

His kiss 521

Chapter 521

Sometimes laughing, sometimes serious, his little voice rang out again and again.

At first, Gabriela found Truett's little cries of "Daddy" bittersweet, but as the word kept tumbling out of his mouth, a sharp sting pricked her heart.

She was the one who rocked him to sleep, who soothed his tears, who fed him day and night, yet the very first word he learned wasn't "Mama," but "Daddy"?

How unfair.

Her appetite dulled, Gabriela forced herself through dinner, her mood clouded by that single word echoing in her mind.

Afterward, she checked her phone and saw a new message.

It was from Rebecca.

This year, Rebecca was spending the holiday at Wesley's place.

She had sent a selfie at the dining table, and in the background, Wesley and Loretta were captured in the frame.

Wesley sat with his usual unreadable expression, but Loretta's face was radiant, practically glowing at Rebecca's presence.

Gabriela stared at the photo in silence, then quietly locked her phone.

It shouldn't matter, she reminded herself.

Time, after all, had a way of dulling every wound.

She never replied to Rebecca's messages, yet they kept coming, like little snapshots flaunting intimacy.

There was Wesley reading a book on the sofa, Wesley tending to the garden, and Wesley in the study, surrounded by Billy and the think tank.

Through Rebecca's endless stream of photos, Gabriela caught glimpses of the estate.

This year, festive decorations were strung up once more.

The rare orchids in the garden had blossomed again.

And Loretta still found joy in sunning her scallions in the courtyard, just as always.

Around this same time last year, Gabriela herself had been there, working part-time as a chef, helping with the decorations. She had been focused on making money, yet, in hindsight, those days carried a rare kind of happiness — simple and carefree.

Lost in her memories, Gabriela showed one of the photos to Truett. “That’s your daddy, Truett.”

The little boy didn’t understand her words, but he recognized the sound of “Daddy.”

At once, he began chirping the word, calling it out again and again, full of delight.

Hearing it day after day, Gabriela carried the name into her dreams. In those dreams, she confessed the truth of the child to Wesley. Instead of anger, he welcomed it with warmth, and the three of them lived together as a family. The dreams were so intoxicating that each morning she woke with a sharp pang of loss.

Usually, sleep was her cure; no matter how heavy her heart, by morning she could shake it off. But lately, even after a full night’s rest, the melancholy clung to her.

Perhaps it was nothing more than the chill of winter sinking too deep into her bones.

Before long, the harshness of winter began to soften, and the company returned to work.

Just a few days after operations resumed, the administrative director received a surprising invitation.

It was a proposal for collaboration on a luxury hotel project.

The matter was promptly brought to a company meeting for discussion.

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From the very beginning, Gabriela felt something off about it. She was the first to voice her opposition. "Our company specializes in weddings and apparel planning. We don't have the funds, nor do we belong in this field."

After all, wedding planning and hotel construction belonged to two entirely different industries. It was too risky.

Her reasoning, however, was met with scorn.

"Miss Haynes," the administrative director sneered, "do you know why this company has stayed small all these years? Because you're too cautious, too afraid to take risks. If Marie were still running things, she'd seize this opportunity without hesitation."

Gabriela's expression remained composed. "It's a pity that while she was in charge, no one ever offered her such a grand project."

The director's temper snapped. He slammed the table and shot to his feet. "That's only because I personally know Mr. Orion Bolton, the one in charge of this project. Without my connections, this chance wouldn't even exist for us!"

Gabriela's brow furrowed. "Opportunities that appear too good to be true hardly ever are. I won't give my approval."

The director's eyes narrowed, and with a sharp turn, he addressed Kaleb. "Kaleb, what's your stance on this?"

Kaleb, after listening quietly, finally spoke up. "The hotel is already completed. We wouldn't be involved in the initial construction costs. All that's required is an investment of two hundred million for decoration and promotion. And in return, we gain forty-nine percent of the shares."

