

His kiss 68

Chapter 68

Gabriela's lips curled in silent disdain.

Honestly, it was exhausting—Phyllis couldn't help herself, always taking cheap shots and clinging to her childish sense of superiority. Gabriela couldn't even be bothered to fire back.

Josh, finally shaking off his daze, frowned at Phyllis's biting words. "Gabriela might just be living her life, you know. There's no reason to assume the worst every time."

Phyllis bristled at Josh's unexpected support. Her voice turned shrill. "Dad, did you forget how she used to work those bars in high school—selling drinks, flirting with random men, doing whatever she had to for money? Those places were crawling with shady guys. It was disgusting. And Gabriela actually bragged about it!"

A flush of anger crept over Gabriela's face, her jaw tightening.

Since freshman year, Marie had quietly pocketed Gabriela's tuition money, secretly hoping she would drop out without a fuss. When Gabriela finally brought this to Josh's attention, he chose to believe Marie's story and blamed Gabriela for wasting the money.

Left with no other choice, Gabriela started picking up weekend jobs, scraping together every dollar she could just to stay in school.

That bitter episode became the perfect ammunition for Phyllis, fueling the rumors she spread.

Now, after hearing Phyllis's slander again, Josh felt his faith begin to waver.

Year after year, Marie would hand over the supposed tuition, yet Gabriela always seemed to be hustling for cash, insisting she had to pay her own way. To him, it looked like she was just making excuses—spending time with the wrong crowd and earning a bad reputation.

A heavy sense of guilt settled over Josh—he had failed to discipline Gabriela, betraying his late sister's trust.

Marie summoned up a wounded expression. "Everyone says being a stepmom is tough, but let me tell you, being the aunt isn't a walk in the park either. I've always treated you fairly, Gabriela—anything Phyllis had, you had too. Yet you still insisted on chasing odd jobs, dragging my name through the mud with the neighbors."

Josh rushed to Marie's side, his tone stern as he turned to Gabriela. "Gabriela, you need to cut ties with that old rich guy. Do what Marie says and stop making things harder for her."

Dustin, caught off guard by Gabriela's past, felt his earlier bruised ego soften just a little. His grip on Phyllis tightened as he murmured, "Phyllis, Gabriela clearly has no self-respect. Stop wasting your time worrying about her."

Phyllis tucked herself against him and replied obediently, "Alright."

She refused to believe the old man could keep hiding forever. With her wedding just around the corner, she was eager to meet Gabriela's so-called boyfriend. Secretly, she intended to round up Gabriela's old classmates from both university and high school, hoping to drag her name through the mud in front of everyone.

Surveying their expressions, Gabriela felt a wave of bitter amusement. Not a single one of them actually cared about her. What was the point in bickering with them?

Choosing to sidestep the drama entirely, Gabriela slipped upstairs and retreated to her bedroom.

After a long, steaming shower, she glanced at the stack of documents left on her nightstand—Wesley had mentioned there was something important to tackle tomorrow. Most likely, it meant burning the midnight oil memorizing every detail.

Wesley had a touch of narcissism about him, but she had to admit he'd helped her out tonight. Maybe he wasn't all bad after all.

Gabriela scooped up the stack of documents and began poring over them, letting the notes burn into her memory.

That night, after hours hunched over documents about his personal details, she drifted into uneasy sleep—only to find Wesley starring in her vivid, undeniably heated dreams.

The following morning at the office, just catching sight of him sent a rush of heat to her cheeks. Her heart hammered wildly as she poured his coffee, unable to meet his eyes without reliving fragments of that dream.

Wesley noticed immediately, his gaze sharp with concern. “You look a little flushed. Are you feeling alright?”

Gabriela rushed to cover, shaking her head with a forced smile. “It’s nothing—just stayed up too late cramming for those documents, that’s all. I’m running on fumes.”

Wesley arched a brow. “If that’s the case, let’s hear it. Recite what you memorized.”

Caught off guard, Gabriela faltered; she hadn’t fully absorbed the documents and had planned to revisit them later. Now her own lie had her cornered. She gave a clumsy, fragmented summary, hoping it would pass.

Wesley’s expression remained unsatisfied, his tone cool. “You’re my secretary, Gabriela. If you can’t even remember my preferences, it makes me question if you’re really up to the job.”