

His kiss 741

Chapter 741

Jaycob lingered outside for a long moment before reluctantly re-entering the private room, only to be met with a palpable chill in the air.

The atmosphere felt unsettling, almost foreboding. Bewildered, Jaycob glanced at Billy. What could have shifted Wesley's mood so drastically in a mere ten minutes?

Billy, already steeped in regret, could only offer a helpless shrug.

Reading the tension, Jaycob ventured cautiously. "Mr. Moss, it's getting rather late. I apologize for my delay. Shall we reschedule the project discussion for another day?"

Wesley nodded. "Okay. Billy will coordinate another meeting with you, Mr. Stanley."

As they exited the Gilded Fork, the night sky loomed impenetrably dark.

Wesley's mood mirrored the heavy, inky blackness, devoid of any trace of warmth.

Billy drove in silence, unable to decipher his boss's thoughts. Gabriela's behavior baffled him even more.

Resolving to stay out of it, Billy concluded that his attempts to intervene only stirred up trouble.

Back at the villa, Wesley stepped into the courtyard and noticed the meticulously tended lotus pond.

The residence sat in a serene enclave, disturbed only by the soft patter of raindrops slipping from leaves to the ground.

Yet Wesley's mind churned restlessly.

Billy glanced at him warily. "Mr. Moss, the gardener said the lotus won't bloom this winter."

Wesley's expression remained impassive.

The memory of what had once been a vibrant spread of white roses only sharpened his irritation. His dark eyes grew distant, as if lost in some inaccessible recollection.

After a prolonged silence, he waved a hand dismissively. "You may go."

"Yes, Mr. Moss. Please rest well," Billy said.

Wesley retreated to the living room.

The lights glowed softly, illuminating a scattering of fruit peels in the trash bin. Allan's diary lay open on the coffee table.

Myah had been here again today. She constantly professed deep care for Allan, yet repeatedly left his diary strewn carelessly around the living room.

Wesley reached out, intending to put it away for her.

But something in him recoiled from the diary. His hand froze midair, never making contact.

In the end, he turned and went upstairs.

After a shower, Wesley spotted the ring on the bedside table and frowned again.

Moments earlier, he should have told Billy to find out which man had dared to escort Gabriela home.

Stewart stayed at Gabriela's place until well past nine, long after Truett had drifted to sleep. Only after Matthew urged him repeatedly did he finally bid farewell and leave.

Gabriela saw him out, and when she returned, she found Myah in her bedroom.

“Myah, what are you doing?” she asked.

Caught off guard by Gabriela’s voice, Myah spun around, quickly hiding her hands behind her back.

Gabriela’s suspicion stirred. “Myah, what are you holding?”

Myah shrank back, visibly startled, shaking her head vigorously. “Nothing, Gabriela. It’s late—I’m going to bed.”

“Show me what you’re hiding.” Gabriela grabbed her hand, disapproval in her tone. “If you want something, just say so, and I’ll give it to you. There’s no need to sneak around...”

Her words faltered mid-sentence.

On Myah’s left ring finger gleamed a ring—the very ring Gabriela had fished from the pool days earlier. The engagement ring Wesley had given her.

“Myah, you—”

Noticing Gabriela's stunned expression, Myah knew her scheme had taken effect.

She swiftly veiled the cunning spark in her eyes, adopting a convincingly flustered look. "Please don't get the wrong idea. I only slipped it on because it's so beautiful. I didn't mean to upset you."

Chapter 742

Though Gabriela had always indulged Myah's whims, this ring was her boundary.

Irritation flared, barely contained. "Myah, how could you touch my ring without asking?"

"I'm sorry." Myah's eyes brimmed with tears as she apologized profusely, fumbling to remove the ring.

Oddly, it clung stubbornly to her finger.

After considerable effort, she pried it off, only for it to slip and skitter beneath the bed.

Gabriela gasped and dropped to her knees, searching under the bed.

"I'm sorry, Gabriela. It was an accident," Myah pleaded, joining the search.

They eventually found it, but a small diamond had come loose in the rough tumble.

Myah sobbed as she apologized again and again.

