

His kiss 771

Chapter 771

The establishment Gabriela visited that morning was Okburg's premier fabric emporium, known to the elite as Loom & Bloom. Inside, rows of shimmering fabrics and delicate spools of thread gleamed under soft lights. Discreet signs hinted at the custom gowns crafted in the workrooms beyond. The two-story building housed a quiet seating nook on the upper level.

There, hidden in the shadows, Wesley lingered. From his perch, he could watch Gabriela at leisure while remaining unseen.

Downstairs, Alissa latched onto Gabriela's arm as if fearing she might vanish, tugging her toward tables laden with fabric samples.

"These threads are incredible. Gabriela, do you really use them for your embroidery?" Alissa asked, wide-eyed.

Gabriela gave a small nod.

Another burst of excitement escaped Alissa. "That's unbelievable! All these colors make me dizzy, but you can sort them and create something beautiful."

Gabriela's smile tightened. The constant chatter was wearing on her, as relentless as Brenden's habit of spinning tales. She thought if Alissa and Brenden ever met, they could start a gossip column by sundown.

Unlike Alissa, Gussie Holt remained silent, standing aside with careful restraint.

Ordinarily, she would have asserted her presence around girls like Gabriela and Alissa, eager to prove her superiority.

But Presley's presence shifted the balance, and Gabriela was no longer just a young artisan.

With a princess praising her work, Gabriela was ascending to a realm even Presley might not attain. Such a person was not to be underestimated.

Besides, Alissa clearly shared a warm connection with her. Gussie was already calculating how to ensure her own children remained friendly with Alissa.

While Gussie calculated, Gabriela and Presley finished selecting their materials. After paying, they prepared to leave.

Just then, the store manager descended the staircase and stopped them with a polite bow. "Miss Hayes, my boss would like to invite you upstairs for coffee. He wishes to speak with you."

Taken aback, Gabriela turned to Presley.

Presley's eyes lit with amusement at the attention Gabriela commanded. "I'll take these things back to the studio," she said with a smile. "Stay and enjoy your meeting."

With Presley gone, Alissa had little choice but to take her leave as well. She clung for a moment, promising repeatedly to meet again soon, before finally exiting with Gussie.

Outside, Gussie glanced at Alissa. "I didn't realize you and Gabriela were so close."

Alissa's face glowed with satisfaction. "Of course we are. Otherwise, why would I have spent over a million at that gala just to win one of her pieces?"

A pang of regret hit Gussie as she recalled the opportunity she had squandered that evening.

Determined not to miss another, she invited Alissa to dinner at her home. Even if Alissa never parted with the coveted handbag, forging a closer bond could only be advantageous.

Alissa tapped her chin thoughtfully. "All right, but I need to stop home to change first." It was the perfect opportunity she sought—a chance to flaunt her success in front of Nicole.

Chapter 772

Together, they proceeded to the Hopkins residence.

Once inside, Alissa changed and then sat with her father to recount the day's events.

Boden listened intently, urging her to expand her social circle and reminding her to treat Gussie's family as valuable allies.

"I understand, Dad," said Alissa, casting a deliberately sharp glance toward her sister. "I love going out, meeting people, making connections. Not like some who sit at home like fragile decorative vases. Sure, they look nice, but what's the use if all they do is collect dust?"

Boden had always found Nicole's quiet nature endearing—a gentleness that had once stirred his protectiveness and patience.

Yet, measured against Alissa's confident stride, Nicole's timidity no longer seemed thoughtful. It felt like a shortcoming. Suddenly, he wondered why he had ever admired it.

His gaze settled on Nicole with a new edge of displeasure.

The shift struck Nicole like a blow, tightening her chest. Her father had never looked at her with such disappointment before.

Fear crept in. Would she be cast aside, stripped of his affection, before she could even seize what was Alissa's? She couldn't allow that.

While she stayed silent, her mind churned with plots to reclaim his favor.

Alissa, meanwhile, glowed with triumph as she swept out with Gussie.

The thrill of having the upper hand was intoxicating. Even without Gabriela in sight, her influence lingered like a strengthening shadow, making Alissa savor the victory all the more.

