

His kiss 831

Chapter 831

Earlier, Myah had threatened to surrender herself, thinking such a gesture might soften Gabriela's heart. Never in her wildest dreams did she imagine Gabriela would show such iron resolve — and all of it, merely because of Brenden.

Clutching Gabriela's hand, Myah wept and pleaded for mercy. "Gabriela, I truly didn't mean for this to happen. If I must go to jail, I will — but please don't see me as a villain. I'm not as heartless as you think."

Gabriela turned her face away.

Through the years, she had been fooled countless times by Myah's tears. But now, with Brenden's life hanging by a thread behind those emergency room doors, her heart refused to bend. She lifted her gaze to the harsh light above the operating room, the weight in her chest pressing down like stone.

"Myah, if Brenden doesn't survive this — even if you hold back the truth — I will see to it with my own hands that you end up behind bars."

Myah crumpled to her knees, her fingers slipping away from Gabriela's grasp. In that instant, she knew she had lost Gabriela's love and protection once and for all. Whether regret would ever come to haunt her, no one could say. She sat dazed on the cold floor, whispering that she would surrender only after the doctors finished their work.

Loretta stood bewildered, torn in two. Her heart ached for Brenden, yet pity tugged at her for Myah. But Gabriela's wrath was like a storm — there was nothing Loretta could do to stop it. The elderly woman's nerves quivered; she did not know where to turn.

At last, the light above the emergency room dimmed.

A masked doctor emerged. "I'm sorry. We've done everything within our power."

The tension coiled inside Myah seemed to dissolve. Her fists unclenched, revealing sweat-damp palms. A flicker of relief crossed her brow — Brenden hadn't died yet. That was all she needed to breathe again.

Gabriela's heart sank like lead. "Doctor... truly nothing else can be done?"

The doctor gave a regretful shake of his head. "Mr. Saunders's injuries are grave. We've pushed our limits. The rest lies with his will to live. We'll continue monitoring — if he can survive the next seventy-two hours, there may yet be a faint chance."

Just then Wesley arrived, catching those last words, and his chest tightened. Though not brothers by blood, he and Brenden had grown up side by side, bound closer than kin. Brenden had always been mischievous, stirring trouble wherever he went — and though Wesley disapproved, he had often indulged him. Whenever Brenden stumbled, Wesley had been the one to clear the wreckage. Such a spirited young man, barely in his thirties and not yet married — how could fate dare to snatch him away?

Wesley barked an urgent command to Billy. "Gather the best doctors in all of Okburg at once. Spare no cost. Bring them here immediately."

Surely, with so many minds, a solution must exist. He refused to believe that someone who had smiled and talked to him yesterday might lie silent forever today. Billy rushed off to obey.

Wesley turned to question the doctor further — then his eyes fell upon Myah, still kneeling on the ground. His brows knit together. He stretched out his hand to lift her.

Grasping his dry, steady palm, Myah suddenly broke into sobs. She collapsed against his chest as though she were the one wounded.

“Wesley, it was me... I caused Brenden’s injuries. Gabriela insists I confess, and I know I should. But I can’t — not until he wakes. Please understand...”

Wesley said nothing, only nudged her gently aside. Yet watching her tears stream so bitterly, his heart softened, and he passed her a tissue. Even so, Myah sensed that his support was no longer absolute, and a cold dread gripped her soul.

Back when blindness had clouded her eyes, she had neither known Wesley’s face nor welcomed the Moss family. Had she been able to see then, perhaps she would have fallen for him at first sight and married him instead. Had she married him, Gabriela would never have entered the picture. In the end, it was nothing but life’s cruel paradox — her sight had returned too late for fate to favor her.

Myah’s voice trembled as she pressed on. “Wesley, you shouldn’t bear any guilt over this. This was my fault alone. Even if Allan were here, he wouldn’t blame you.”

Wesley wavered — but before he could reply, Loretta turned pale at the mention of Allan's name. Gripping Gabriela's arm, the old woman pleaded earnestly, "Gabriela, I believe Myah didn't mean harm. Let's not tear ourselves apart now. This quarrel won't bring Brenden back to us."

For Loretta, too, Brenden was precious. Though not her blood grandson, she had watched him grow, and he had always honored her as family. The thought of losing him broke her to the core. And she remembered too well — years ago, Allan had given his heart to save Wesley. The Moss family had sworn an oath: should Myah ever be harmed, Wesley's life would pay the price. Superstitious as she was, Loretta dared not break that vow, fearing fate's curse might one day ring true.