"It's fine. I'll take it to the jeweler for repair tomorrow," Gabriela said, swallowing her frustration. "But you can't take my ring again without permission."

"Understood." Myah nodded fervently, her face etched with guilt as she wished Gabriela goodnight.

Once outside, Myah's innocent mask dissolved, giving way to a chilling smile.

It carried a disturbing, obsessive edge that could unsettle anyone who saw it.

She unfurled her palm, fixating on the diamond concealed there, and whispered, "Gabriela, I hope I won't need to resort to this again."

After Myah left, Gabriela searched beneath the bed for the missing diamond but eventually gave up.

The next day, she took the ring to a jewelry store for repair and ran into Rebecca.

Cindy trailed behind, carrying Rebecca's bag.

Word of Gabriela being barred from Wesley's company and left in the rain had reached Rebecca, and she reveled in it.

She had brought Cindy to the jewelry store, buying her two expensive pieces as a rare gesture of generosity. Cindy, who had endured Rebecca's psychological games for two years, was stunned by the unexpected favor.

Spotting Gabriela, Cindy seized the chance to taunt her, hoping to earn more of Rebecca's approval and escape future torment.

"Oh, Miss Hayes, jewelry shopping too? I heard you were thrown out of Mr. Moss's company yesterday and caught in that downpour. Not feeling under the weather? How do you have the energy to browse jewels?"

Gabriela brushed off Cindy's jabs, unwilling to stoop to her level. After searching the store and finding no diamond of a matching size, she turned to leave—only for Cindy to block her path.

"Gabriela, I'm speaking to you!"

When Gabriela ignored her, Cindy's anger flared. "Show some respect! You can't even muster a reply?"

"I only speak with respectable people." Gabriela cast her a cool glance at her. "After all these years, you're still the lackey."

Though unspoken, the insult landed sharply.

Cindy, livid, geared up to lash out.

Desperate to win Rebecca's favor, she was ready to make a scene.

"Gabriela, you smug little—You think you're something special for catching Mr. Moss's eye, but he dropped you the moment he got back! Hmph. In my view, Mr. Moss should be with Rebecca..."

"Rebecca, control your lackey." Gabriela turned to Rebecca, her expression composed but frosty. "If you can't act civilized, at least keep your sidekick from stirring trouble."

Cindy reeled at Gabriela's directness, her face flushing with fury.

As she prepared a retort, Rebecca's brow furrowed, and she signaled Cindy to back off.

Cindy clamped her mouth shut, begrudgingly.

Rebecca turned to Gabriela. “My family is hosting a charity gala the day after tomorrow. I’m inviting you—and I’ll ensure Wesley’s invited too.”

She tilted her chin, radiating arrogance. “Do you have the nerve to show up?”

Chapter 743

Gabriela saw through Rebecca’s game instantly.

They were half-sisters. As born rivals, their paths had been set against each other from the beginning. Lauren’s imprisonment had only tightened Rebecca’s resentment, and now the whole city buzzed with whispers of Gabriela’s supposed rift with Wesley since his return. Rebecca clearly planned to use the upcoming party as a stage to humiliate Gabriela.

But truth be told, it had always been Rebecca and Lauren striking first. Gabriela didn’t think she should bend to them.

Dismissing Rebecca’s plotting, Gabriela calmly asked the jeweler how long it would take to repair her ring.

“A week at most,” the jeweler answered with deference.

Gabriela left the ring, pocketed the receipt, and turned on her heel to go.

Rebecca, her face stormy, hurried after her.

“Gabriela, what’s wrong? Too scared to show your face? When you stole my man, you were all fire and arrogance. What happened to that now?”

Gabriela stopped, her gaze cool and cutting.

“First of all, Wesley was never your man. Second, if you’re still gnawing on that bone, maybe try winning him over instead of yapping at me like a jealous stray. And third, don’t flatter yourself. I’m not avoiding your little party. I just don’t waste my time on things that aren’t worth it.”

The indifference in her tone shattered Rebecca’s thin façade of superiority, leaving only burning hatred in its wake.

As Gabriela reached for her car door, Rebecca slapped her hand against it, blocking her path.

