

His kiss 661

Chapter 661

In Lauren's mind, Rebecca embodied perfection, untouchable like a pampered princess who could never be stained by humiliation.

Rebecca, however, felt her patience fraying.

"Mom, what's your actual plan for dealing with Gabriela?" she asked, her tone edged with frustration.

Lauren had promised to deal with Gabriela before, yet nothing happened. Gabriela emerged without a scratch, and rather than suffering, she came out even more advantaged.

Rebecca had only smashed a handful of computers at Gabriela's company, and still her father nearly drained the Howard family's coffers to provide Gabriela with compensation.

An illegitimate brat daring to fight her for the inheritance? What the hell made Gabriela think she deserved a damn thing?

Rebecca had already dreamed up dozens of ruthless ways to get rid of Gabriela, her patience worn thin by her mother's constant stalling.

Lauren, however, had no intention of letting her daughter get her hands dirty. She didn't answer directly, only smoothing her tone to a soft murmur. "Don't trouble yourself. I'll handle it in my own way."

She remembered how, two decades earlier, she had quietly erased Alanna from Matthew's life without leaving a trace.

If she had done it once, she could certainly do it again.

After soothing Rebecca into backing down with those reassurances, Lauren summoned her assistant.

Her expression turned cold, her words clipped. "Do whatever it takes—bring me Dustin within two days."

But where had Dustin vanished?

After being stabbed by Dustin, Stewart not only filed a police report but also sent his people to hunt the man down.

Wesley's men were sweeping every corner of the city as well.

Like prey with hunters on every side, Dustin had scurried into a half-built, abandoned structure at the city's edge. The place reeked of mildew and dust, but he dared not leave for even a scrap of food.

For half a month, Dustin had vanished from every city camera, his existence wiped clean from the screens. Not a single purchase or sighting betrayed his presence, which explained why so many factions failed to track him down.

One day, rain hammered the streets in relentless sheets.

The gash Gabriela had carved into Dustin's head with her stiletto still festered, the damp weather turning it raw and unbearable—itching, burning, throbbing all at once.

He stood at the edge of the ruin he called shelter, cold eyes fixed on the curtain of rain, as if it mirrored the wreck of his life. Once, he had been the pride of his parents—a brilliant young man, striking in looks, with a future overflowing with promise. Opportunities had stretched before him like an endless horizon. Now, he was nothing but a fugitive, a criminal hounded through the shadows, barred from even setting foot at home.

His parents had sacrificed everything to push him through the gates of a prestigious university, only for him to squander it all by marrying a gambler's daughter. That single choice had dragged him into this pitiful purgatory.

Chapter 662

And the cruelest irony of all—every twist of his downfall had started because Gabriela refused to tell him the truth.

Had Gabriela revealed from the very start that she was loaded, he would never have severed ties with her. Had he known that Phyllis had stolen what was hers, he would never have taken her hand in marriage.

Gabriela's name echoed through his regrets like a curse. With each passing day, the demon gnawing at his heart only grew stronger.

There were only two paths left before him. Either she relented, and they lived out their lives bathed in wealth and power, or he pulled her into the abyss with him, chained together in eternal ruin.

His thoughts twisted darker and darker—until the sound of footsteps shattered his daze.

A cold prickle crept down his spine, and he instinctively pressed himself into the shadows.

Out of the gloom stepped a pair of white, refined high heels—gleaming, poised, and perilously close.

Phyllis scraped the mud from her heels, her brows pinched as she surveyed the dingy hideout with open contempt. "Dustin, get out here."

Only after her sharp call echoed through the place did Dustin finally shuffle from the shadows, his movements slow and heavy.

A filthy strip of bandages clung unevenly around his head, his clothes hung in wrinkled folds, and a sour stench clung to him from days without washing.

The man who once carried the polished charm of a movie star now looked pathetic—his face smothered in coarse stubble, his posture broken, his whole presence reduced to that of a beggar.

