

His kiss 531

Chapter 531

Kaleb let out a long, weary sigh at Gabriela's words. "Gabriela, I know you have no way of borrowing money."

He had already discovered the truth earlier that day. The Howard family had pressured every bank in Okburg, cutting off all possibility of the Haynes Group securing a loan.

But he was confused. "We still have enough to cover salaries for half a year. Why put it off for a week?"

The company had set aside two hundred million dollars, projecting the hotel would recover its costs within six months.

Even in the worst case, their partnership with GD Fashion guaranteed they would pull the funds back in that same timeframe.

The rumors flying around that the group was on the brink of bankruptcy, unable to even pay its employees, were nothing but poisonous lies stirred up by mischief-makers.

But by intentionally spreading the news herself, Gabriela had made those whispers seem all too real.

"Uncle Kaleb, I know exactly what I'm doing. Trust me, and follow my lead," Gabriela said, her tone steady with conviction.

Kaleb didn't fully understand Gabriela's reasoning, but he obeyed nonetheless. He admitted to himself that age had dulled his judgment. Perhaps it was time to trust the wisdom of the younger generation.

While Kaleb headed off to the Finance Department, Gabriela made her way straight to the core offices of the Lakeshore Building.

This time, the receptionist's attitude was strikingly polite, almost deferential, as she ushered Gabriela inside.

"Miss Haynes, Mr. Sugden is inside," she said softly.

Brett, on the other hand, looked utterly drained the moment he saw her.

The memory of her threat to sell the building still hung over his head.

"Miss Haynes," he muttered weakly, "what brings you here again?"

"I've gone through the building transfer papers," Gabriela said evenly. "This property was signed over to my name a month ago."

Assuming she was here to press about the transfer again, Brett sighed in defeat. “You should really be asking Mr. Moss about this.”

Gabriela cut him off, her tone firm. “I’m here for you. Hand over last month’s rent.”

Brett froze, startled. “The rent?”

“Yes,” Gabriela replied without hesitation. “Transfer it to me. Right now.”

As the rightful owner of the Lakeshore Building, her demand carried absolute weight. Brett didn’t dare delay. He quickly instructed the finance team to deduct labor, maintenance, and miscellaneous fees before wiring the remaining sum to her.

Moments later, Gabriela’s phone chimed with a balance update. Eight million dollars had just landed in her account.

She stared at the string of zeros, a strange, dreamlike joy washing over her.

Never in her life had she imagined she’d one day become a landlord, earning her fortune through rent alone.

Yet even as Gabriela admired the string of zeros in her account, a pang of unease tugged at her.

All of this money ultimately came from Wesley.

But then she reminded herself that Wesley was the father of her child.

This money was just child support, nothing more.

Straightening her back, she said coolly, "From now on, every month on this day, you'll transfer the rent to me."

Brett's face stiffened. "The rent for the building is collected once a year."

"That's your problem," Gabriela shot back, her voice sharp. "If I don't see it next month, I'll sell the building."

There was no room for negotiation.

Chapter 532

Brett wiped at his brow, defeated. "Understood."

Gabriela hadn't expected him to yield so easily, but Wesley's evasiveness gnawed at her. Her eyes narrowed.

"Actually, I'll need another transfer of one hundred million to my account."

Brett nearly collapsed, his knees threatening to buckle. "Come on, a hundred million isn't pocket..."

"Change. How could I possibly transfer that at will?"

"That's not my problem!" Gabriela snapped, lifting her chin with the imperious tilt of a queen passing judgment. "The office building is mine. If I don't see a hundred million by tomorrow, I'll sell it without hesitation."

She thought if he failed to produce the money, he'd have no choice but to run straight to Wesley.

And for a sum as staggering as a hundred million, Wesley would have no choice but to confront her.

Brett's voice trembled as he tried to soothe her. "I'll... I'll do my best."

"You've got one day," Gabriela cut him off, her tone like ice.

With that, she swept out of the office. The instant the door clicked shut, Brett slumped into his chair and called Wesley.

The moment Wesley picked up, Brett all but exploded. "Wesley! Come and deal with Miss Haynes before she drives me mad!"

He had known from the beginning that there was something unusual about this deal. Wesley had bought the building at a sky-high price, then conveniently handed the management to him.

Dealing with Gabriela, who tossed around demands for a hundred million as casually as ordering coffee, was enough to make Brett's patience snap.