“You’re not going anywhere!” Rebecca snarled, her voice trembling with rage. “If you dare skip the party, I’ll tell everyone that your mother was nothing but a shameless mistress, and you... nothing more than her illegitimate bastard—”

The crack of Gabriela’s palm silenced her. The slap echoed like a whip in the quiet street.

“That’s enough from you!” Gabriela’s eyes flashed with cold fury. “You know very well what truly happened between my mother and your father. If you have a problem, take it up with Matthew, not me.”

“How dare you raise your hand at me again!” Rebecca shrieked, lifting her hand to strike back.

But Gabriela was faster. She seized Rebecca’s wrist and shoved her back a step, her strength sharp and unyielding.

“Don’t even try. You’ll never win against me. Unless you want another beating, stand down.”

Gabriela’s poise carried the weight of years of discipline, while Rebecca was hopelessly outmatched.

Cindy, who had been lingering nearby, flinched at the sound of the slap.

She had always thought Gabriela fragile—someone others could trample on. Yet now, watching her strike without hesitation, Cindy realized Gabriela was anything but weak.

Rebecca’s cheek burned, her pride burning hotter. She knew the scandal of her mother had destroyed Gabriela’s family, yet it was Gabriela’s presence that magnified her shame.

For two years, she had been mocked, pitied, laughed at. Every night, she dreamed of crushing Gabriela beneath her heel. Clutching her face, she glared through eyes wet with hatred.

Chapter 744

“Gabriela, you ruined my mother, threw her in prison, and then you stole the man I loved. You must be so satisfied with yourself!”

Gabriela’s lips curved, though her tone was flat, almost mocking.

“Satisfied? Hardly.”

Her voice remained steady, almost cold. “Lauren hired Dustin to attack me. He got ten years, but thanks to her connections, she walked away with just a year and a half. Tell me, Rebecca—how could I possibly be satisfied with that?”

Her dark eyes glinted like drawn blades as she leaned closer.

“Lauren tormented my mother, made her life a living hell. From this day forward, I will hunt down justice for her relentlessly.”

Without waiting for a reply, Gabriela slid into her car, rolled up the window, and started the engine.

“Gabriela!” Rebecca screamed, her fury spiraling. “If you don’t come to the party the day after tomorrow, I’ll drag your mother’s name through the mud! I’ll see her disgraced—even in death!”

Gabriela's hands tightened on the steering wheel for a brief moment. Then she pressed the accelerator and sped away, leaving Rebecca fuming in the exhaust.

From the shadows, Cindy watched Rebecca thrash about like a headless chicken, squawking in her fury.

She shrank back instinctively, wishing she could vanish altogether.

A pang of regret hit her. If only she hadn't offended Gabriela two years ago. Standing beside Gabriela now would've felt far safer than trailing after Rebecca.

"Cindy!" Rebecca's sharp voice snapped her back. "Get over here!"

With no escape, Cindy trudged forward, forcing a weak smile. "Rebecca... honestly, Gabriela's not someone to mess with. Maybe we should just let this go?"

"Let it go?" Rebecca's tone was icy. "Absolutely not. Go tell Grandma that Gabriela struck me today. We'll see what she has to say about that."

Cindy's stomach sank. She knew Rebecca was scheming again. Dutifully, she carried the tale to Beverley.

But Beverley only waved a hand, her voice indifferent. “Gabriela isn’t one to provoke. Why stir the hornet’s nest?”

Time and again, whenever Rebecca clashed with Gabriela, Beverley smoothed it over with empty words.

Cindy had grown used to it, yet she still couldn’t fathom why Rebecca believed her grandmother would ever truly take her side.

When Cindy returned with the news, Rebecca erupted. She swept vases off the table in a fit of rage, porcelain shattering across the floor.

Lauren sat calmly beside her, waiting until her daughter’s tantrum burned itself out. Then, with a cold edge, she said, “Rebecca, you’re becoming reckless. Impatient. Look at you.”

“Mom, I’ve had enough!” Rebecca’s eyes brimmed with hatred, her voice trembling. “How can Gabriela stand above me? She’s an illegitimate child!”

