right.”

“Still mad?”

“No,” Rebecca sighed. “But you have to help me teach Gabriela a lesson.”

Jasper smiled, patting her head. “Wesley already agreed to the marriage alliance. Don’t make this messy.”

Though he treated Rebecca kindly, Jasper didn’t blindly agree with everything she said.

Rebecca relented. "I don't want anything drastic. Just... make her suffer a little. Enough that she knows to stay away from Wesley."

Jasper chuckled. "Alright. Just this once."

"I know you are the best," she beamed.

Jasper's methods were of such ruthlessness that even Wesley avoided crossing him.

Gabriela was in trouble.

Unaware of the storm brewing, Gabriela was occupied with end-of-year preparations — handing out employee bonuses and organizing the essential daily supplies to send to Silvermoon Village for Myah.

Truett had learned to roll over and could now sit with support.

Most of Gabriela's energy went into caring for the little one, leaving her endlessly occupied.

On New Year's Eve, after bathing him, she placed him on the bed and stepped away for baby powder. In under thirty seconds, Truett rolled off the mattress.

Luckily, the floor was carpeted.

The baby wasn't hurt — he even giggled, crawling across the rug.

Panicked, Gabriela scooped him up, checking for injuries.

He kicked happily and babbled, "Daddy."

Gabriela froze. "Truett... what did you just say?"

As though he truly grasped her meaning, the little boy opened his mouth once more. "Daddy."

The word came out slurred, blurred at the edges — but there was no mistaking it.

He was calling for his father.

And after that, he let out a bright, bubbling giggle.

Gabriela's eyes instantly turned red.

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Truett had just learned to utter the word “Daddy.” Yet the man meant to hear it might never know.

Gabriela’s eyes shimmered with unshed tears when a sudden knock came.

Farley stepped in.

He froze for a moment, then asked gently, “Gabriela, why are you crying?”

She quickly averted her gaze, forcing a faint smile. “It’s nothing, just a speck of dust in my eye.”

Farley’s eyes flicked to the little boy in her arms. He could guess what stirred her heart — it was Wesley’s absence. A long sigh slipped from him.

But Gabriela clearly didn’t wish to linger on the subject.

Respecting her silence, Farley shifted the mood. “Come down for dinner.”

“Alright.”

Downstairs, Ken had prepared a lavish spread in celebration of New Year's Eve. Loretta and Miriam had already returned to Moss Manor to celebrate New Year's with Wesley, while the housekeeper had taken leave to spend time with her own family.

The dinner was a modest one, with just Gabriela, Farley, Ken, and Truett.

They were about to sit down when the sudden chime of the doorbell broke the quiet.

On the doorstep stood Tessa and Tyler.

Tessa, recently divorced and estranged from her parents, found the idea of dining alone unbearable, so she sought warmth at Gabriela's place.

Tyler, with no one waiting for him at home, took it for granted that he'd join them.

The once still villa filled instantly with chatter and laughter.

Gabriela welcomed them warmly, motioning toward the table, while Ken hurried off to bring more utensils.

Perched in his high chair, Truett's eyes lit up at the sight of familiar faces, and he greeted them with cheerful babbles.

Tessa immediately reached over, unable to resist pinching his plump little cheeks. "Oh, he's precious! Look at him, already sitting up on his own."

Almost as if to show off, Truett opened his mouth and clearly called out, "Daddy."

Tessa froze, her eyes widening. The word carried too much weight. Knowing that his father already had a girlfriend, her gaze darted toward Gabriela. Seeing Gabriela's serene, unreadable expression, Tessa let out a quiet breath of relief.

Tyler, however, did not take it so lightly. His face darkened, and his voice rose in outrage. "So, Truett can call for his father now? Then where is this so-called father of his? Gabriela, who is he? Tell me, and I'll snap his legs myself!"

Tyler inherited his father's fiery temper, his words laced with menace.

Gabriela's heart lurched. She knew all too well that if Tyler knew the truth, he might storm off in a blind rage to confront Wesley.

Composing herself, she forced a faint scold into her voice. "Must you ask such things to ruin the mood?"

Tyler faltered instantly, the thought of upsetting her making him clamp his mouth shut.

He didn't dare push further, worried even a stray word might bring tears to her eyes.

But Truett, innocent of the tension swirling around him, had no intention of keeping quiet. He delighted in his newfound skill, chirping the word over and over. "Daddy!"