At that exact moment, Wesley was in a boardroom surrounded by executives. He lifted a hand, halting the meeting, and slipped out with the calm composure of a man utterly unshaken.

His voice on the phone was smooth, almost lazy. "What happened?"

Brett nearly wailed. "She came for the rent and snatched up eight million on the spot! The rent's collected once a year, but she insists I hand it over every single month!"

On the other end of the line, Wesley's lips curved into a faint smile. He could picture her clearly: fiery eyes, unyielding stance, a woman impossible to tame.

Amusement tangled with a quiet sigh, and a soft chuckle escaped him.

“Then I suggest you comply without delay,” he chuckled.

Brett was left speechless, staring at his phone in disbelief.

Was this all a joke to Wesley? What kind of lovesick fool found joy in being bled dry?

Was he so hopelessly smitten that Gabriela’s every demand thrilled him instead of enraging him? Or perhaps his fortune was so vast that tossing some of it away felt no different than scattering coins into a fountain?

Brett said, his voice tight, “She also wants me to transfer a hundred million dollars to her by tomorrow.”

“Then give it to her,” Wesley answered, his tone maddeningly calm.

Brett nearly dropped the phone. He swallowed his outrage but couldn’t stop himself from asking, “What exactly is your relationship with her?”

The other end went silent.

Wesley's thoughts circled a truth he rarely voiced.

He knew Gabriela's heart tilted toward him. If he wished, she could become his wife.

The temptation burned, yet the chains of his reality held him back.

Finally, his voice came, low and deliberate, carrying the weight of something he could neither abandon nor claim. "She's everything to me."

The words hit Brett like a blow.

Chapter 533

No wonder Wesley indulged her so blindly. No wonder Gabriela could make outrageous demands and walk away victorious every time. She wasn't simply important to him; she was the axis of his world.

But Wesley's fragile health held him back — he couldn't bring himself to confess his love to Gabriela openly.

Brett couldn't help but feel sorry for Wesley. He let out a long, quiet sigh. "For her sake, take care of yourself."

Wesley's reply was calm, almost tender. "Sure. Please make sure that she is always taken care of."

Brett tried to lighten the mood, and his tone carried unmistakable sincerity. “Don’t worry. From now on, I’ll watch over her and make sure no one bullies her.”

He and Wesley had forged bonds that had been tempered in life-and-death situations. That trust was why Wesley had entrusted him with managing the office building.

“Thank you,” Wesley said simply.

Meanwhile, Gabriela returned to the company, her heart soaring like a kite in high wind.

But the moment she stepped into her office, a storm awaited her. The entire staff surged forward, eyes wide, voices sharp with panic and frustration. “Miss Haynes, is it true that we’re not going to get paid? Is the company really going bankrupt?”

“I’ve got car payments and a mortgage. How am I supposed to survive without my salary this month?”

“Miss Haynes, please, I need that money for my baby’s milk powder!”

The rumors had erupted like wildfire, spreading faster than anyone could contain, setting nerves on edge across the office.

And there was Trenton, smirking in the chaos, stoking every spark, feeding the frenzy with careful precision.

Kaleb lingered at the edge, fists clenched, his calm a fragile veneer over the storm of fury simmering inside him.

Every eye in the room was locked on Gabriela.

She stood unmoving, her gaze sweeping over the restless crowd like a quiet storm.

“Calm down. The company isn’t going bankrupt. We’ll only be delaying salaries by a week,” she said, her voice steady and deliberate. “Since I took over, we’ve faced countless challenges and I’ve resolved every one of them. If you trust me, stay. If not, you can settle your salaries with the Finance Department now. The Haynes Group will not owe a single penny to anyone.”

Her calm authority hung in the air, heavy and undeniable.

Eyes darted between one another, searching for cracks, but no one moved to resign.

They all knew Gabriela’s track record. Under her leadership, major projects had been secured, and her capabilities were impossible to ignore.

Those who remained silently reaffirmed their trust in her.

Trenton, the chaos's instigator, felt a flicker of panic. No one was taking the bait. Frustrated, he stormed toward the Finance Department, demanding immediate salary settlements.

The HR Director instantly brandished a pre-prepared resignation letter like a weapon.

"The first batch to resign can at least claim their full salaries. Wait too long, and you may end up with nothing!" he bellowed, forcing unease into the staff.