Revulsion flickered across Phyllis's eyes.

This was the man she had once schemed to claim? A hollow wreck who had even dragged her mother into ruin—paralyzing her and condemning her to a hospital ward behind prison walls. If it weren't for competing with Gabriela, she would never have fought for such trash.

"Did you make sure no one followed you? Not a single suspicious car?"

Dustin refused to meet her eyes, his gaze shifting nervously through the shadows.

"No one tailed me," Phyllis assured coldly, lowering her voice. "I waited for the rain before coming. The cameras can't catch me in weather like this."

Burying her revulsion, she leaned closer, whispering with malice, "I wish Gabriela would just disappear. I'll help you get through this, no matter what it takes."

She hoped that once the police eased up on their hunt for Dustin, he would have the opportunity to eliminate Gabriela.

Phyllis dropped a backpack onto the floor with a dull thud.

Inside were a few bare essentials—food, water, toiletries.

The instant the zipper hissed open, Dustin's hand shot in and fumbled out a loaf of bread. He tore into it like a starving animal.

Phyllis's stomach twisted as she watched him devour each bite with feral desperation.

To think she had once shared a bed with this wretched man made her stomach churn until she nearly gagged.

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Dustin had only ripped into half the loaf before the sound of approaching steps froze him.

In a flash, he sprang up and clamped his hand around Phyllis's throat. "You lured them here, didn't you?"

Her face turned red as she clawed at his wrist, words rasping out between gasps. "No... I didn't..."

A man in a tailored black suit and neat tie stepped into view, addressing Dustin with cool formality. “Mr. Owen.”

Dustin’s eyes narrowed—he knew that face.

The man belonged to the Howard family.

He had seen him once before, back when this same figure had hunted him down.

Only then did Dustin release his grip. Phyllis crumpled to the floor, coughing violently, dragging in ragged breaths as if each one burned her lungs.

“Mr. Owen, this is five million, along with a passport.” The man placed a card and a passport into Dustin’s hand. “When the job’s finished, grab the money and disappear overseas until things cool off.”

Dustin’s fingers tightened around the items. “Fine. I’ll do exactly as you say.”

The man departed with a nod of approval, leaving behind a heavy silence.

Watching the ruthless light flicker in Dustin’s eyes, Phyllis felt pleased.

She had been the one to lead the man here.

He had promised her a fortune if Gabriela were taken care of—how could she possibly turn that down?

Her mother was locked behind prison walls. Her father's wages barely covered food, let alone the dresses she once wore so freely.

Jobless and dependent on scraps, her life had collapsed into misery.

If everything in her life had been torn apart, then Gabriela, who had caused her suffering, certainly had no right to live freely.

Phyllis rose slowly, her tone edged with warning. "Dustin, listen. Gabriela is under protection. If you charge in there with a knife, you'll only get yourself killed for nothing."

His eyes gleamed with malice as he fixed her with a stare. "Then what do you propose?"

A faint, almost mocking smile touched her lips. "What can I propose? I've lost everything now."

Deep down, she was aware that she couldn't risk being tied to his madness. If Dustin were caught, she refused to be dragged down as his accomplice.

Phyllis suddenly slipped a mirror from her bag and began fussing with her hair, smoothing the strands before painting her lips a glossy red.

Dustin's mouth twisted into a sneer. "Even now, you're worried about makeup?"

Her reflection steady in the glass, Phyllis answered without looking at him, her tone light and unhurried. "Whatever the struggle, many women place their looks above all else, cherishing their appearance fiercely."

Something sharp flickered across Dustin's expression.

Many women placed their looks above all else?

Then he would take that away from Gabriela. He didn't need to kill her to ruin her—just scar her beauty and make every day of her life a torment.

Chapter 664

Dustin lurked in the shadows, plotting how to tear Gabriela apart and ruin her completely.

She remained unaware, danger creeping closer with every passing hour.