He laid out the numbers calmly, then said, "From my perspective, I support the collaboration."

Gabriela's heart sank. "Uncle Kaleb, hotel investments demand huge sums, returns are painfully slow, and the market is volatile. Haven't we seen several large hotels collapse recently? Two hundred million is the very edge of our financial limit — we can't afford to gamble with it."

Kaleb was not a man prone to rash ventures. For a moment, Gabriela's earnest words wavered him.

The director quickly pressed the attack. "Kaleb, you must reconsider. Opportunities like this come once in a lifetime. If we hesitate, other companies will snatch it without a second thought. A project of this scale practically guarantees profits."

Kaleb, torn, reviewed the contract line by line. The legal department confirmed there were no visible loopholes.

He was unwilling to contradict Gabriela outright. Finally, he set the decision to a company-wide vote.

Over seventy percent of the executives voted in favor.

The director's face lit with triumph. "Rest assured, Miss Haynes. I'll take full responsibility for this project and lead our company into a new era of success."

Gabriela, having only just taken her seat as CEO, lacked the authority to veto. With no choice, she gave reluctant approval.

Soon after, Haynes Group poured two hundred million into the hotel's final stage of decoration.

But less than two months later, disaster struck. Orion himself disappeared without a trace.

The man behind the project abandoned the hotel entirely and vanished, leaving the whole Haynes Group in shock, reeling at the betrayal.

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The hotel stood half-finished, its renovations abruptly stalled.

At this pivotal moment, Orion vanished, pulling the entire Haynes Group down with him.

Overnight, the company's finances collapsed.

Payroll was on the verge of default; employees might not even receive their wages.

In the tense meeting that followed, Gabriela fixed her gaze on the administrative director. "You promised this project would be seamless, without complications," she said, her voice like steel.

Now that catastrophe had struck, who was going to take the blame?

The director merely shrugged, his tone dripping with indifference. "Every venture carries risks. There's no such thing as guaranteed profit. Besides, the contract states clearly: if the Bolton Group defaults, the hotel reverts to us. That means we now own the hotel outright. I'd say we've struck gold."

His smug self-justification ignited Gabriela's fury.

The hotel project had already swallowed every last cent of the Haynes Group's liquid assets.

Two hundred million had been poured in, with the expectation that profits would slowly flow back once the grand opening took place.

But with the Bolton Group vanishing overnight and leaving behind a wreck of half-finished construction, the Haynes Group was left holding the ruins.

Gabriela's patience finally snapped. "If the hotel doesn't open even for a single day, then it's nothing but a monument to failure."

Across the country, unfinished developments littered the landscape, grim reminders of builders who cashed out and vanished mid-project.

Now, Haynes Group teetered on the same edge.

A darker suspicion gnawed at her: the director might have seen this trap from the beginning, yet deliberately led her straight into it.

But he was too skilled at wriggling out of accountability, and worse, the board stood behind him.

Without a concrete reason to dismiss him, firing would cost the company dearly in severance, months of salary, benefits. The thought of that betrayer walking away with a payout made Gabriela's blood boil.

As the dispute spiraled, Kaleb finally spoke up, his voice steady but heavy. "I, too, share responsibility for this outcome. But right now, what matters most is securing the remaining funds."

He had once been convinced the hotel's prime location guaranteed success. With their capital strong enough to risk two hundred million, the gamble had seemed reasonable.

But who could have predicted that Orion, after investing more than five hundred million, would simply disappear without a trace?

What game was the Bolton Group playing?

Unlike the director's evasions, Kaleb's admission was sincere. He apologized openly to Gabriela and put forward a path forward.

Though frustrated, Gabriela could not lay true blame on him. Instead, she urged that they focus their energy on raising funds.

The meeting broke up with tension still simmering in the air.

Gabriela walked into the bank to apply for a loan. She needed exactly two hundred million.

She had never borrowed a cent in her life, and yet now, as head of the company, she was drowning in debt. The thought hollowed her out.