The employees glanced at one another, panic rising.

Nervously, they glanced toward the Marketing Director, Hyde Martel. With two directors stepping away, would Hyde follow?

Hyde, however, remained composed. "I think I can wait another three months," he said evenly.

The HR Director leaned in, whispering, disbelief edged in his tone, "Are you insane? Resigning now would be a big blow to Gabriela."

Chapter 534

"Honestly, Miss Haynes has been kind to us," Hyde said.

The last time they lost the bet, Gabriela hadn't insisted they apologize to her in front of the employees, nor had she brought it up again.

Trying to reason with the HR Director, Hyde added, "Now that Marie is in jail, why should we be loyal to her?" He paused, his voice steadier now. "Our future is ours to shape. Why let bitterness make our path harder?"

Not long ago, Hyde's mother had fallen seriously ill, requiring costly surgery. When Gabriela learned of it, she instructed Kaleb to advance Hyde's salary.

Perhaps she was merely following company protocol, treating it as a routine matter.

Yet for Hyde, any desire to oppose her had vanished.

The HR Director scoffed, "So that's it? You've been bought off with a few coins."

With that, he handed over his resignation letter to Gabriela.

Gabriela's eyes lit up, and without hesitation, she signed it.

The HR Director had expected Gabriela to plead for him to stay, giving him the perfect opportunity to make demands.

But her swift, unquestioning approval left him unsettled. Fury flared. He hissed, “Miss Haynes, we have families to support! Don’t blame us for doing what we must!”

He thought back to Marie’s time as CEO and how much she had valued them.

And now Gabriela dared to dismiss them so casually! He was walking out on the company, and she didn’t even attempt to stop him!

That was unbelievable.

Gabriela, calm and composed, simply nodded.

Then she picked up the phone. “Finance, process the final wages immediately for everyone resigning today.”

Her resolute demeanor after his outburst made his pulse quicken.

A sudden, uneasy chill washed over him.

Gabriela's manner was strange, almost as if she had been expecting their resignations all along.

Gabriela turned to Hyde. "Mr. Martel, and your resignation letter? Hand it over. I'll sign it along with the others."

Hyde shifted uneasily. "I've decided to stay. I want to face this crisis alongside the company."

Both Gabriela and Kaleb blinked in surprise.

"I believe the company can pull through these rough times," Hyde added, his voice steady.

Gabriela gave him a thoughtful glance, but there was no time to dwell on his sudden change of heart.

She addressed the rest of the staff. "For those resigning today, your wages will be settled in full. You won't need to come in tomorrow. If anyone wants to resign, now's the time."

She paused, letting her words sink in. "But if you don't leave today, you can't bring it up again tomorrow. And when the company thrives, no one will be left behind."

Her words rippled through the office.

Dozens of employees whispered among themselves.

In the end, no one brought up resigning again.

Even Tina, the young mother waiting for her salary to buy baby formula, stayed put.

She remembered Gabriela's words: "Women can hold their own just like men."

Once more, Tina chose to trust her.

Gabriela nodded, her expression sincere. "Thank you all."

Trenton couldn't hold back a sneer. "Ah, Miss Haynes, you sure know how to warm hearts, but none of that will put food on your plate."

Chapter 535

He then turned to his colleagues, his tone dripping with condescension. "Honestly, I'd suggest you think practically. A paycheck in hand is always safer than a pep talk."

He had never liked Gabriela, and with the company failing, he saw the perfect opportunity to stir up more trouble for her.

But the office paid him no mind.

Gabriela's serene smile remained, unshaken and unbothered. Before long, the two resigning directors, along with more than a dozen employees, had collected their final wages.

Even as Trenton strode toward the door, he couldn't resist one last jab.

Gabriela didn't glance up. Not even once.

Feigning distraction with her phone, her eyes suddenly lit up.

"Uncle Kaleb! The money's arrived!"

Kaleb blinked, caught off guard. "What money?"

"Just some I borrowed from a friend," Gabriela fibbed.

Then, turning to the remaining staff, she announced with a flourish, "To those who chose to stay, your wages will be settled immediately, and you'll receive twice the usual."

She paused, letting the shock settle in. "And for everyone continuing with us, salaries will rise by thirty percent."

The office fell utterly silent. Eyes widened and jaws dropped.

Suddenly, a roar of cheers erupted through the office.