“Enough!” Lauren snapped, her tone sharp as a whip. “Look at yourself. Flailing, shrieking like some unruly woman. Where’s your grace? Your composure? Not even Wesley would look at you twice in this state. Even families beneath ours—the Dewitts, the Vasquez—would sneer at such behavior.”

Chapter 745

Rebecca froze, her fury curdling into humiliation.

“Mom... I tried being the well-mannered daughter you raised me to be. And what did that get me? Grandma canceled my engagement without my permission. Wesley cast me aside and chose Gabriela! Tell me—what am I supposed to do now?”

Lauren studied her daughter, and for a moment, disappointment softened into weariness. She let out a long breath.

“Rebecca,” she said quietly but firmly, “do you truly believe Gabriela is beneath you? Think carefully. Compared to her, what do you actually have?”

Rebecca faltered, her lips parting, but no answer came.

“You wave around your overseas degree as if it sets you above her,” Lauren continued, her words cutting with brutal clarity. “Yet Gabriela is now the CEO of the Haynes Group, leading it toward an IPO. And you? You don’t even hold a formal job. Your career depends entirely on Jasper’s whims. Perhaps the company will be yours one day, but even then, you’ll still be bowing to him.”

Rebecca’s face paled as Lauren went on.

“You boast about your piano skills, your international medals, your gold in dance. Yet since returning, you’ve abandoned it all, chasing after Wesley like a desperate girl. Meanwhile, Gabriela has become Presley’s sole protégé. That single honor alone eclipses every award you once clung to.”

Lauren leaned closer, her tone cold and final.

“So tell me, Rebecca. What makes you superior? Your so-called legitimacy as the Haynes family’s daughter? If that’s all you have left, then you have nothing at all.”

Lauren’s eyes glistened—not with sorrow, but with a simmering hatred.

“Your father is divorcing me. Once it’s done, Gabriela won’t just be the CEO of the Haynes Group, she’ll be the true daughter of this family. And you? What will you have left?”

Her words struck Rebecca like a thunderbolt. For a moment, she couldn’t breathe.

It felt as though she’d been dragged out of a comfortable illusion and thrown into the cold light of reality.

Why was it that she always lost to Gabriela? Why did her fury, her pride, her tantrums never change the outcome?

Because deep down, she had nothing to fight with.

Her mother had forced her to face the truth she had avoided for so long.

Rebecca's fists curled tight, her nails digging into her palms.

"Mom, then tell me. What should I do?"

Lauren's expression softened. She reached for Rebecca's hand, her tone low but deliberate.

"First, you must become exceptional. Pick up your piano and dance again. Show the world the brilliance you once had. And use your Haynes name wisely. Build connections with those who matter in business. If you can prove your worth, your grandmother and father will have no choice but to value you."

Chapter 746

At that moment, Lauren—softened by nearly two years behind bars—had grown noticeably calmer. Her gaze brimmed with aspirations for her daughter, hoping she would embody poise, strength, and elegance.

With a wry smile, she admitted, "I was consumed by love. To win your father, I did whatever it took. Yet, after more than three decades, his heart remained cold, and I landed in this mess. Don't repeat my mistakes. Even if you outwit Gabriela and marry Wesley as you dream, that marriage won't endure."

Rebecca absorbed her mother's words, the bitterness in her eyes slowly dissolving, revealing her refined and composed nature. Though naturally defiant and commanding, she had always masked it expertly, earning her reputation as Okburg's most sophisticated socialite. It was only Gabriela's arrival that unraveled her façade, exposing her insecurities and inviting scorn.

"Mom, I hear you. I'll follow your guidance from now on," she said earnestly.

She was ready to do whatever it took to surpass Gabriela.

Lauren nodded approvingly. "Then explain why you're so set on inviting Gabriela to our Howard family's private charity gala."

A spark of madness flashed in Rebecca's eyes. "Because I want to make a scene of her. I want everyone to see Wesley has cast her aside."

Lauren frowned, disapproving. "You must be on your best behavior at such a prominent event. Don't fixate on targeting Gabriela. I'll ensure your grandparents introduce you to key figures."

"Don't worry, Mom. I'll be cautious," Rebecca assured.