At that moment, Gabriela was ascending to Loom & Bloom's second floor.

She was shown into a spacious, softly lit private room. Her gaze immediately caught on a lone figure seated in a wingback chair. Only the back of the chair was visible, but the angle revealed a hand resting casually on the armrest—long fingers, distinct knuckles, a silver watch glinting faintly at the wrist.

Recognition was instant.

Her heart skipped a beat, and she hurried forward without thought. "Wesley... is that you?"

He lifted his head, a faint smile playing at his lips. "Why? Were you hoping it wasn't me?"

"No," Gabriela said, clutching his hand. "I'm delighted to see you here."

Yet his smile faded, the corners of his mouth turning down slightly. He remembered how animated she had been with Alissa earlier.

Trying to bridge the distance, Gabriela stretched out her arms. "Wesley, give me a hug."

For a second, Wesley froze. Something warm flickered in his chest, though he tamped it down. "People might see. Behave yourself," he replied in a low, controlled tone.

Taking his words as reluctant permission, she flung herself against him, wrapping him in a fierce embrace.

His brows drew together as he made a half-hearted attempt to disentangle himself.

Gabriela whispered softly, "I've missed you."

Those words softened his grip, loosening his resolve.

"And Truett misses you even more," she continued, tilting her face up from his chest. "He keeps asking for his father. Why haven't you come to see him lately?"

Chapter 773

Annoyance flared in him again at her audacity.

His expression unreadable, he shot back, "Who's the one too busy to show up?"

In truth, Gabriela had barely been at the office. Her days were spent either assisting Presley or escorting Princess Alvira around the city, introducing her to Okburg's landmarks and history.

Princess Alvira had grown enamored with the local culture, and her fondness for Gabriela deepened daily.

But Wesley found no joy in watching Gabriela's attention being diverted elsewhere.

Before Gabriela could fully explain, Wesley, clinging to his irritation, pressed with a sharp question. "I heard you're designing a handbag for the princess. Is that true?"

Rumors had already begun to circulate. Wesley suspected the princess might have let the news slip purposely, raising Gabriela's profile.

He had been among the first to hear, and the thought gnawed at him. What if the commission consumed all her time? What if the pressure became too much?

"That's right," Gabriela admitted softly.

Still nestled against him, she clutched his collar with one hand while the other tightened around his waist. "I'll be tied up for a while. If I don't make it to see you..."

Wesley's mouth hardened. "Good that you can't come to see me. I'll be away on business in Eventide Vale anyway."

He told himself work awaited. He told himself he didn't care.

"But will you still find time for me?" Gabriela asked, her voice gentle but steady, her eyes brimming with a warmth that begged for an answer.

He restrained himself. Letting her think he was too easy would only diminish his worth in her eyes.

Wesley wanted her to realize that winning him over wasn't as simple as dealing with someone like Allan.

Her patience wore thin with his silence. A mischievous glint sparked in her eyes as she reached for his wrist and deftly slipped free one of his cufflinks.

His brow furrowed. "What do you think you're doing?"

“If you won’t promise to come, then I’ll keep this. When I miss you, I’ll look at it and imagine you’re here,” Gabriela said.

He turned his face away, but the corners of his lips betrayed him, curving in the faintest smile.

Sweet words like hers could sway any man.

He wasn’t immune, and he didn’t mind admitting it to himself. No wonder so many people found her impossible to resist.

Seeing his expression soften at last, Gabriela exhaled quietly in relief. At least he wasn’t fuming anymore.

Then a thought occurred to her. “Wesley, what actually brought you here today?”

Before he could answer, movement stirred below. Someone had stepped into the boutique.

Wesley motioned toward the figure. “You’re here for him, aren’t you?”

Gabriela leaned over the railing and caught sight of the man in the crisp white suit—the same one she had noticed at the banquet.

Chapter 774

Gabriela had asked Tyler to dig into the man in the white suit, but days had gone by without the slightest lead.

To her surprise, it was Wesley who stumbled onto him first.

As the thought lingered in her mind, Wesley let out a dry laugh. “Next time you want something investigated, try asking Billy instead. Your friends have brawn, sure,” he drawled, “but wit? Not exactly his strong suit.”