The reality of receiving double their salaries had finally sunk in.

Tina eagerly checked her bank notification, her eyes sparkling. "Miss Haynes has never let us down!"

Voices quickly joined in agreement.

"Good thing we didn't quit!" someone shouted, relief lacing their words.

"Those who quit must be kicking themselves right now," another said, a sly smile tugging at their lips.

No sooner had those employees pocketed their wages than Gabriela dropped a bomb: not only double salaries this month, but also a raise.

The kind of news that would haunt anyone who had resigned.

A young employee leaned in, lowering her voice to a conspiratorial whisper. “Did you hear? The Howard family was the one trying to sabotage us this time.”

“The Howard family? The one that runs the international supermarket chain?” another gasped, eyes wide.

“Yep,” she replied.

“Brave choice, sticking around with insider info like that,” someone muttered, shaking their head in awe.

The young employee’s grin deepened. “And there’s more... I heard the CEO of the Apex Group has a close relationship with Miss Haynes.”

It was this employee who had spotted Gabriela sharing a meal with Wesley.

At first, she didn’t recognize Wesley, but his face seemed oddly familiar. Curiosity led her to research influential figures—and she discovered he was the illustrious CEO of the Apex Group. Just think of the connections Miss Gabriela must have had to pull something like that off.

Knowing Gabriela had deep connections with Wesley, the employee believed the Howard family's schemes wouldn't succeed.

"That makes a lot of sense..." murmurs floated through the room.

Amid the quiet chatter, Gabriela stepped forward, moving with calm authority. Instantly, the office fell silent, everyone returning to their seats.

Gabriela approached Tina, handing her two large bags brimming with cans of formula and diapers.

"Your baby's about seven months old, right? These should be perfect," Gabriela said gently.

Chapter 536

Tina looked at the generous bounty, stunned. "This is too much! I can't accept these!"

The formula Gabriela brought was a high-end brand, quite costly and usually out of Tina's budget.

Gabriela said warmly, "It's really no trouble at all. There's just too much at my house, so I thought I'd share some with you."

Her household had been generous with baby supplies. Loretta bought things for Truett, Tessa did the same, and Tyler often showed up with a big bag of gifts.

Even Wesley would occasionally have Billy deliver boxes of formula.

The most unexpected, however, was Stewart, who, upon learning Gabriela had a child, also brought various items.

The family was practically swimming in baby supplies.

Gabriela added with a reassuring smile, "My child is about the same age as yours. You won't need to worry about formula or diapers anymore. I'll bring them over for you."

Raising a child was costly, and formula and diapers were always the biggest expenses.

Tina had recently gone through a divorce and was raising her baby alone. Gabriela's thoughtful gesture felt less like a gift and more like a lifeline.

Tina's eyes glistened with tears. "Miss Haynes, I don't know what to say. This is very kind of you."

"Don't mention it," Gabriela replied warmly. "Women should always back each other in times of hardship."

Crying in front of her always made Gabriela uneasy, so after offering a few comforting words, she quickly shifted the mood. “Everyone, tonight we celebrate the hotel project’s progress! Drinks and dinner on me!”

The office erupted. “Wow! Thank you, Miss Haynes!”

Those who had just resigned, boxes in hand, could only watch with envy.

If only they hadn’t listened to Trenton.

Even the HR Director felt a sting of regret, eyeing Hyde with quiet jealousy.

He couldn’t keep the sarcasm out of his voice. “So, Hyde... you stayed and got a raise. Congratulations. But without me and Trenton, you’re on your own here. Gabriela will surely make things difficult for you in the future.”

Hyde said nothing.

It was impossible for him to believe that Gabriela, the woman who treated her employees with such care, would ever act that way.

“Anyway,” the HR Director said, his tone sharp, “I’m done. Trenton landed a spot at a new company, and I’m going with him. We’re heading for greener pastures, while you stay here and suffer.”

As the HR Director turned to leave, Gabriela’s voice cut through the office. “Hyde, you’ll organize tonight’s celebration.”

Hyde blinked, caught off guard. “Me?”

“Yes, you,” Gabriela said with a calm smile. “Uncle Kaleb is too old for this. Can I count on you?”

The weight of her trust hit him unexpectedly, a warmth spreading through his chest.

“Consider it done, Miss Haynes! Everything will go off without a hitch.”

He squared his shoulders, lifted his chin, and shot a victorious look at the HR Director.