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The bank processed her request with mechanical efficiency, sending an agent to investigate her personal assets. By the next day, the results were in.

The agent said crisply, "Ms. Haynes, you currently own a villa and an office building. The villa is valued at three million, and the office building at two point three billion. Given your holdings, are you sure you still need a loan?"

Gabriela blinked. For a moment, she thought she had misheard.

What office building?

The only asset she had was her villa, the one she had wrestled back from Marie at great cost.

"There must be a mistake," she said, her voice cutting through the room. "I don't own any office building."

The agent's expression didn't waver. "Lakeshore Building is registered under your name. Thirty-one floors. Current valuation: two point three billion."

Gabriela's mind spun.

Lakeshore Building? The same building where her company rented space and paid nearly a million in rent each year. And now, it belonged to her?

How was that possible?

The agent suggested, "Ms. Haynes, perhaps you should speak with the building's manager."

As Gabriela stepped out of the bank, her thoughts spun in confusion.

Could it be that her mother had left her not only the villa and the company, but also an entire office building?

Lakeshore Building wasn't the crown jewel of Okburg, but it generated more than three hundred million in rent every year.

With that steady stream of income, Gabriela could live in comfort for the rest of her life.

Raising Truett would be effortless. She wouldn't have to worry about a single thing.

Without hesitation, she made her way straight to the management office of Lakeshore Building and asked to see the manager.

His name was Brett Sugden.

After the receptionist delivered her request, Brett brushed it aside, saying he was too busy to waste time on a mere nobody, and refused to see Gabriela.

The disdain in the receptionist's tone was unmistakable.

She knew Gabriela, the young CEO of the struggling company on the fifth floor. Rumors had been swirling that Haynes Group had just suffered a major project collapse, and their partner had skipped out. Was Gabriela here to beg for a rent extension?

If so, how pitiful.

Gabriela's expression hardened. She pulled a chair close and sat down firmly in the lobby. "Please tell Brett that if he doesn't see me today, I'll sell this building tomorrow."

The building was valued at two point three billion. Even at a discounted price of two billion, it was still enough to secure a lifetime of ease.

The receptionist almost laughed out loud.

Sell this building?

Did Gabriela truly think she could toss around a property worth billions like poker chips? Unbelievable.

Yet the fire in Gabriela's eyes gave her pause. This wasn't an empty threat. The receptionist, unsettled despite herself, reluctantly relayed Gabriela's words to Brett.

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Less than three minutes later, Brett appeared, his stride quick and precise, his face shadowed with reluctant resignation. "Ms. Haynes, what can I do for you?"

Gabriela didn't bother with pleasantries. "Why is Lakeshore Building under my name?"

Brett let out a long, weary sigh, shaking his head. His silence was louder than any answer.

The receptionist froze, disbelief written across her face.

So it was true. Gabriela actually owned the thirty-one-floor tower.

Gabriela's patience snapped. "Please, tell me the truth."

"I... I can't," he murmured, his eyes flicking away.

Her tone sharpened. "You won't? Fine. Then I'll make it public. I'm selling the building. I promise, buyers in Okburg will line up for it."

The threat landed immediately. In a city teeming with wealth, an office tower like Lakeshore would never linger unsold.

Brett's mask of control faltered. "Ms. Haynes... I'm only following orders. Why make things difficult for me?"

Gabriela's laugh cut like ice. "I just want the truth."

At last, Brett exhaled, defeated. "If you want the answers, please speak with Mr. Moss."

Gabriela's eyes narrowed. "Wesley?"

Brett nodded reluctantly. "Yes. Mr. Moss commanded me to stay silent. If you confront him, don't mention I told you."

Otherwise, he could face a stern reprimand.

Gabriela stepped out of the building, her mind reeling.

Wesley was behind all this.

But why?

Why would he quietly transfer a building worth billions into her name without a word?

She needed answers.

Elsewhere, Rebecca was deep in conversation with Jasper.