For the last two days, she had been staying at Wesley's apartment. Now that they were together, Wesley's passion burst free, his relentless energy almost smothering. He clung to her as if each moment might be their last. Sometimes, Gabriela even questioned whether the diagnosis had been wrong. He seemed perfectly fine.

But deep down, she knew a man of Wesley's stature would never rely on the judgment of just one doctor regarding his health. If his illness had been confirmed, it was beyond doubt. A quiet sorrow weighed on her chest. Whatever Wesley demanded, she indulged him without resistance.

One afternoon, rain hammered against the windows in steady sheets.

Wesley sat in the living room, his tall frame relaxed on the sofa as he conducted a video call. The highway project had finally been signed, with Brenden appointed to oversee the venture. Billy and six senior advisors had been assigned to support him.

Brenden spoke with mounting confidence, pacing before the screen as he laid out the early investments and painted a bright picture of the highway's future.

Across the room, Gabriela reclined with a book in her lap, pausing now and then to answer Kaleb's messages. Though she had been absent from the office for a few days, he had managed most of the workload in her stead. Still, several critical documents demanded her own review.

Wesley and Gabriela occupied opposite ends of the quiet room, neither intruding on the other's space. Beyond the windows, rain hammered down in relentless sheets, yet inside, the silence felt calm and intimate.

When the conference ended, Wesley snapped his laptop shut and glanced over, finding Gabriela absorbed in her phone. A warmth stirred in him at the sight, a contentment he hadn't expected.

"Are you hungry?" he asked, leaning slightly toward her with a subtle smile. "Let me make you something."

"Let me do the cooking," Gabriela suggested, setting her phone aside as she started toward the kitchen, only for Wesley's hand to stop her with gentle insistence.

His eyes softened as he murmured, "Let me handle it." He wasn't the type to shower her with romance, but he wanted to ground their life together with simple, practical gestures. When she looked back someday, her memories of him would carry a touch of warmth.

In no time, Wesley set two steaming plates of pasta on the table, each crowned with a perfectly fried egg.

Gabriela's eyes lit up as she lifted her fork. "This looks wonderful," she said warmly.

Wesley leaned back with a smug little grin. "Of course it does." Nothing was beyond his reach. His sharp mind picked up anything he put his hands to.

She tasted the pasta. It carried a gentle, balanced flavor that lingered without being heavy.

"It's really delicious," she remarked brightly, her voice full of warmth.

"Then eat more," he urged, watching her closely.

Chapter 665

For a while, they ate in companionable silence. Gabriela studied the firm lines of his face before blurting, "Wesley, what if you tried treatment?"

His hand stilled on the fork. After a moment, he answered slowly, "Even if I submitted myself to treatment, it would only drag things out a little longer."

He was determined to meet the end with dignity.

"I made a vow to myself five years ago in that hospital bed: I would never just lie there again, wasting away, utterly powerless against death."

Even with talk of life and death hanging between them, his expression stayed unnervingly serene, as though the one nearing the end wasn't him at all.

"I see." Gabriela knew she couldn't change his mind. Swallowing her grief, she kept eating, though her tears slipped soundlessly into the plate.

Once they finished, Wesley gently took her hands and began trimming her nails.

The intimacy of the act warmed her, yet his explanation came with a sly smile. "Your nails are too sharp. The scratches from the other night are still visible, and I can't exactly walk around showing those off."

Gabriela's cheeks flushed crimson.

For someone usually so distant, how could he so effortlessly turn into such a tease?

Wesley curved his lips in a quiet smile as he carefully trimmed her nails. He liked to tease her, as if to remind her he wasn't a man waiting for death, but someone who could still make her laugh. He wanted her memories of him to hold more than grief and shadows.

When he finished, he laced his fingers with hers and tugged her toward the upstairs theater.

The second floor held a cozy private screening room with a wide screen and rich, mellow lighting.

They didn't need popcorn or conversation. Just sinking into the couch together, pressed side by side, was enough to make them content.