The HR Director froze.

Rage and regret mingled on his face. He clenched his fists, wishing more than anything that he could tear up his resignation.

Chapter 537

Trenton left Haynes Group and hurried to inform Luther Ferguson about Gabriela's decision to give every remaining employee a raise.

Luther, Jasper's trusted assistant who managed the hotel project, absorbed the information with practiced composure. "Understood," he said simply.

Trenton's smile turned obsequious. "Luther, I've severed ties with Haynes Group. I'm available to join your company immediately."

Luther had dangled a deputy manager position at Howard Group before him when this assignment began. The promise gleamed like gold in Trenton's mind.

At one of the nation's most powerful corporations, a deputy manager held more influence than a simple director at Haynes Group.

Luther, who found Trenton distasteful, delivered his response with arctic precision. "Report to work tomorrow."

Trenton's gratitude spilled forth in waves of effusive thanks.

Luther's investigation into Gabriela's recent activities yielded troubling results. He presented his findings to Jasper with characteristic directness. "Gabriela awarded everyone double pay this month and implemented permanent salary increases." He paused, allowing the implications to settle.

Jasper continued examining the silver wristwatch in his palm, then lifted his gaze with glacial indifference. "Your point?"

"My sources confirmed Gabriela visited Apex Group today. She requested an audience with Mr. Moss," Luther continued.

"You believe Wesley provided the funds?" Jasper's tone carried no surprise. "He didn't."

Rebecca's position at Apex Group granted them perfect surveillance over Wesley's movements. Nothing escaped their network.

Luther nodded with dawning comprehension. "Nina and Tessa must have loaned her the money. Seven years of service to Mr. Moss would have built considerable savings."

Jasper secured the steel timepiece around his left wrist with practiced movements. "Regardless of Gabriela's methods, maintain close surveillance in the coming days."

"Understood."

Luther's departure coincided with Rebecca's entrance.

Her voice dripped honeyed sweetness. “Jasper.”

Jasper raised his wrist, displaying the watch with genuine pleasure. “This piece is exceptional. I’m thoroughly impressed.”

“It barely cost a hundred thousand,” Rebecca deflected, though pride colored her words. “I worried it might seem inadequate for someone of your stature.”

“You sacrificed multiple paychecks for this gift.” Jasper’s expression softened with authentic appreciation. “The sentiment means everything.”

Rebecca’s arm wound through his with practiced intimacy. “Your happiness is my reward.”

Jasper’s low chuckle rumbled with satisfaction.

Rebecca studied his features with calculated precision. His improved mood presented the perfect opportunity. “What intelligence did Luther bring you?”

Jasper provided a concise summary.

“Salary increases?” Rebecca’s frown deepened with disdain. “Only someone as foolishly naive as Gabriela would imagine money could purchase loyalty. Those who stayed are simply greedy, drawn in by the promise of a raise. They’ll abandon ship the moment they realize she’s bankrupt.”

Jasper maintained his silence, his gaze shifting from the steel timepiece to Rebecca’s face.

“Jasper, why not instruct Luther to orchestrate her company’s destruction?” Rebecca’s suggestion dripped with venom, each word laced with contempt for Gabriela.

With their family’s influence, crushing someone from a humble background like Gabriela would require no more effort than swatting an insect.

Jasper’s brow furrowed with subtle disapproval.

Rebecca shook his arm with theatrical desperation, her lower lip jutting in a practiced pout. “Jasper, Gabriela’s existence disgusts me. Please eliminate her.”

Jasper shook his head with firm resolution. “Cornered animals become dangerous. Restraint serves us better than recklessness.”

“What can she do? Desperation won’t grant her power over us.” Rebecca’s scoff carried bitter mockery. “Jasper, she haunted Apex Group for half the day today. Do you understand how my colleagues perceive me now? They’re acting like I stole Wesley from her—all because she knew him first. It’s ridiculous.”

Jasper smirked. "Someone at work challenged your position today?"

Rebecca performed wounded vulnerability with masterful precision. "Gabriela's presence torments me beyond endurance. I want her erased permanently. Will you grant me this?"

Chapter 538

Jasper's hand moved through her hair with gentle reassurance. His final concession emerged after careful deliberation. "We'll wait a little longer."

Rebecca felt victory surge through her veins but restrained herself from pushing further. Her gratitude flowed with practiced softness. "Thank you, Jasper."