Shifting topics, she asked, "Is there truly no chance for you and Dad to reconcile? That Hopolis project..."

"That's not your concern," Lauren cut in swiftly. "It's between your father and me. We'll sort it out. Ignore any rumors for now."

"Okay," Rebecca replied softly.

Despite her reluctance, Gabriela attended the Howard family gala, fearing Rebecca might smear her mother's reputation. The event unfolded at the sprawling Howard estate, perfectly suited for such an affair.

As Gabriela arrived, her unassuming compact car stood out starkly among the sleek luxury vehicles lining the driveway.

A young woman exiting a nearby car snickered at Gabriela's modest ride. "Has the Howard family fallen on hard times? They're letting anyone in now."

Gabriela parked her car and glanced at the woman.

Gabriela's beauty was arresting—sharp eyes with a subtle edge, softened by a gentle warmth that made her utterly captivating. The young woman who had laughed, Alissa Hopkins, froze upon seeing Gabriela's face, her heart skipping a beat.

Who was this breathtaking stranger?

Even as a woman, Alissa felt a flush of awe and quickly looked away, regretting her sharp words.

Unfazed, Gabriela strode toward the Howard estate's entrance, but was stopped by the doorman.

"Apologies, ma'am, but you need an invitation to enter."

Frowning, Gabriela replied, “Rebecca invited me.”

“I’m sorry,” the doorman replied respectfully. “Even so, please show the invitation.”

Nearby, Rebecca observed, her friends snickering with glee.

Chapter 747

One taunted, “Talk about shameless—showing up without an invite. With her shabby appearance and that junky car, what could she possibly contribute of any value?”

This party, organized by Beverley, drew an elite crowd of business tycoons. Attendees were expected to present a significant donation.

The Howard family hosted an auction during the event, where the donated gifts would be auctioned off, with all proceeds funding schools in underprivileged regions. The guest whose donation secured the top bid would earn a coveted business partnership with the Howard family.

Nearly every attendee was strategizing to select the ideal gift, each aiming to outshine the others with the highest bid.

Another friend chimed in, “Gabriela is just here to fill a seat. What is she even after?”

“What do you think? After Wesley ditched her, she’s probably scouting for a rich suitor among the party’s elite.”

Rebecca basked in a smug sense of triumph.

So what if she didn’t measure up to Gabriela in every way? Gabriela was still stuck outside her family’s mansion.

After her friends mercilessly ridiculed Gabriela, Rebecca glided forward with poised steps, ready to “smooth things over.”

Just then, Mason Garner from Alphacom Electronics arrived with his wife. Spotting Gabriela barred at the entrance, he stepped in quickly.

“Gabriela is with me,” he declared.

The doorman, tasked with humiliating Gabriela, replied, “Mr. Garner, your invitation permits only one guest.”

Whitney Garner, Mason’s wife, wrapped in a sleek black shawl, arched a brow icily. “Since when does the Howard party enforce such a rule?”

The doorman offered a profuse apology.

Whitney paused, then turned to Gabriela with a warm glance. “Go in with Mason, Gabriela. I’m feeling under the weather and will head home to rest.”

Gabriela quickly refused, unwilling to attend at Whitney’s expense—she wasn’t that desperate to join the event.

But Whitney was adamant, her resolve stunning the onlookers, who began to whisper that Gabriela must truly be close with Mason and Whitney.

Suddenly, a refined elderly voice cut through. “Gabriela? Why are you stuck out here? Misplaced your invite?”

The crowd turned, gasping as they recognized Bernice Thomas, a formidable presence.

Whitney responded coolly, “Ms. Thomas, the Howard party’s rules are overly strict. Perhaps it’s better to skip it.”

Bernice, who had always held Gabriela in high regard, frowned. “Come in with me, Gabriela,” she offered.

This commanding figure in the music world, respected even by Beverley, carried an air of undeniable authority despite her gentle demeanor.

The doorman didn't dare block her path.

Rebecca stood frozen, blindsided by the turn of events. She had confirmed Presley was abroad and hadn't anticipated anyone defending Gabriela. Bernice's unexpected arrival threw her off completely.