By the time the credits rolled, dusk had fallen, and the rain outside had given way to a clear night.

Wesley rose, offering his hand with an easy suggestion. "Come on. Let's take a walk."

The fresh, rain-washed air carried them out to the lively university district. Neon lights glowed against damp pavement, and the snack street buzzed with chatter and clattering pans.

Gabriela hesitated. She hadn't wanted to bring him here. The stalls overflowed with fiery spices and rich oils, flavors far too heavy for his condition.

Wesley said with quiet earnestness, "I just want to see the place you used to visit all the time back in college."

With no real way to refuse, Gabriela reluctantly guided him inside.

Hand in hand, they wandered the streets like any ordinary couple, sharing bites and strolling between stalls. Since Wesley's weak heart kept him from eating too much, Gabriela ended up finishing most of the dishes.

While they were placing an order for skewers, a hesitant voice broke through the chatter of the crowd. "Miss?"

Turning, Gabriela found herself facing a clean-cut young man, probably a student from one of the nearby universities. She narrowed her eyes, struggling to remember who he was.

Chapter 666

The young man's hopeful expression faltered. "You don't remember me?"

Gabriela gave a small shake of her head.

Wesley's features tightened, his jaw set with a stormy edge. He knew Gabriela drew attention wherever she went, but with him standing right beside her, did this man think he was invisible?

His grip on Gabriela's hand firmed as he spoke with deliberate calm. "If you've got something to say to my girlfriend, you can say it to me."

The young man blinked in shock, blurting, "Miss, you changed boyfriends already?"

The air seemed to still around them.

Wesley's expression dropped into an icy mask, a chilling aura radiating off him.

Before the tension could escalate, Gabriela quickly cut in, her voice crisp. "Stop making things up. I don't know you."

The young man fumbled out his phone, thrusting the screen toward her while pointing to a shop across the street. "It was just recently, over there. I was going to ask for your number, but your boyfriend looked like he'd kill me for it."

He then muttered through clenched teeth, "If I'd realized you switched boyfriends that quickly, I would've put in more effort."

Gabriela was at a loss for words.

The face in the photo was Stewart's.

The memory clicked. Back when Stewart had arranged for a doctor to treat Myah's eyes, she'd thanked him with dinner. The two of them, both striking and eye-catching, drew plenty of stares. Strangers kept pestering for their numbers, so Stewart had claimed she was his girlfriend just to shake them off. She never imagined that someone would not only remember that night, but also snap a photo.

"Delete that photo," Wesley ordered, his voice sharp and threatening enough to make the young man flinch.

The young man squared his shoulders, though his voice wavered. "Why should I delete it?"

Wesley's eyes turned glacial as he stated, "Do you need my lawyer to explain it to you?"

That single threat drained the color from the young man's face. Unaccustomed to dealing with such an intimidating presence, he fumbled with his phone and quickly erased the photo.

Not satisfied, Wesley seized the device and scrolled through it himself, making certain not a single image of Gabriela remained before handing it back.

No way would he allow another man to carry around pictures of his woman.

Gabriela saw the fury burning in his expression and dared not say a word. She quickly paid for the skewers, then followed him away in silence.

Even after they returned to the apartment, Wesley's face remained shadowed and tense.

Gabriela slipped closer, her voice soft and coaxing. "Don't be upset. It was nothing more than a quick excuse, not the truth."

"I thought I was the first one you brought to a snack street." Wesley let out a bitter laugh. "Stewart really outdid himself, pretending to be your boyfriend. No wonder you hesitated to bring me there earlier."

Gabriela rolled her eyes at Wesley's remark.

"You know your heart isn't strong, so you really shouldn't eat spicy food," she explained gently, her voice carrying quiet concern. "I only hesitated because I didn't want you having those heavy, fiery dishes."

But a stroll down a snack street without tasting anything seemed hollow.

Wesley knew he was being stubborn, almost petty.