Jasper turned toward the window, his fingers caressing the wristwatch with absent contemplation. The silence stretched between them, heavy with unspoken promises.

Gabriela remained oblivious to the shadow surveillance trailing her every movement, unaware that death might be lurking in Jasper's calculated patience.

That evening, she gathered all remaining employees at Century Hotel for a celebration dinner.

Hyde had secured a spacious private dining room where thirty-plus loyal staff members clustered around three expansive tables.

His menu selections impressed Gabriela, accommodating every palate with surprising consideration.

Kaleb leaned close to Gabriela's ear, his voice barely audible above the dinner chatter. "Hyde appears genuinely transformed."

"We'll monitor his progress closely," Gabriela replied with measured caution. "For now, he's simply another team member."

Marie's years of torment had carved deep grooves of wariness into Gabriela's psyche.

She wouldn't sabotage Marie's former allies, but trust would require substantial proof over time.

"Still, he'll receive the recognition and advancement opportunities his performance earns," she added.

Kaleb's admiration for her magnanimity deepened with each decision she made.

The atmosphere crackled with genuine warmth as employees raised their glasses repeatedly, toasting Gabriela's bold leadership.

Laughter punctuated conversations while plates emptied with satisfied appreciation.

After the final farewells echoed through the hotel lobby, each employee offering heartfelt promises of dedication, Kaleb lingered beside Gabriela. “Let me drive you home,” he offered with paternal concern.

“Go ahead, Uncle Kaleb. I need some air.”

Gabriela settled onto a roadside planter’s cold concrete edge, her fingers dancing across her phone screen with urgent purpose.

“Wesley, why did you transfer Lakeshore Building to my name? I understand you’re getting married. I won’t interfere with your happiness—I simply need answers.”

The message disappeared into digital silence. Thirty minutes crawled past without response, each second stretching her patience thinner.

Bitter wind numbed her fingertips while frustration gnawed at her composure.

She had withdrawn over one hundred million dollars today without triggering even a flicker of concern from him.

Had her messages vanished into an ignored inbox, or was his silence deliberate cruelty?

Aubrey’s whispered gossip suddenly blazed through her memory with crystalline clarity.

Gabriela shot to her feet, her arm cutting through the night air as she flagged down an approaching taxi.

The middle-aged driver studied her through his rearview mirror.

“Where to, miss?”

“Blue Star,” Gabriela commanded.

His hands tightened on the steering wheel. “Young lady, do you understand what Blue Star represents?”

“Perfectly. Please hurry—this is urgent.”

The driver navigated through neon-soaked streets before pulling up to Blue Star’s imposing facade. He turned to face her with genuine worry etched across his weathered features. “Exercise extreme caution in there.”

“Thank you for your kindness.” Gabriela pressed payment into his palm and stepped into Okburg’s most notorious establishment.

Blue Star commanded nineteen hundred square meters in the city's pulsing heart—an exclusive sanctuary designed entirely for wealthy women seeking male companionship.

As Gabriela crossed the threshold, two perfectly aligned rows of devastatingly handsome men materialized before her. Each towered over six feet, their sculpted forms radiating calculated charm and practiced elegance.

They greeted her in unison, saying, "Welcome, miss!"

Their voices blended into a symphony of seduction, each word crafted to inflate feminine ego and superiority. The choreographed display of male submission was designed to intoxicate female clients with unprecedented power.

Gabriela's breath caught as the spectacle unfolded before her stunned gaze.

Chapter 539

A handsome man stepped forward, his smile warm as he gestured Gabriela inside. "Miss, would you like to book a room or a service package?"

Gabriela had never been to a place like Blue Star, but she knew one thing from Aubrey—a night here started at three hundred thousand dollars.

The top escort at Blue Star commanded an exorbitant fee for just one night of service.

And if a guest didn't have at least twenty million in assets, they would never even see the top escort.

Lifting her chin slightly, Gabriela said, "I'd like to have my looks rated first."

Blue Star offered a unique attraction—an AI facial recognition system at the front of the hall.

If a guest scored above 90, they would be rewarded with a free night, including the services of the club's top escort.

That was also the information Aubrey had once shared with her. "It's a pity I'm not pretty enough," Aubrey had sighed. "Otherwise, I'd definitely test my luck. Imagine a free night with Blue Star's top man."