Her hands clenched as she fought to quell her envy, stepping forward with feigned composure to "mediate" the situation.

But then, another imposing figure emerged.

"Gabriela can enter with me!" he announced, his eyes flicking toward Rebecca, brimming with unspoken disapproval.

Chapter 748

The man who stepped forward was none other than Matthew.

Rebecca's fingers went numb, icy with shock, as her father's piercing gaze fell on her. She hadn't anticipated his presence tonight. For years, he had withdrawn from company matters, shunned gatherings, and remained a distant shadow.

So why now?

She guessed he must have been here for Gabriela. That realization twisted the knife deeper, fueling the storm of bitterness rising inside her.

Gabriela had stolen her lover, and now she was stealing her father's devotion too.

Rebecca's fists clenched so tightly her nails dug into her palms. Tonight, she vowed, Gabriela would be humiliated before them.

Matthew, however, had no words for Rebecca. His eyes softened as they landed on Gabriela. He spoke as he extended his arm.

"Gabriela, come in with me."

Gabriela hesitated, caught between old wounds and the fragile bridge he was offering. After a moment's pause, she slipped her hand lightly onto his arm.

Over the years, Matthew had made effort after effort to mend what was broken. And for once, Gabriela felt her heart soften. She longed to let go of the bitterness, to simply have a father again.

When Gabriela took his arm, Matthew's throat constricted; emotion threatened to unravel his composure then and there. He forced himself to steady, shoulders squaring as he guided his daughter toward the grand hall.

Dressed in a sharp charcoal suit, Matthew carried himself with effortless dignity. The years had only refined him, lending his presence the quiet authority of a distinguished gentleman.

The moment he crossed the threshold, the room shifted. Conversations faltered, eyes turned, and in an instant, every guest was aware of him.

"Isn't that Matthew Howard? He hasn't set foot in public for ages. What's he doing here?"

"Look at who's on his arm... Could this be him openly recognizing that illegitimate daughter?"

"Illegitimate? Careful with your words. He's in the middle of that very public divorce from Lauren. Once the dust settles, the question of who the true Miss Howard is may no longer be in doubt."

Rebecca lingered at the entrance, every whispered remark slicing into her pride.

Her father had paraded Gabriela openly, without a single thought to how it shredded her heart.

Across the room, Herman and Bess wore dark, strained expressions.

Herman's jaw tightened as he strode toward Matthew, his voice controlled but heavy with restraint. "There's something we need to discuss in private. Would you step into the side room with me?"

Matthew bent slightly toward Gabriela. "I won't be long. If you feel uneasy, call me."

Gabriela gave a small nod.

As Matthew and Herman withdrew, Bess closed her fingers around Rebecca's hand, her squeeze firm and deliberate.

"Stay composed," she murmured softly. "Your aunts Ariadne and Debby just returned from abroad. They wish to see you."

At the mention of Ariadne and Debby, Rebecca forced herself upright, swallowing her resentment as she prepared to greet them. These two were, after all, formidable women whose names commanded respect in every business circle.

Chapter 749

But before she could move, a stir rippled through the hall.

Wesley had arrived.

He cut through the crowd in a jet-black suit, its lines severe, his figure sharp as a blade. Cold authority radiated from him, and when his gaze swept across the gathering, silence fell like a shroud.

His eyes found Gabriela at once. Without hesitation, he advanced toward her, each step heavy with unspoken intent.

Gabriela's breath hitched. After what happened last time, she hadn't dared approach him again. Yet now he was coming straight for her.

Three paces away—

Suddenly, a young man brushed past her, “accidentally” knocking into her shoulder.

The crimson wine in his glass cascaded down her gown, splattering across silk and shoes in a ruinous stain.

“I’m so sorry!” the man immediately bent down, as if to blot the stain from her shoes.

Startled, Gabriela instinctively retreated several steps, leaving him swiping at empty air with his handkerchief.

Realizing how ridiculous he looked, the young man lifted his gaze, a hint of embarrassment in his eyes as he asked gently, "Did I frighten you?"

Gabriela froze, her mind tugged backward by memory.