“Jasper, are you sure Gabriela won’t bounce back this time?” Rebecca asked, a hint of worry in her voice.

Jasper gave a calm nod.

Rebecca’s eyes lit up. “You are incredible!”

“Actually,” Jasper said smoothly, “with this project collaboration, Haynes Group was bound to profit. But Gabriela still needs more funding to keep things afloat.” Only half of the renovations were complete, and they were short another three hundred million.

Even when the hotel was finished, it would take three months just to break even.

Gabriela would need a massive investment to support the project, and the Haynes Group, small as it was, lacked the financial muscle.

Rebecca’s brow furrowed. “And if she somehow manages to raise the funds? Wouldn’t that mean she gets the hotel for nothing?”

Jasper’s confidence was unwavering. “Relax. I’ve already spoken to the banks.” Thanks to his influence, no bank in Okburg would dare lend Gabriela a cent.

Rebecca exhaled, relief washing over her. “Thank you so much, Jasper. I’m going to see Wesley.”

"Go ahead," Jasper replied, his voice smooth as silk.

Once Rebecca left, Jasper lingered by the floor-to-ceiling window, swirling a glass of wine. His gaze drifted to the lawn below, where a cluster of purple wildflowers had stubbornly sprouted, vivid against the green.

A thrill ran through him.

He wondered what look would cross Gabriela's face when he swooped in to take the hotel from her after she failed to keep it afloat.

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Jasper assumed Gabriela would be grateful. How could she not?

Once he reclaimed the hotel, he'd hand her a generous two hundred million. And if the stars aligned and his mood was right, he might even toss in an extra two million.

Word was, Gabriela had an insatiable appetite for money; a few extra millions would surely make her eyes sparkle like polished diamonds.

In Jasper's mind, taking back the hotel would secure her gratitude, perhaps even her admiration.

But reality had other plans, and everything spiraled beyond his control.

Gabriela arrived at Wesley's condo, only to find Rebecca was also there. Rebecca's sharp eyes narrowed. She believed Gabriela was here to beg Wesley for help.

Two hundred million wasn't pocket change, and with the banks turning their backs on Gabriela, who else could she possibly turn to but him?

Jasper's move had been ruthless. One swift strike, and Gabriela was left cornered with nowhere to run.

Suppressing the smirk tugging at her lips, Rebecca tilted her chin ever so slightly, her voice dripping with superiority. "What brings you here, Miss Haynes?"

Gabriela steadied her tone, keeping it neutral. "I need to speak with Mr. Moss."

Rebecca let out a sharp, humorless laugh. "And what business do you have with Wesley? You're no longer part of Apex Group. You don't belong in his world anymore."

Before Gabriela could reply, Rebecca cut her off, her words sharp as glass. "Don't tell me you've fooled yourself into thinking you're his friend. Please. With your background? You're not even in the same league."

Her gaze swept over Gabriela, cold and disdainful, before she twisted the knife even deeper. "I know you're imagining that he has some interest in you, that you could play the other woman. Let me make this clear: with your status, even if you managed to slither into that role, you'd never become his wife. As long as I'm here, you'll never stand a chance."

Rebecca stood there, her posture oozing condescension, every word calculated to sting.

Gabriela didn't flinch. Without a word, she turned on her heel.

"Stay away from my man," Rebecca called after Gabriela, her tone sharp and commanding. "Or your company's problems will go far beyond a simple cash flow crisis."

Gabriela froze mid-step and turned sharply, her eyes blazing. "Were you the one who orchestrated the mess with the hotel?"

Rebecca didn't even bother to deny it. Instead, she smiled, her triumph shining through every delicate curve of her expression. "I warned you, didn't I? Get too close to Wesley, and I'll see to it that you're ruined."

Gabriela stared, stunned. "Are you insane? Spending six hundred million just to set a trap for me?"