Seeing Loretta side with her, Myah rushed to the old woman, sobbing. "Loretta, don't put Gabriela in a bind. She's right to believe I did wrong, and I must bear the cost."

"Myah... Brenden... my poor children..."

Loretta and Myah wept together, their grief twisting the air. Wesley felt the weight of it pierce him deeply. His gaze drifted to Gabriela — her eyes rimmed red, fury blazing within as she struggled to contain herself.

"Gabriela," Wesley urged, "don't let your anger cloud everything. Let's wait until Brenden wakes, then decide."

Gabriela stared at him, disbelief cutting through her tears. "Wesley, do you think this is only anger?"

She unlocked her phone and played a video — Dani, the jewelry store clerk, confessing that Myah had bribed them to forge a ring. Myah's face paled; resentment flared. Gabriela had promised not to show Wesley the evidence, yet she had broken her word.

But with the truth laid bare, Myah dared not deny it. Instead, she lowered her head and admitted quietly, "I'm sorry, Gabriela. I only wanted a ring like yours. I feared Wesley's disappointment, so I pushed the blame onto you. Please forgive me this time — I'll never repeat it."

Unmoved by her tears, Gabriela turned to Wesley, her voice steady. "Now, do you still intend to shield her?"

Wesley had long trusted Gabriela. Yet with this evidence before him, doubt clawed at him. Over the years, Myah had played her part well, veiling her true colors. He swallowed hard before speaking, his voice heavy with resignation.

"This video proves only the forgery of a ring — it doesn't prove she struck Brenden. Gabriela, they are two separate matters. Don't let grief and anger blur the lines."

Gabriela fell silent, her lips pressed tight. If Myah had dared to fake a ring, it was likely because she had no fear of exposure. And Wesley, bound by his promise to Allan, would never move against her without ironclad proof. So Gabriela chose not to waste words.

She fixed Myah with a cold, unyielding stare. "You had better pray that Brenden survives."

Terrified by that look, Myah shrank behind Wesley.

The night dragged on, each second feeling like a year. None of them dared to close their eyes.

By morning, Fiona heard of the accident. She threw a coat over her pajamas, her hair disheveled and slippers still on her feet, and rushed straight to the hospital. Her face was pale with panic. She seized Loretta's hand and cried, "How is Brenden? What happened? What did the doctors say?"

But Loretta, at a loss herself, could offer no comfort.

Too anxious to wait, Fiona ran to question the doctors directly. The news chilled her blood — Brenden was clinging to life through machines, and if he failed to endure three days, all would be lost. A shiver coursed through her heart. She hadn't even told him yet how much she cared. How cruel that fate had struck before her words ever reached him.

Chapter 832

Fiona slipped into a sterile gown before quietly stepping into the ward.

The sight of Brenden — motionless and tangled in tubes — struck her like a blow. A sharp ache welled up in her chest. So many of their days together had been filled with constant squabbling. She had always dismissed him as tactless, insensitive, lacking even the most basic grace. Yet now, seeing him like this, she longed for those arguments to return. If only he would open his eyes and call her a fool again, she would embrace it with a smile.

"Brenden, how could you be so unlucky?" Her voice trembled as she leaned closer. "It was just a driving lesson, and now you're lying here like this."

Her words spilled out in a broken murmur. “Last time, you said you wouldn’t waste your time on me. I thought you were teasing... but I didn’t expect you to be so heartless. Please, just wake up — I swear I’ll stop fighting with Gabriela. I’ll even be her best friend if that’s what it takes.”

But Brenden gave no sign of hearing her, lost to the world in a silence that made her heart sink even deeper.

Fiona’s mind drifted back to the first time they had met — how Brenden had called her by name and pulled her out of a tight spot. She had laughed at him then, but he never once held it against her. He had been at her side through every reckless escapade: crashing weddings, scheming against Rebecca, even taking a whipping to protect her. No matter how badly he was hurt, he always found a way to grin and soothe her fear. A man like that couldn’t simply be taken away.

After ten minutes, the nurse gently led Fiona from the room. She dabbed her cheeks, then turned to Gabriela — who had waited outside from dusk till dawn — and bowed. “Please, look after Brenden for me. I’ll be back.”

Gabriela, unsure of Fiona’s plan, only nodded. “I will.”

Fiona left the hospital and hurried to find Samuel Guzman, the wizard. He lived in a small house in the suburbs. The three pines by the gate had grown taller since her last visit. She remembered bringing Brenden here once before, when he had already been injured and things had gone from bad to worse. Clutching her skirt, she stepped inside with a resolve that steadied her.