Of course Gabriela would have male friends—everyone had their own circle. Still, he couldn't bring himself to stomach Stewart. From the moment he sensed Stewart's hidden intentions toward Gabriela, a deep aversion had taken root.

With his jaw set and his eyes dark as midnight, Wesley looked at her as though she were the one at fault. "From now on, you're not having meals alone with Stewart."

Gabriela nodded right away, her agreement quick and earnest.

"You're not to meet him privately at all," Wesley added, his tone leaving no room for negotiation.

"All right," she answered softly.

Her immediate compliance, however, only made Wesley more upset.

Memories of the deep-sea city model Stewart had guarded for years stirred in Wesley, his voice turning into an icy growl.

“You’re never to give him anything again.”

“All right,” Gabriela conceded with a faint nod.

Whatever he demanded, she accepted without question. Given his frail heart condition, she didn’t dare spark his temper. Though some tension slipped from his face, an icy edge clung to his demeanor.

He recognized that, no matter how unreasonable his orders became, Gabriela wouldn’t resist.

Indulging in the certainty of her devotion, Wesley let himself savor the strange luxury of being fussed over like a spoiled child.

That night, after finishing her bath, Gabriela quietly prepared hot water for him before slipping into bed.

When Wesley stepped out from his own soak, toweling off his damp hair, he found her already asleep.

Moving with deliberate care, he shut off the light, then slid onto the mattress beside her, drawing close in the dark.

The nightlight cast a faint glow across Gabriela's skin, soft as silk beneath the shadows.

Wesley drew her into his arms, his lips brushing lightly over her shoulder and down her arm. His hand stilled when it reached the faded burn scar on her left arm, his fingertips tenderly tracing the mark as though trying to erase it.

In his heart, he vowed that even if one day he was no longer by her side, Gabriela would live like a princess, never again scarred by pain.

Every movement was careful, as if afraid of disturbing her sleep. But she had been restless these days, and her lashes fluttered as she blinked awake in a sleepy haze.

"Wesley, why aren't you asleep yet?" she murmured, her voice husky with drowsiness.

At the sound of her words, his arm tightened abruptly around her waist, a quiet insistence in the pressure.

"Why are you still calling me by my name?" he asked, his tone low.

“What else am I supposed to call you?” Gabriela frowned faintly, baffled by how the head of a vast corporation could cling so fiercely to such small, trivial things.

Wesley spun her into his arms, his kiss pressing hard and sure before he urged in a low rasp, “Call me darling.”

Heat rose to her face, painting Gabriela’s cheeks red. Even after sharing the most intimate nights, she still flushed at the smallest provocation.

Wesley’s low chuckle rumbled in his chest before he feigned a stern look. “If you don’t say it today, maybe tomorrow you won’t have the chance...”

Chapter 668

“Darling!” Gabriela blurted, cutting him off. Her voice carried a sweet urgency, and she repeated it again and again, “Darling, darling...”

Each call slipped out soft and obedient, as light as spring air stirring through young leaves, sending a rush of heat straight to the heart.

Wesley’s hand froze, his hold around her waist tightening instinctively. Desire swelled through him, roughening his voice into a raw demand. “Once more.”

Gabriela whispered with earnest devotion, “Darling.”

That single word unraveled his restraint. He crushed his lips to hers, the kiss deep and lingering, tasting the sweetness of her breath.

Lost in the cool, magnetic force of Wesley's embrace, Gabriela's head swam, yet a sliver of reason still flickered in her hazy mind.

She kept Wesley's fragile health in mind and refused to indulge him further. With a firm shove, she pushed him back. "I'm too exhausted tonight. I just want to sleep."

With that, she burrowed quickly into his arms and feigned slumber, her lashes pressed shut as if sealing the decision.

Wesley made no move to press her. Instead, he held her close, his voice a low murmur against her hair. "Sleep well, darling."

A hush settled over the bedroom, wrapping it in silence.