"Watch your tone," Rebecca said sweetly, her voice a velvet blade. Her smile only grew more serene, more cutting. "Who knows, if I'm feeling generous one day, I might reclaim the hotel and hand that two hundred million back to you."

In that instant, clarity crashed over Gabriela.

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There had never been anything wrong with the hotel's location, no construction issues, no buried clauses in the contracts.

The moment it opened, the Haynes Group would have been on its way to steady profit.

Now, she understood why Orion had abandoned the hotel when it mattered most.

Had it not been for the office building Wesley gifted to her, she might have begged Rebecca to reclaim the hotel and end the nightmare quickly.

But now? Gabriela had nothing to fear.

She curved her lips into a sneer. "I'm confident that we can navigate the hotel through its crisis, so there's no need to trouble yourself with reclaiming it."

Four hundred million for a property worth a billion on the market? Only an idiot would hand that back.

Rebecca arched a brow, clearly amused.

“Still clinging to hope, are you?” She stepped closer, her tone dripping with sarcasm. “Don’t waste your breath trying to get Wesley involved. He won’t lift a finger for you. Soon, he’ll be my husband, and when that day comes, every decision he makes will be run by me.”

With a flick of her wrist, she pressed her fingertip to the scanner. The soft chime of the lock disengaging was like a punch in the gut for Gabriela.

She stood rooted, forcing her face into its usual calm mask.

But as the door opened, memories of Wesley smiling as he recorded her fingerprint flooded in. Her throat tightened, eyes stinging with tears she refused to shed.

So it was true. Wesley was really going to marry Rebecca.

And yet, some foolish, stubborn part of her still held onto the tiniest thread of hope.

Gabriela got home with a heavy heart.

Farley appeared in the doorway with Truett perched in his arms. His brows were knitted with worry.

"I heard about the hotel," he said, voice tentative. "How bad is it? Did the bank shut the door on you?"

Gabriela remained silent.

Farley let out a weary sigh. "Then at least let me see if I can pull some strings." He thought his connections at the bank might help.

Gabriela shook her head. "Don't worry about it. I can handle this myself."

What she couldn't handle, however, was the storm churning inside her.

Farley didn't believe her for a second. Quietly, he made up his mind to reach out to his contacts first thing tomorrow.

Just then, Truett reached his tiny arms toward her, his bright eyes brimming with innocence. "Daddy," he called softly.

The single word was enough to splinter Gabriela's composure. Her throat tightened, eyes stinging with tears.

She'd been trying for weeks to teach him to say "Mommy," repeating it over and over, but every time, it was "Daddy."

And each day, his pronunciation grew clearer, undeniable.

Her frustration cracked through her sadness. She pulled out her phone with trembling fingers. "You little rascal," she murmured, her voice unsteady. "Fine. I'll call your dad right now."

Farley stiffened, unease etching deep lines into his face.

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He'd long suspected that Wesley was Truett's father.

But now, with Wesley on the verge of marrying someone else, the thought terrified him. If Gabriela revealed Truett's identity, the Moss family could swoop in and take the child, leaving her with nothing. He had seen things like that happen too many times before.

He feared that, in the end, Gabriela might lose Truett and still never have Wesley.

"Gabriela, don't," Farley said, his voice low and urgent. "Don't do anything rash. You know how people like them operate."

In families like theirs, children were often kept, and mothers discarded like yesterday's news.

Gabriela's grip tightened around the phone, but her expression smoothed into something calm, almost cold. "Relax. I know what I'm doing."

She dialed Wesley's number. No answer.

Then she tried again.

This time, the line connected, but there was only silence.

Tentatively, she spoke. "Mr. Moss?"

"Wesley's in the shower," said Rebecca. "Did you need something from him?"

Gabriela froze. "Rebecca?"

"It's me." Rebecca's tone sharpened, edged with impatience. "If you have something to say, say it now. Soon, neither Wesley nor I will be picking up your calls. You've been in a relationship before, haven't you? You should know that couples don't appreciate interruptions during intimate moments."