A long time ago, in her very first year at university, Allan had arranged for her to work as a server at the graduation ball. She remembered the sting of red wine splashing across her dress, poured clumsily by a drunken girl.

And then Allan, the dignified host of the evening, had knelt at her feet without hesitation, wiping her shoes with the sleeve of his immaculate white suit. To soften her tears, he'd pressed a single white rose into her hand.

That night, his quiet elegance had carved itself into her memory.

Now, facing this stranger in a white suit, the scene felt hauntingly familiar. Her gaze drifted to the white rose tucked neatly into his breast pocket.

The young man noticed her look. Smiling faintly, he plucked the flower free.

"You're fond of white roses, aren't you? Please, accept this as my apology."

Time seemed to fold, layering the present over the distant past. Lost in the echo, Gabriela's hand moved of its own accord. She accepted the rose, dazed, her heart trembling with the uncanny resemblance.

Every pair of eyes in the hall gravitated toward Gabriela. She was luminous, draped in elegance. The young man kneeling before her in his immaculate white suit looked less like an embarrassed guest and more like a knight pledging himself to his queen.

From across the room, Wesley's stare hardened. He tracked every flicker of her expression, every shift in her posture, his jaw tightening with a cold, gathering fury.

Ridiculous.

A bitter laugh threatened to break free. He actually wanted to apologize to her just now—he was sorry that he hadn't meant for her to get caught in the rain that day. He had just been driven out of his senses by jealousy.

Chapter 750

Oblivious to the storm brewing in Wesley's chest, Gabriela accepted the white rose with a faint, composed smile.

"It's okay," she murmured, her voice soft but steady.

Clutching the bloom, she turned and quietly made her way toward the restroom.

Inside the banquet hall, Rebecca gracefully excused herself from Ariadne and Debby. Lifting two crystal glasses of wine, she made her way toward Wesley and offered one with a practiced smile.

Wesley didn't reach for it. His eyes, flat and cold, cut into her instead.

"Miss Howard, if you have something to say, say it."

Rebecca exhaled, feigning a wistful tone. "I just remembered... Gabriela has always cherished white roses. I heard it's because they remind her of someone special. She can be so very sentimental."

The faint curve on Wesley's lips vanished. A knot coiled in his chest as Allan's diary resurfaced in his mind, its words echoing the very scene he had just witnessed.

His frustration rose like a tide—hot and relentless—and he turned abruptly on his heel, striding toward the exit.

At that moment, Gabriela stepped out from the restroom, only to glimpse Wesley's retreating figure disappearing through the doorway. Her heart faltered, confusion clouding her eyes.

Rebecca, however, was taken aback. She hadn't expected her tidbit of information to strike such a raw nerve. Wesley's jealousy over someone long gone was laughable—utterly ridiculous. What spell did Gabriela cast to hold such sway?

Masking her irritation with a cool smile, Rebecca approached her rival, her words laced with mockery.

“Gabriela, didn’t Wesley once propose to you? Funny—he hasn’t even greeted you since his return. Has the distance between you two turned your love cold?”

Gabriela met her with silence, refusing to take the bait.

Rebecca wasn’t satisfied. Her lips curved, but her eyes gleamed with malice.

“Or are you hiding something? With so many witnesses tonight, why not tell us all exactly what your relationship with Wesley is now?”

Gabriela, her patience worn thin by the evening’s events, finally snapped.

“Rebecca, are you a psycho? Must you always dig into what doesn’t concern you?”

Color drained from Rebecca’s face, replaced quickly by a scornful laugh.

“Don’t play coy. Everyone in Okburg knows you’ve been trading on Wesley’s name, flashing the title of ‘his woman’ to grease your business deals. What’s wrong? Worried people will discover he tossed you

aside, then cut ties with you? Afraid of watching your little company collapse so you can finally taste humiliation yourself?"

Gabriela's brows arched, her gaze sharp with contempt.

"Humiliation? For what? I don't steal. I don't cheat. Every partnership I've signed was fair—built on mutual benefit, not me leeching off anyone."

She paused, her words like shattering glass.

"But you, Rebecca... have you ever conducted business without hiding behind the Howard name?"