Pressed against his chest, Gabriela lay with her back to him. Though her breathing mimicked rest, her eyes fluttered open in the dark, heavy with emotions she dared not speak.

A sudden sting tightened her throat, the impulse to cry welling up from nowhere.

The fleeting moments she shared with him left her heart aching, and in silence she prayed for the heavens to grant them even a sliver more time together.

The night deepened, thick and soundless.

But perhaps it was the heavy barbecue from earlier. In the hollow hours between three and four, Wesley stirred awake, his chest constricting as if an unseen weight pressed down. His face drained of color, lips paling in the dark.

Gabriela jolted upright, panic flashing through her. With trembling hands, she slipped some pills into his mouth, urging him to swallow. Gradually, the rigid whiteness of his features eased, warmth seeping back into his skin.

She refilled his glass and watched with quiet worry as he took slow sips. Only after a long stretch did the pallor fade, leaving his face steadier.

Gabriela made up her mind—she would drag him to the hospital if she had to.

Her voice cracked with fury and fear. “If you won’t go, then we’re done! I can’t live like this anymore, constantly terrified.”

The words tumbled out like a weapon, quickly followed by a flood of tears.

Wesley's expression hardened, the calm on his face betraying the storm behind his eyes.

She belonged to him now—how could she regret it and talk of leaving?

It was far too late for that.

His voice came out cold and sharp, carrying a chill that cut to the bone. "Say that again."

Gabriela shot back through trembling lips, "Either you go to the hospital, or we're done!"

Pouting stubbornly, she added with biting finality, "Once we break up, I won't ever come back. I won't care what happens to you after that."

Rage surged through Wesley as he clamped her wrist in an iron grip. His eyes blazed with a searing intensity. "You really think 'breaking up' is something you can throw around so casually?"

Gabriela didn't flinch, meeting his stare with a fierce glare. Her eyes brimmed with tears, shimmering with such raw sorrow that it broke through his defenses.

Chapter 669

Wesley's chest tightened. He was helpless against her grief.

With a weary sigh, he brushed her tears away and murmured, "Don't cry. I'll do whatever you want."

Wesley then allowed her to lead him to the hospital.

After the tests were run, the doctor listened as Gabriela explained he had eaten barbecue before bed. A sigh escaped the doctor. "Mr. Moss's body is already extremely fragile. Heavy, spicy foods put tremendous strain on his heart. He has to stay away from things like this from now on."

Gabriela bobbed her head, her chest tight with unease.

While the doctor prepared Wesley's medication, she leaned in close, her voice barely above a whisper. "Doctor... there really isn't any other way?"

Though Wesley himself had already given up, watching Gabriela cling so fiercely to hope made his chest ache. He reached over, gently closing his hand around hers.

"Well... there might be a way." The doctor hesitated, his voice carrying a trace of uncertainty. "But the likelihood of it working is extremely low."

Gabriela's eyes lit up instantly, a spark breaking through her despair.

However faint, a chance was still a chance—something to hold on to.

“What is it, doctor?” she asked quickly.

His gaze lingered on the faint red scratches marring Wesley’s neck. After a long pause, he finally admitted, “This approach hasn’t been backed by reliable clinical results.”

Catching the raw hope shining in her expression, he added in a rush, “If Mr. Moss had a child, and we had access to the cord blood... then perhaps there’s a slim possibility.”

Yet before even weighing the success of such a treatment, reality loomed cruelly.

With Wesley’s time counted in mere months, conceiving and bringing a child into the world was far from a viable option.

Those words left Gabriela reeling in silence.

The doctor offered quiet reassurance. “This approach isn’t confirmed yet—it’s still under study. Please don’t pin all your hopes on it...”

Her focus snapped back in an instant, the words tumbling out with barely contained urgency. “The cord blood—we have it!”

Both the doctor and Wesley turned toward her at once.

A flicker of confusion crossed Wesley’s eyes.