Gabriela bristled, instinctively standing up for Tyler. “Tyler’s honest and dependable, and his people know what they’re doing.”

Wesley scoffed. “Really? Then explain why they still can’t even put a name to that man’s face.”

Tyler commanded a small group of around three hundred people, but even they couldn’t breach the rarefied circles of the Howard family’s soirées. Getting hold of that night’s guest list had been difficult enough; finding someone who matched the white suit was proving nearly impossible.

Gabriela knew the obstacles, but she also caught the edge in Wesley’s voice.

His recent medical treatments had left their mark, sharpening his moods in unpredictable ways. So she swallowed her retort and chose silence instead.

With a sweet, practiced smile, she leaned closer. "That's why you're the best, darling."

The faint aroma of coffee curled between them, wrapping the moment in a deceptive sense of warmth. Her tender words slipped into Wesley's chest, softening the iron walls he always kept around his heart.

For a fleeting moment, it almost felt as though nothing stood between them.

He wanted to believe that Allan was nothing more than a friend and that he alone held her love.

But catching himself leaning toward her again, Wesley's lips tightened, his brow darkening. "Don't call me that."

Gabriela froze. Was that irritation in his tone, or pain? Afraid to push him further, she let the endearment drop and quickly shifted course. "What's his name?"

"Randall Kirk," Wesley answered curtly.

Gabriela scribbled it down, rolling the name over in her mind, but it sparked no recognition.

Wesley leaned back, his voice steady but edged. “Randall has no direct link to Rebecca. He graduated from your university the same year as Allan. Billy asked around Allan’s old classmates. No connection, no friendship. The two hardly knew each other.”

Gabriela listened intently. Then, like a door unlocking in her memory, something struck her. Her eyes widened. “I remember now.”

Four years ago, while visiting her mother’s grave, she was kidnapped and forced into icy waters, left on the brink of drowning. Later, as she was shoved into the cold storage compartment of a truck, she briefly regained consciousness—just enough to glimpse one of the kidnappers’ faces.

“No wonder,” Gabriela murmured. “When I saw Randall at the banquet, he seemed familiar. I thought it was because he looked like Allan.”

She now realized Randall didn’t actually resemble Allan; he had only seemed familiar, and in her memory, she had confused the two.

She hesitated, then asked quietly, “Wesley, what do you remember from the kidnapping?”

Wesley’s brow furrowed. The memory was fractured—some pieces clear, others lost in shadow.

“Pieces of it. Just enough.” A pause. Then, with a flash of irritation, he asked, “Are you certain it was him?”

After Gabriela was rescued four years ago, Wesley launched a thorough investigation.

But the kidnapping had taken place in a remote area with no cameras, no witnesses, and no fingerprints.

The freezer truck used to drown her had already been abandoned. After a year of chasing dead ends, the trail went cold.

When Wesley left the country for treatment, the case was left unresolved.

Gabriela shook her head. "My memory was too blurred back then. I can't be sure."

Even when she regained consciousness afterward, those few fleeting seconds hadn't returned right away.

"It's fine. If you're uncertain, don't torture yourself over it," Wesley said, his tone softening despite the hard set of his jaw. He knew too well how harrowing that night had been.

Gently, he advised her to put it out of her mind. But when Gabriela spoke Allan's name with that wistful note in her voice, a flicker of resentment stabbed through him.

Chapter 775

Thanks to Myah's endless whispering, Allan had become a splinter wedged deep in Wesley's chest.

Still, for Gabriela's sake, he buried his irritation and kept his expression neutral. "I'll have someone look into it again."

Sensing the rare gentleness beneath his words, Gabriela quickly wrapped her arms around him and clung tight. "Wesley, thank you!"

Just like always—from the very beginning, when she became his secretary, she had known how to coat her words in sweetness, the kind that could soften steel.

Sometimes Wesley wondered how much of it was genuine and how much was simply strategy.

Pulling her gently but firmly away, Wesley studied her face, his eyes deep and unreadable, as if searching for a trace of sincerity behind her mask.