Samuel, thinner now and more frail, still felt like the same unreliable friend she had always trusted.

Fiona's voice was earnest and urgent. "Mr. Guzman, you once performed a ritual to shield me from misfortune — but it seems that misfortune fell on my friend instead." For years, whenever Brenden was near, bad luck had trailed behind him in painful ways. Fiona had always shrugged it off, assuming it was no more than a streak of misfortune. But now everything had changed.

"What happened to him?" Samuel asked quietly.

"He's dying," Fiona said, her eyes hard with grief and determination. "Please, transfer the bad luck back to me."

Samuel stared, taken aback. "Are you not afraid of death?"

"I am," Fiona answered softly.

She had wealth, beauty, and a life many envied — but every shadow of misfortune that had haunted Brenden should have been hers to carry. All she wanted now was to set things right.

Samuel listened in silence, his fingers drumming lightly as he weighed her words. After a long pause, he finally spoke, his voice steady but deliberate. "Perhaps there is a way to save him, if you're willing."

Fiona leaned forward, hope flaring in her eyes. "Please, tell me, Mr. Guzman. What must I do?"

“Everything in this world follows the law of balance,” Samuel explained. “You and your friend are both burdened with ill fortune. But if the two of you were bound together — say, in marriage — your curses might cancel each other out.” One spell balanced by another.

Fiona’s eyes shone. “I’m willing!” Then, just as quickly, doubt clouded her expression. “But what if Brenden doesn’t agree?”

His heart still belonged to Gabriela. If he woke only to find himself married to someone he didn’t love, he might collapse from the shock all over again.

Chapter 833

Samuel’s lips curved faintly. “That’s easily solved. Take me to him, and I’ll see for myself.”

Without hesitation, Fiona led him back to the hospital. Samuel presented his reasoning before the gathered group, and when his words settled, the room fell into a heavy silence. No one spoke up in protest. After all, Loretta was the most superstitious of them all. And hadn’t Wesley and Gabriela themselves survived a near-fatal ordeal right after their own marriage two years ago? Whether science failed to explain it or sheer coincidence was at play, no one could deny the results. Trying it again could only help.

With unspoken agreement, Fiona and Samuel donned sterile gowns and stepped quietly into Brenden’s ward. He lay motionless, pale against the white sheets, but the steady rhythm on the heart monitor was stronger than it had been that morning.

Samuel raised a hand, signaling Fiona not to interfere. From a pouch, he withdrew several aged coins and placed them with meticulous care on a spotless cloth. His voice dropped into a low chant as he cast the coins, their clinking sound reverberating through the stillness of the room. The air grew taut and heavy, as if the walls themselves were holding their breath.

Fiona, who had picked up fragments of his art over the years, recognized the alignment. It was auspicious. Hope surged in her chest.

At last, Samuel's chant ceased. He spoke a single word, rich with finality. "Approved."

Fiona's heart leapt. It was settled. She would marry Brenden. Whatever came of it, her resolve was unshakable.

Stepping out of the room, she delivered the news. Loretta burst into tears, gripping Fiona's hand with trembling fingers. "Fiona... once you're married, I'll treat you as my own."

Even Wesley, composed as he always was, could not hide his astonishment. Given everything selfish and reckless Fiona had done before, it seemed impossible that she would genuinely choose to marry Brenden while his life hung by a thread.

Gabriela couldn't contain herself. "Fiona, I hope you've really thought this through."

"I have," Fiona said without hesitation.

“And your parents? Will they accept it?” Gabriela pressed.

The Dewitt name carried weight in Okburg — it rivaled the Moss Group. Even when Brenden was healthy, Hanley had never seen him as suitable. Now, with Brenden unlikely to last another day, Fiona’s plan looked even more hopeless. Hanley would almost certainly oppose it outright.

“I’ll convince my father!” Fiona vowed.

The method she chose to sway them was dramatic: a hunger strike. She swore that if Brenden died, she would follow him in death. She recruited her mischievous friend Lydia to spread the story.

While Lydia fussed with the logistics, she couldn’t help but tease her. “Fiona, why pick a playboy like Brenden? My brother’s a better match. Why not him?”

For years Lydia had tried to set Fiona up with her brother, but Fiona had always resisted. “Help me with this,” Fiona said, “and you can be my bridesmaid at the wedding.”