The smug lilt in her voice only deepened. "He's in a good mood tonight," Rebecca added almost breezily. "Might keep me busy until late."

Gabriela's grip on the phone tightened until her knuckles whitened.

Memories from the past overwhelmed her.

Back then, he'd left her so spent it took a day before she could steady herself again.

She knew all too well how intense Wesley could be. The way he'd pull her close, kiss her senseless, whisper her name in that deep, roughened voice.

His cold, distant exterior melted away behind closed doors, replaced by a heat that consumed her whole.

The thought of him like that with someone else was unbearable.

Without another word, Gabriela ended the call, her chest aching with a hollow, suffocating weight.

The call ended, and Rebecca set her phone aside, an indifferent smile tugging at her lips.

Just then, Wesley stepped out of the bathroom.

Steam lingered in the air, but he was already in formal attire, his expression unreadable and icy.

“Shower finished, Wesley?” Rebecca asked lightly, her tone almost apologetic. “About earlier... I’m sorry. Didn’t mean for that to happen.”

She’d brought soup prepared by her family’s chef, then, with perfect timing, “accidentally” spilled it on him.

Wesley gave her only a cursory glance. “It’s fine,” he replied, his voice cool and measured, bending to retrieve his phone. “It’s late. You should go home.”

Rebecca softened her tone. “Alright.” Then, with casual precision, she added, “Gabriela called just now. I answered for you. Didn’t catch what she wanted. Maybe you should return her call.”

Wesley paused, still and deliberate, as if weighing whether it even mattered.

After a beat, he said, “No need.”

Rebecca’s lips curved in quiet satisfaction. She turned and left the condo.

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Gabriela spent the night steeped in grief.

The next morning, Truett's lively antics roused her.

He was up early, clambering over her and playfully tugging at her hair. Still half-asleep, Gabriela pulled him close, planting a kiss on his forehead. "Good morning, my sweet boy."

The kiss sent Truett into a fit of giggles, his little arms flailing, though he kept calling out, "Daddy!"

Gabriela sighed softly.

Gazing at Truett's vibrant and adorable face, her heart melted, washing away her lingering anger. In that moment, she felt unburdened, like her old, carefree self.

Wesley could marry whomever he chose, and sleep with whomever he wanted. Truett, so lovable, called for his daddy daily, yet Wesley wasn't there to hear it. That was Wesley's loss.

Reinvigorated, Gabriela steeled herself for the day. She hurried to Apex Group to confront Wesley.

She still hadn't uncovered his true reason for gifting her the office building — and she needed answers.

But security stopped her at the entrance.

“Sorry, Miss Haynes, company policy now bars non-employees from entering,” the guard explained.

Frustration surged through her.

She hadn’t expected that leaving Apex Group would mean being shut out entirely.

Refused entry, she resolved to wait outside.

Surely Wesley couldn’t stay inside forever.

Five hours passed, and he was still nowhere to be seen.

Aubrey and Tessa, hearing Gabriela was there, came out to persuade her.

Aubrey sighed. “The whole company knows Rebecca is set to be Wesley’s wife. She has made it clear you’re not allowed in, and the guards, keen to keep their jobs, won’t budge. Mr. Moss knows about this but hasn’t said a word. Once Rebecca becomes his wife, things might get tough for us.”

After Aubrey finished speaking, Tessa addressed the real issue. “Gabriela, waiting here won’t solve anything.”

She knew about the hotel partnership troubles and Gabriela’s cash flow struggles, guessing she had come to seek Wesley’s help.

Tessa offered a bank card. “This is my savings — over a million. Take it to get by.” The money could at least cover salaries for a month.

With an embarrassed smile, Aubrey pulled out a stack of cash. “I’ve only got forty thousand, but every bit counts.”

Her family’s circumstances were tough, requiring her to support her brother by sending most of her monthly earnings home. The forty thousand she offered was the commission she had earned last year.