Gabriela half-expected him to shove her away, but instead, his fingers pressed more firmly around her wrist.

He let out a short, disdainful laugh. "Glad to be of use."

Gabriela exhaled quietly, resigned to Wesley's unyielding pride.

Winning him over would take time, but things were already better than before.

With patience, Gabriela believed they could rebuild what they had lost two years ago.

Leaving Loom & Bloom together, Wesley drove her back to the villa.

The moment they arrived, Truett came sprinting toward him, his face alight with joy. “Daddy!”

Wesley scooped him up with ease. “Truett, you’re getting chubby.”

“Mommy said if I eat well, I’ll grow tall by the time you come back!” Truett replied earnestly.

At his son’s innocent words, Wesley’s gaze drifted to Gabriela.

Whatever else he thought of her, he couldn’t deny she had raised their child well. And despite his absence, Truett didn’t shy away from him. It was as though the bond between father and son had been waiting, unbroken, all along.

That night, Wesley stayed—not with Gabriela, but with Truett.

Truett had only recently begun sleeping on his own and would often wake at night seeking comfort from Farley.

Yet, nestled in his father's arms, he slumbered peacefully.

He woke at dawn with boundless energy. A small body wriggled against him, tugging Wesley from sleep. He cracked open his eyes; the sky outside was still heavy with darkness.

"Daddy, you're awake." Truett's cherubic face hovered above him, eyes shining like stars in the gloom. "Daddy, can I make a wish now?"

So early, and already his son was plotting. Wesley almost laughed. "A wish? What kind of wish?"

Truett didn't hesitate. "I want to wake up every day and see Daddy. I want Daddy and Mommy to get married. And I want Grandpa to live with us."

Wesley chuckled. "That's a lot to ask for a little boy."

Truett's eyes grew round. "Why? Can't I have three wishes? Myah said if you were Santa Claus, you'd give me three."

Despite all the years he hadn't been there, Wesley found himself helpless against the boy's charm.

"No, it has to be only one," Wesley teased. "So which will it be?"

Truett pursed his lips, thinking hard, before answering with firm resolve. "Then I choose Daddy and Mommy getting married."

Farley had once told him that if his parents were married, they'd stay together forever. Then Matthew could visit whenever he wanted.

Watching his son's careful reasoning, Wesley's chest tightened. The boy's mind was quick, too much like his own.

He didn't answer the wish. Instead, he pressed a kiss to Truett's forehead, carrying him toward the bathroom.

Just as he lifted the boy toward the sink to wash up, his gaze caught the mirror, and his body went still.

The face staring back was his own, yet altered. Strange, dark markings stretched across his skin, twisting like living shadows.

Truett wriggled in his arms, arms outstretched for another hug. "Daddy... so when will you marry Mommy?"

Wesley didn't reply. He raised a hand, scrubbing frantically at the marks, but they remained.

A chill coiled in his chest. His voice was low and deliberate.

"Truett!"

Chapter 776

Wesley's jaw tightened, his temper rising just beneath the surface as he fought to keep it in check.

Oblivious to the storm brewing, Truett tilted his head and asked innocently, "Daddy, why do you say my name like that? You sound so scary!"

"Explain this," Wesley demanded, forcing restraint into his voice as he pointed at his own face. "What exactly is this supposed to be?"

His cheeks and forehead were smeared in red and white paint, arranged in a messy, childish design.

Truett puffed his cheeks in frustration. "Daddy, you're so silly! Can't you tell? It's Santa Claus!"

Wesley drew in a deep breath before asking again, slower this time, “And why, exactly, did you decide to draw Santa Claus on my face?”

Truett’s eyes lit with earnest seriousness. “Daddy, I wasn’t just drawing. I was turning you into Santa! Santa isn’t grumpy, and he makes wishes come true!”

Only then did Wesley realize why his son had been staring at him so intently since waking up.

He softened his tone, trying to sound patient. “Who put that idea into your head?”

Truett’s little fingers twisted together, his eyes darting away. “I thought of it all by myself.”

The lie was clear, but Wesley let it pass.

Since no real harm had been done, he saw no reason to scold further.

