

His kiss 61

Chapter 61

Aubrey didn't press the issue; she simply let out a wistful breath, her gaze drifting away. "Once the New Year rolls around, you'll have your master's in hand. No wonder you landed a spot in the executive office. Makes me wish I'd pushed myself harder and gone for grad school too."

She'd spent years gathering solid experience at a smaller firm, but joining Apex Group meant starting over as an intern—her bachelor's degree just didn't carry enough weight here.

Gabriela shrugged lightly, her tone casual. "Honestly, I'd rather stick with sales. At least in this department, I don't have to worry every day about getting laid."

Given her impressive academic background, Gabriela could have gone straight for an internship in the executive office. Instead, she opted for the sales department, drawn by the allure of commission-based pay that promised bigger rewards than a flat salary ever could.

As the conversation continued, a burst of laughter rang out nearby—Tessa's signature, unfiltered cackle.

Tessa found Gabriela's childish thinking quietly amusing. A stint in the executive office meant rubbing elbows with Wesley himself—an intimidating prospect, sure, but the networking alone was priceless. Even if Gabriela eventually returned to the sales department, the contacts and skills she'd collect would serve her for years to come.

Hearing Tessa's laughter, Gabriela and Aubrey turned their heads. Aubrey called out, "Ms. Ortiz, fancy running into you here! Working overtime, are we?" The workday had already wrapped. Tessa let out a weary sigh. "I've been absolutely swamped. Looks like I'll be clocking extra hours again tonight."

At year's end, the executive office and finance department always ran at full throttle.

Tessa slid into a seat beside Gabriela and Aubrey for dinner, and once they'd finished eating, Tessa reached over and gave Gabriela's shoulder an encouraging squeeze. "Starting tomorrow, you'll be working with me. I'm really counting on you to help carry some of the load. Let's give it our all, yeah?"

Tessa's warm, down-to-earth attitude eased Gabriela's tension, and she answered with genuine resolve, "I won't let you down."

Gabriela's plan was simple: tough it out through the chaos until year-end, pocket her bonus, and then make her quiet exit. After a solid night's sleep, she awoke with her spirits soaring.

Gabriela never let grief drag her down for long; she knew how to shake off the weight and reclaim her strength.

She carefully applied a touch of makeup, fastened herself into a sharp women's business suit, and stepped into a pair of sleek heels. Instantly, she cut a commanding figure the moment she arrived at the office.

Inside the elevator, she ran into the three women who'd badmouthed her in the restroom the day before. As the doors slid shut, two of them offered wary greetings, their voices tinged with unease.

Gabriela, acting as though she'd completely forgotten their previous friction, flashed them a bright, easy smile. "Morning," she said, her tone friendly but confident.

Cali, looking visibly uncomfortable, mumbled a stilted greeting in return. "Morning."

The memory of Gabriela's icy fingers brushing her cheek lingered—so vivid it had chased her through restless dreams. She had no intention of provoking Gabriela ever again.

The elevator hummed upward—first stopping at the fourth floor for the sales department and then carrying Gabriela all the way up to the executive office on the twelfth.

As the elevator doors slid shut in front of them, Cali and the others lingered in the corridor, watching the elevator continue upward—leaving them behind on their usual floor. The gulf between Gabriela and them, once barely noticeable, now felt unbridgeable.

None of them could deny it: Gabriela's rise had been swift and undeniable. On the twelfth floor, Gabriela halted in front of the executive office, drawing a slow breath as she squared her shoulders.

She forced a quiet, defiant smile. Whatever happened inside, she could always walk away if Wesley made things unbearable. She refused to let anyone break her spirit.

With her resolve steady, she rapped on the polished door. It swung open to reveal a bright-eyed young man whose easy grin radiated friendliness. "You must be our new team member," he said, offering her a welcoming smile.

“New teammate, right? Welcome aboard! I’m Jerome Cruz.” Jerome was a genuinely nice guy—the kind of easygoing person who put everyone at ease.

Gabriela offered him a courteous smile before greeting the rest of the team, her tone warm but reserved. Without lingering, she made her way straight to Tessa’s office.

“Good morning, Ms. Ortiz. Is there anything you’d like me to tackle first?” she asked, her voice steady.

“One moment,” Tessa replied, her fingers flying across the keyboard. She barely glanced up as she printed out a file and handed it over. “Per the new memo, you’ll be handling Mr. Moss’s meals from now on. Billy will introduce you to him in a bit.”

Gabriela took the document, feeling the full weight of her new assignment settle on her shoulders.