“No, thank you,” Gabriela said, touched but firm. “Tessa, Aubrey, I have funding.” Even without the office building that was valued at billions, her personal savings would tide her over.

“Take it, Gabriela,” Tessa urged. “Without your help, I would still be stuck in Fulton’s abuse and wouldn’t have gotten divorced so smoothly.”

Gabriela insisted, “I’m serious — I’ve got money.”

Reluctantly, Tessa and Aubrey pocketed their offers. "If you need us, just say the word."

Soon, Nina and Cali came downstairs and offered financial support to Gabriela as well.

Without hesitation, Nina pulled out a card containing six million. "This should hold you for six months," she said.

Tessa was stunned.

Who knew sales paid so well?

Despite Nina's junior role, her savings dwarfed Tessa's.

A pang of envy hit Tessa, and she wondered if she should ask Billy to transfer her to the sales department.

Gabriela was deeply moved by their generosity.

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She reassured them that she wasn't short on cash, and only then did Nina tuck away her card.

Urged by her friends, Gabriela agreed to return to her company.

The more she thought about it, the angrier she grew.

Cali, barely even a close friend, was ready to help, yet Wesley, who had been intimate with her, wouldn't even meet her. She was determined to see him, no matter what.

Back at her company, bad news awaited.

With Orion's disappearance, many employees, fearing the company's collapse, began submitting resignations. Gabriela quietly reviewed the letters.

Kaleb sighed. "I'll try talking to them."

He knew the hotel partnership's failure was largely his fault, a result of his shortsightedness, and he felt responsible for Gabriela's predicament. He vowed to fix it.

Gabriela suddenly asked, "Is there anyone else who wants to quit?"

Kaleb looked confused.

With fewer than fifty employees, over ten resignations seemed significant enough.

She pressed further. “So none of the department heads have resigned?”

Some of them were loyal to Marie, and keeping them posed a risk.

But Gabriela hadn’t found grounds to fire them.

Their resignations now would be a blessing.

Kaleb shook his head. “What makes you ask that?”

Just then, Trenton strolled in with a swagger. “Miss Haynes, I heard the company might not be able to pay salaries soon. This mess is on me, so I’m resigning.”

Trenton, previously the finance director, was now the administrative director. Gabriela had reassigned him because she didn’t trust him with the company’s finances.

His voluntary resignation meant she could avoid paying severance, and she was secretly delighted, though she kept up an indignant facade.

“You’ve caused so much chaos for the company, and now you just walk away?” she challenged.

“It wasn’t intentional,” Trenton replied shamelessly. “I took on the project for the company’s good. Is it my fault it fell apart? It’s evident that our company lacks the necessary financial resources. With another two hundred million, that hotel would have been ours. I’ve poured...”

“Everything into this place, but with you, Miss Haynes, lacking the strength to lead, I’m frankly disappointed.”

Trenton intentionally raised his voice, ensuring other employees overheard.

He pressed on, “You’re too inexperienced. You needed more seasoning before taking the helm. Your inexperience has sunk this company. You should be ashamed.”

With that, he slapped his resignation letter on Gabriela’s desk and strode out. She stifled her glee, calling after him loudly, “Mr. Diaz, you know we’re in trouble. Stay two more months to help us through!”

“Everyone has got their own road,” Trenton replied dismissively, not glancing back. “Please inform finance to settle my salary within two days.”

“Mr. Diaz, please reconsider...” Gabriela called, but he was already out of sight.

The remaining employees, catching the exchange, grew even more restless. Once Trenton was gone, Gabriela’s feigned distress vanished, replaced by a bright grin.

She shut the office door and turned to Kaleb with a mischievous smirk. “Uncle Kaleb, please inform finance that we can’t pay salaries yet. Let’s hold off for a week.”

As soon as the other two department heads resigned, she would promptly release salaries and reward loyal staff with raises.

Rebecca could never have guessed that her plot against Gabriela had unwittingly helped her clear out Marie’s loyalists entirely.