That silenced Lydia. For the coveted honor of standing beside Fiona on her wedding day, she would see it through no matter what. As for her brother — he could settle for the wealthy heiress from the neighboring city. She might not match Fiona’s fortune, but her devotion to him was unquestionable.

With Lydia’s help, word spread swiftly through their entire social circle: Fiona Dewitt was determined to marry Brenden Saunders.

When the news reached home, Hanley Dewitt stormed in, whip in hand, his face black with fury. This time Fiona did not run, nor did she shrink back. She dropped to her knees, shoulders squared, gaze steady.

“Mother, Father,” she said solemnly, “you can punish me as you see fit. But when it’s done, I beg you to grant me your blessing. I must marry Brenden.”

Hanley’s rage boiled over. He raised his hand as if to strike her — then stopped, trembling with fury.

Chapter 834

The future Hanley envisioned for Fiona didn’t involve marrying a reckless playboy who now hovered between life and death. The whip cracked through the air with a sharp snap.

Fiona stayed on her knees, spine rigid, face calm — silent even as the pain seared her skin. Hanley’s fury only deepened, each lash landing harder than the last. When several strikes left angry welts across Fiona’s back, her mother Lavinia Dewitt’s composure finally shattered. She stepped in, her voice trembling.

“That’s enough — you’ll kill her! If she has not behaved well, we can guide her slowly.”

Though reluctant, Hanley’s grip loosened. With a gruff huff, he tossed the whip aside, locked Fiona away, and swore she wouldn’t be freed until Brenden’s death made her lesson complete.

An entire day and night passed. Fiona refused both food and water, her lips dry, her face pale. Unable to watch her waste away, Lavinia crept in with a small tray, eyes red.

“Fiona,” she whispered, crouching beside her. “Please, eat a little. I won’t tell your father, I promise.”

Fiona lifted her tear-streaked face toward Lavinia, her voice trembling but determined. “Mom, please — let me out. If Brenden dies, I’ll carry that guilt for the rest of my life.”

She couldn’t even pinpoint when her feelings for Brenden had taken root. She had spent so much time nitpicking his reckless, carefree ways, yet deep down she had always envied Gabriela — envied that Brenden had been willing to change for her, to give up every other option without hesitation. Only after the accident, when he lay on the brink of death, did Fiona truly grasp how much he meant to her. The thought of never trading barbed jokes with him again, never teaming up for another bit of mischief, left her chest hollow and aching.

That unguarded pain flickering in Fiona’s expression made Lavinia falter in disbelief. “Fiona, what do you even see in Brenden?” she asked at last, her tone sharper than she intended. “That man has had more girlfriends than I can count. Even if he pulls through, once you marry him you’ll have to put up with all the women who still chase him.”

Fiona shot back without hesitation. “No, I won’t.”

She leaned forward, her voice urgent. “Mom, Brenden changed a long time ago. He’s been living clean for years — he doesn’t even have a single female friend now. Even his assistant is a man.”

Lavinia hesitated, memories surfacing of Brenden's visits to their home — how he had always been courteous, soft-spoken, and never once disrespectful. Brenden had a striking, approachable charm, nothing like the arrogant heirs she had known. Maybe the gossip about him had been too cruel.

"Mom, I'll only ever marry Wesley or Brenden," Fiona declared, her tone unwavering. "No one else could ever catch my eye." She took a breath, her voice turning fierce. "Wesley is never going to marry me. And if Brenden dies, I'll enter a convent and spend the rest of my life in prayer. Whether you let me go or not is your choice."

Lavinia let out a helpless sigh and tapped Fiona's forehead. "Don't try to scare me. There aren't even any convents nearby that would take you on a whim."

Fiona noticed Lavinia's expression softening and seized the moment, clinging to her arm and giving it a playful shake. "Mom, please — just this once. Let me have this."

Lavinia's shoulders sagged as she let out a weary sigh, her voice thick with worry. "Fiona, marriage isn't something to rush into. If Brenden survives, he may spend the rest of his life in a sickbed. Are you ready to stay with a man who might never walk again?"

"I am," Fiona whispered, her tone unwavering. "No matter what happens, I have to marry him."

What had begun as a hobby — learning fortune-telling to humor Loretta — had slowly become something she truly believed in. Omens became truth only through faith, but without it, they dissolved into nothing. And deep down, Fiona trusted Samuel's reading. She was certain Brenden had borne the disaster meant for her. No matter the outcome, she wanted to try. If he died after their marriage, at least she could face herself knowing she had done everything in her power.