Picking up a bottle of cleanser from the counter, he began scrubbing at the paint, but no matter how long he washed, streaks of color still clung faintly to his skin.

Truett’s lips quivered as he watched, disappointment weighing on his tiny shoulders.

His daddy didn't want to be Santa, which meant his daddy didn't want to grant his wish.

Once he had done all he could, Wesley took his son's hand and led him downstairs.

Gabriela noticed immediately: the boy's head hung low, his face crestfallen, while Wesley wore a cold, stern expression, clearly irritated long before breakfast had begun.

What on earth had happened here?

Before Gabriela could open her mouth, Myah spoke first, her voice filled with concern. "Wesley, what happened to your face?"

Only then did Gabriela notice the faint but obvious streaks of paint that clung stubbornly to his skin, remnants of something hastily scrubbed away. Her eyebrows rose in surprise. "What on earth happened?"

One look at her puzzled expression, and Wesley's anger thinned out like smoke.

"You really don't know what this is?" he asked, his tone flat.

Gabriela shook her head firmly. "We didn't share a room last night, so how could I possibly know?"

With a low sigh, Wesley turned toward his son. “Truett, why don’t you tell your mommy what this masterpiece is supposed to be?”

Gabriela’s eyes followed his gaze, settling on the boy.

Though the household had always spoiled Truett, Gabriela had made sure he learned boundaries. The stern look in her eyes was enough to make him wilt.

Chapter 777

“Mommy, I’m sorry,” he confessed quickly. “I took your paints without asking. I only wanted to make Daddy look like Santa.”

“Paints?” Gabriela repeated, the realization hitting her at once.

There was no question in her mind that Truett had taken some of her oil-based paints.

With just a glance at Wesley’s face, she understood everything—the mischievous boy had used her paints as if his father’s face were a canvas.

She should have been furious. She should have scolded him on the spot.

But the image was too much: the always cold, composed Wesley parading around as Santa Claus. The thought burst out of her as helpless laughter. She tried to compose herself and, between chuckles, managed to say, “Don’t worry. They’re non-toxic artist’s paints. They won’t hurt your skin.”

The only real casualty here was his dignity, and oh, how she wished she had managed to snap a photo.

Wesley’s expression darkened immediately, his lips pressed into a grim line as her laughter continued.

Truett hurried to grab his father’s hand, his small eyes shining with innocence. “Daddy, don’t you want to be Santa?”

Confronted with that hopeful gaze, every trace of Wesley’s anger drained away. With a sigh, he scooped the boy up and settled him on his lap.

“Santa or not,” he said patiently, “you can’t draw on Daddy’s face anymore. Do you understand?”

Truett bobbed his head eagerly. “Okay! Then next time, I won’t draw. I’ll just give you a big, fluffy Santa beard instead!”

Wesley fell silent, thoroughly defeated. He forced himself to breathe evenly, holding his temper in check.

Truett was only a child—his child. Losing patience with him was out of the question.

“You don’t have to dress me up as Santa,” he said at last, steadying his tone. “If you want something, just tell me directly.”

Clapping his small hands, Truett beamed. “Then I want Daddy and Mommy to get married! That way I can stay with you forever, Daddy!”

The cheerful words dropped into the room like a stone in water, rippling the air into silence. Every pair of eyes turned toward Wesley.

Gabriela’s gaze lingered on him, anticipation mixing with nerves as her heart thudded faster.

He swallowed hard, his Adam’s apple shifting before he finally answered, “I’ve been swamped these past few days. When things settle down, I’ll marry your mommy.”

If Myah hadn’t barged in the other day, he would have already let go of his anger completely.

It wasn’t a firm promise, but he hadn’t brushed it aside either, and that alone unraveled something tight inside Gabriela. Her lashes shimmered with moisture as a smile trembled across her lips.

“Wesley... then I’ll wait for you.” She hoped he wouldn’t disappoint her this time.

Chapter 778

Truett squealed with joy, bouncing in his chair. “Yay! And when Grandpa comes, I’ll tell him everything!”

Wesley reached out and ruffled his son’s fluffy hair, wordlessly agreeing.