Refusing to acknowledge their stares, Gabriela pressed forward, her voice trembling with impatience. “Doctor... if we already have the cord blood, can treatment start immediately?”

There was no time to waste—Wesley’s life was slipping away too quickly.

Although the doctor looked slightly puzzled, he still answered with measured seriousness, “My recommendation is that Mr. Moss receive treatment in Athea.”

Gabriela leaned forward anxiously. “If we go overseas, how long would it take to get an appointment?”

“There’s a Dr. Gale in Athea,” the doctor explained. “He specializes in heart surgery. But his operating schedule is extremely tight. Normally, it could take up to a month to secure a slot. In certain urgent cases, though, it might be shortened to two weeks.”

After reviewing Dr. Gale’s appointment process and medical team, Gabriela accompanied Wesley to receive his IV drip. Throughout the entire procedure, Wesley’s gaze never left her face.

“Gabriela,” he murmured, voice edged with quiet command. “You’d better tell me what you meant about having the cord blood.”

Gabriela waited until the nurse had stepped out, then bent closer, her tone hushed and deliberate.

“Wesley, I have a major secret to confess. But you have to promise me first—you won’t get mad at me once you hear it.”

Chapter 670

Wesley’s brow tightened as Gabriela’s earlier words about cord blood replayed in his mind. He leaned forward, voice low. “All right. I’m listening.”

“You... you actually have a son,” Gabriela confessed.

The moment the revelation left her lips, Wesley’s expression sharpened. A fierce glint flashed in his eyes, carrying a silent warning—that if she dared make a joke of this, his temper would ignite on the spot.

Gabriela’s courage faltered, her voice dropping to a tremor. “Truett... he isn’t Tessa’s child. He’s mine.”

The words were barely above a whisper, and Wesley almost wondered if he had imagined them. His face didn’t cloud with anger, but a gravity unlike anything before settled over his features.

His eyes fixed on her in disbelief, as though the revelation itself shattered his grasp on reality. “Truett is your child?”

Gabriela nodded. “Yes. He is our son.”

Wesley’s mind reeled back to the small boy’s laughter, the warmth of little arms circling his neck. Each time he carried him, an unfamiliar yet undeniable bond had pulled at his chest. He remembered the slip of Truett’s voice—soft, trusting—calling him “Daddy.”

The truth struck him like a blow. That child was his flesh and blood.

Gabriela had played a daring, reckless game—bearing his son in secret and claiming that Truett was Tessa’s child.

The realization scorched through him. She had robbed him of those precious years, deceived him so brazenly he’d missed his own child’s first milestones, his first words, his very growth.

His brows knitted hard, shadowing his striking features as his voice cut sharp. “And you’re only telling me this now?”

Gabriela faltered beneath the weight of his glare, her fingers tightening at her side. “Could we... skip the reason?” she asked, her tone wavering.

“Skip it?” Wesley’s jaw clenched. “You’d better decide if you can live with the fallout.”

The fury in his eyes stung her, leaving a lump in her throat. “I once believed the man who had slept with me was Brenden,” she whispered, her voice thick with grievance. “You knew the truth, yet you kept playing Brenden just to toy with me. You hid it from me, and still had the nerve to say you liked me. How could I possibly tell you I was pregnant? I never cared for Brenden. Even if I carried his child, I wouldn’t have let him find out. By the time I finally learned the truth, you were already promised to Rebecca. I was terrified you’d try to take the baby from me—so of course I kept silent.”

Gabriela spilled everything in a rush, her voice trembling as her chest heaved. By the end, her eyes were rimmed in red, glistening like a startled rabbit’s.

Wesley dragged a hand down his face, torn between anger and helplessness.

She was the one who had hidden everything, yet she twisted it until she looked like the wronged one, painting herself as the victim before he could even speak.

He gave a sharp, derisive snort. “You are fortunate we are in a hospital, Gabriela. Otherwise, you would be taught a severe lesson.”

The implication in his words struck her instantly.