At the time, Gabriela had laughed it off.

Aubrey, though, had pressed her. "Gabriela, with your striking features, honestly, you might actually score high enough. If anyone could, it's you."

Gabriela had never thought she'd find herself actually trying it.

The handsome man paused but maintained his polite smile. "This way, miss."

The system began scanning.

Three minutes later, the results appeared: 95 out of 100.

The system didn't just rate features—it detected cosmetic enhancements. Any hint of surgery, and the score wouldn't even pass.

The system had been left to gather dust for over half a year, and few guests possessed enough confidence in their looks to risk taking its test.

Besides, women who could score that high would hardly set foot in a place like this.

Gabriela was the first to score 95.

The man stared, stunned.

Looking at her closely, he realized her beauty was extraordinary—if he were the top escort, he'd gladly serve her for free.

"Please wait a moment," he said. "I'll inform the manager."

The manager himself arrived shortly after, equally impressed. He personally escorted Gabriela to The Ace Room, the club's most exclusive suite.

"Miss Haynes," he said. "Please wait here. Roderick will join you soon."

Roderick Barnes—the top escort of Blue Star.

Gabriela settled into the plush sofa, lifted her phone, and snapped a selfie with the Blue Star logo clearly in the frame.

Then she sent it to Wesley.

If he refused to see her, then fine—she'd spend his money on someone else.

And she doubted he could stay calm after this.

Wesley was preparing to sleep when the message came. In the photo, Gabriela's cheeks looked faintly flushed, as if she'd been drinking.

Why wasn't she at home? Why was she out at this hour?

His eyes were fixed on the logo behind her: Blue Star.

Chapter 540

His expression hardened. He called Billy at once. "Find out what kind of place Blue Star is."

Even through the phone, a faint chill crept over Billy.

Doing business, of course, meant crossing paths with all kinds of people.

Billy's social circle was far more intricate than the one Wesley was familiar with. He had heard of Blue Star.

Gabriela's decision to visit such a place was undeniably bold. Without a moment's hesitation, Billy dispatched someone to investigate.

Back in The Ace Room, as Gabriela put her phone away, a waiter appeared, carrying a tray of exquisite snacks. "Miss Haynes, please enjoy."

His voice was both gentle and respectful.

Gabriela suddenly understood why women spent millions here. If the waiters were this polished and charming, how captivating must Roderick be to command such a reputation?

She nibbled on the treats as the minutes passed, waiting for him to appear.

What she didn't know was that in the front hall, chaos was already brewing—because of her.

After Gabriela left Century Hotel, Fiona had followed in secret, trailing her all the way here.

Fiona was well aware of places like Blue Star.

But seeing Gabriela walk in left her reeling. That poor little nobody... willing to splurge at Blue Star?

Excitement surged in Fiona's chest.

If Wesley discovered Gabriela was mixed up with such a place, he'd never want her again.

Then Fiona's own chances with him would soar.

She was so eager to catch up with Gabriela that she rushed out of her taxi—forgetting her handbag inside.

“My bag! My phone!”

She realized too late. The taxi had already driven away. But she couldn’t afford to lose Gabriela, so she let it go and slipped inside.

She watched as Gabriela went through the beauty rating process, jealousy burning in her veins.

So when the handsome man asked if she’d like to book a room, she said she wanted her beauty scored too.

The system flashed Fiona’s score: 88.

She froze.

How could Gabriela score 95 while she only had 88?

Where did those missing seven points go?

Seeing her dark expression, the handsome attendant smiled politely. “Ms. Dewitt, would you like to proceed now?”

“I want to be rated again!” Fiona snapped.

The man obliged. Ten more scans.

The first few remained at 88. Then the number slipped to 83, and finally, the last result dropped to 74—an embarrassingly low score.

“This system is terrible!” Fiona shouted, her voice trembling with fury. “Completely inaccurate!”

The man kept his tone calm. “The system uses strict facial recognition. Errors are nearly impossible.”

What he didn’t say was that by her last attempt, her face was twisted in rage—and 74 was, if anything, generous.

Her repeated testing quickly became gossip across the club.

One staff member remarked to Roderick, “That guest is pretty and dressed in luxury. Clearly wealthy. But she keeps demanding beauty ratings.”

Roderick's interest was piqued.

He'd worked there three years, and in all that time, not one woman had managed to catch his eye.