Then, beneath the table, his hand found Gabriela’s, giving it a gentle squeeze—a silent but clear promise.

Farley’s eyes lit with happiness as he turned to Ken. “This is good news.”

Ken nodded warmly. “Now eat up. There’s still work to be done at the company later.”

The meal carried a rare ease, filled with quiet contentment—except for Myah, who kept her head bowed, her appetite gone.

Once the dishes were cleared, she pulled Wesley aside, her voice low. “Wesley... do you blame Gabriela?”

He looked at her with faint confusion. “What do you mean?”

“I know these two years haven’t been easy on her,” Myah whispered. “She’s been waiting for you, holding onto the hope you’d marry her.”

The corners of Wesley’s mouth curved faintly. “I know.”

Since Gabriela longed for it so much, he would settle his unfinished business at Eventide Vale quickly, and when it was done, they could choose a date. They’d register their marriage and hold a wedding so grand that everyone would smile with pride.

Myah’s voice softened, but her words struck heavily. “Gabriela’s been keeping herself busy with design work, always drafting late into the night. But there are times I wake up and find her sitting in the dark, staring at my brother’s photo... crying where no one can hear.”

Wesley’s face shadowed, his hand curling into a tight fist, veins standing out across his knuckles. So that was it—her tears had been for another man.

“But Gabriela also told me that the past is over,” Myah continued quickly. “She said what matters now is living well with you.”

Her eyes shone with earnest pleading. “Wesley, you carry Allan’s heart. You’re all she has left to cling to. Please... take care of her from now on.”

Wesley stayed silent, his jaw locked, refusing to answer.

Worried by his silence, Myah reached out and touched his hand. “She truly wants to marry you. If she didn’t, she never would’ve gone so far as to use Truett to draw on your face.”

At that, Wesley’s expression iced over, his anger flaring.

So Gabriela had resorted to using a child’s innocence to get what she wanted? Time and again, she managed to disappoint him.

Still pressing, Myah whispered, “For Allan’s sake, won’t you consider marrying her soon?”

The moment her words faded, Gabriela appeared, her steps light, her face lit by a smile.

“What are you two whispering about?” she asked cheerfully.

Wesley’s head snapped toward her, his eyes piercing, stripping away every layer of her expression.

Gabriela’s smile faltered under the weight of his gaze, unease creeping into her chest. “Why are you looking at me like that? What’s wrong?”

Chapter 779

Under Gabriela’s worried gaze, Wesley’s face remained impassive.

He said, "You packed everything you need? I can drop you off at work."

"We're not even headed the same way," Gabriela replied instinctively. "There's no need to inconvenience yourself. I'll drive myself." Though Wesley seemed fine now, his recent recovery from treatment made Gabriela hesitant to let him make the extra trip.

"Hurry up. You've got five minutes," Wesley said coolly, striding out with a distant air.

Gabriela frowned, confused. What has gotten into him?

Myah, her gaze cast downward, mused softly, "Perhaps Wesley is irritated because he couldn't fully remove the paint from his face and fears facing people at work?"

Gabriela nodded, considering the idea.

Outside the apartment complex, Wesley leaned against his car.

The winter morning was brutally frigid, the air laced with a biting chill. Even the faintest gust made fingers throb with sharp numbness.

He ignored the cold, staring toward the entrance with a hard, unreadable look.

Soon, Gabriela jogged out, clutching a black mask.

Smiling despite his grim expression, she approached and gently placed the mask on him.

“Wear this today, Wesley, and no one will notice the paint. Wash your face a few times at the office, and it’ll be gone by tomorrow.” Her smile was bright, her eyes gleaming almost too vividly.

Wesley’s gaze stayed icy. “If you knew the paint wouldn’t come off, why did you let Truett do it?”

Gabriela’s smile carried a hint of exasperation. “Truett was just being playful. I’ll discipline him properly later. But he’s your son too, so you have a role in teaching him.”

“He does need a proper lesson,” Wesley replied vaguely, opening the car door. “Get in. I’ve been a bit busy lately.”

Gabriela slid into the passenger seat, pulling a bottle of moisturizer from her bag. “All that washing might dry out your skin. Take this with you. After washing your face at the office, put some on.”

She popped the cap, squeezed out a dab, tugged down his mask, and smoothed it onto his face.

“Feels nice, right? You can use it even when your skin is fine. This moisturizer brand is great for keeping your skin hydrated and healthy. Look, I’ve used it forever.”

She spoke with the intention of showing off her flawless skin while trying to coax a tender morning kiss from him.

Wesley only scoffed, his expression blank. “What, do you think I’m too old for you?”

He knew how sly she could be—how her sweet words could blur truth and pretense. Yet he had chosen to believe she cared for him as he was.

Earlier, he had even promised Truett that he would marry her. Was he losing it?

“No way!” Gabriela’s eyes widened. “Wesley, you’re so handsome. Aging only makes you more striking. Who would call you old? That’s ridiculous!”

So, he was aging and could never measure up to Allan. In her mind, Allan remained eternally young.

Starting the car, Wesley said, “I only mentioned marriage to please Truett. Don’t take it seriously.”

Gabriela froze, stunned. She didn’t even buckle her seatbelt, deaf to the wind whipping by outside.

Wesley glanced at her a few times. Finally, he stopped the car, leaned over to fasten her seatbelt, and rolled up the window.

Chapter 780

Gabriela touched her chilled face, processing his words. “You said the marriage talk was fake?”

So Wesley insisted on driving her just to say this?

“Yes. Fake,” he confirmed, eyes on the road. “Don’t mention marriage around Truett. When he’s older, I’ll take him to live with me. You’ve endured difficult years. I’ll compensate you.”

“Are you out of your mind?” Gabriela could endure much, but not when it involved Truett. “Truett is my son, the one I’ve raised. You can’t simply take him from me.”

“Gabriela, you had no right to bear a Moss family child without my consent. I haven’t held you accountable yet, so don’t act so righteous. He is my blood. He belongs with the Moss family.”

Gabriela’s heart plummeted.

Since learning three years ago that Wesley was Truett’s father, she had feared this day would come. She had imagined his grandfather or Loretta coming for Truett, but never Wesley himself—especially not after they had exchanged rings.

The only man she had ever loved.

Softening her voice, she pleaded, "Wesley, for the sake of our time together, don't take him from me."

Wesley hadn't truly meant to take Truett. He was just frustrated, wanting to rattle her. Seeing her pale, he felt a pang of guilt.

"I won't take him," he said, watching her closely. "But don't bother me anymore. I'll visit Truett regularly. You just have to play along as a happy couple for his sake."

Gabriela's fingers grew cold.

What went wrong? They had made up yesterday at Loom & Bloom. Was it because of Truett drawing on his face?

She wanted to explain, but Wesley seemed impatient.

"You have to choose," he said.

Taking a deep breath, Gabriela replied, "I choose Truett."

With his erratic moods, if marriage was off, so be it. After all, she had managed without him all these years.

Wesley drove her to the Lakeshore Building in silence, his face stern.

Gabriela lingered in the car, wanting to say more, but Wesley said coldly, "Get out."

He had already unbuckled her seatbelt.

With no choice, Gabriela stepped out.

As she walked away, Wesley sped off, then abruptly stopped. Her faint scent lingered in the car.

Irritated, he grabbed the moisturizer bottle, recalling her smile as she applied it to his face. Leaning back, he felt inexplicably annoyed.

True to her word, Gabriela didn't contact Wesley for days.

In the adult world, love mattered, but work took precedence.

Committed to crafting an exceptional handbag for the princess, Gabriela poured her energy into perfecting her designs.

Immersed in sketching drafts, she often skipped returning to the office, leaving no time to soothe Wesley's mood.

Wesley had planned to depart for Eventide Vale three days earlier, but he delayed his trip.

He instructed Billy to subtly inform Brenden that the journey could last more than two weeks.

Unsure whether Brenden had passed the message to Gabriela, he noted her absence.

With pressing obligations in Eventide Vale, Wesley left Okburg, his expression heavy with gloom.

The moment he arrived, Gabriela's call came—her voice trembling on the verge of tears.

"Wesley, Truett has gone missing!"