Lavinia studied Fiona's resolute face for a long moment before finally exhaling. "Very well," she said quietly. "If this is truly your decision, I won't stand in your way."

She pressed the necessary documents into Fiona's hands — birth certificate, ID, and social security card — and unlocked the door with trembling fingers. Fiona's reddened eyes glistened. "Mom... thank you. I swear I'll take care of you for the rest of my life."

Chapter 835

"If you and Brenden truly find peace together..." Tears streaked Lavinia's face as she choked back a sob. "I feel like I'm sending you into danger, Fiona. Please, think this through one last time."

Fiona managed a small, steady smile. "I'm not walking toward danger, Mom. I promise."

Clutching the documents tightly, she dashed toward the hospital.

By the time she arrived, the waiting area buzzed with tension. Brenden's relatives filled the space — among them his mother, Marissa, who had flown back from overseas overnight. Marissa looked astonishingly youthful, her graceful features barely hinting at her fifty-some years. Her poised expression carried a subtle, assessing sharpness as her gaze landed on Fiona.

Fiona straightened, her voice soft but clear. "Mrs. Saunders."

Marissa clasped Fiona's hand with a quiet sigh. "Fiona, thank you — for loving Brenden so deeply, for standing by him when it matters most."

With deliberate care, she placed a signed share transfer agreement into Fiona's palms. Once Fiona officially became Brenden's wife, three percent of the Saunders Group would automatically be transferred to her name. Though the Saunders Group could not rival the Dewitt fortune, that three percent guaranteed Fiona lifelong financial security — whether she chose to sell the shares or live on the steady dividends. Whatever the future held, she would never lack for money.

Fiona stood frozen, wide-eyed, staring at Marissa in disbelief.

Marissa spoke again, her voice tinged with regret. "After my divorce, I went abroad and neglected Brenden. My absence is partly why he turned so wild. I failed as his mother — this is the least I can make up for."

Loretta, both touched and relieved, insisted softly, "Fiona, your future mother-in-law is offering you this with her whole heart. You should take it."

Fiona accepted the documents, her expression firming with resolve, and went straight to a lawyer to register the marriage that very day.

By evening, the news had rippled through the entire social circle, stirring a frenzy of gossip. In her sleek office, Rebecca let out a delighted, mocking laugh. "Has Fiona completely lost it? Marrying a man who's practically at death's door? Does she honestly believe a marriage certificate can turn fate around? Absolutely pathetic. Imagine wasting years abroad only to end up like this. No surprise, though — anyone who stayed close to Gabriela always seemed a little unhinged."

Jasper sat quietly on the sofa, not sharing her amusement. His expression was unreadable, his gaze distant as though weighed down by his own thoughts.

When word reached Hanley, his temper flared so violently he nearly struck Lavinia. But with the wedding already official, there was nothing left to stop. Grinding his teeth, he swallowed his fury and chose to pretend he hadn't heard a thing, unwilling to make himself any angrier.

Another day slipped by in a blur. Whispers spread through their entire circle as everyone waited, tense and restless, for an update. In powerful families, using marriage to shift fortune or ward off disaster was hardly uncommon — but Fiona had turned the whole affair into a spectacle, the kind people would gossip about for years. If Brenden actually opened his eyes, it would feel nothing short of a miracle.

At the hospital, nearly three days had crawled past. Family and friends lingered outside the ICU, anxious and exhausted. Fiona clutched Gabriela's hand with white-knuckled intensity, her voice thick with emotion.

"Gabriela, Brenden was hurt because of you. If he doesn't make it... you have to make this right for him."

Gabriela's chest tightened with sorrow, the memory of Brenden's easy grin from the day before flashing through her mind — him reassuring her not to worry. She reached over and gently patted Fiona's shoulder, her voice low and soothing. "Brenden's going to make it."

Across the hallway, Myah stood watching, her expression darkening. Fiona — of all people — was holding hands with Gabriela. Did Gabriela so easily forget how viciously Fiona had once treated her? How could she stand there looking so calm, almost friendly? While Myah silently plotted a way to drive a

wedge between the two, the heart monitor in the ward spiked without warning, its alarm slicing through the tense air.

A nurse shouted for the doctor, and in an instant Okburg's top specialists came running, sweeping into the room and yanking the curtains shut. Those left outside could only stare at the closed curtains, pulses pounding, unable to see what was unfolding beyond them.

Fiona clutched Gabriela's hand even tighter, her voice trembling as she whispered again and again, "Brenden, you have to make it. Please — stay with us."

Chapter 836

Nearly two hours later, a nurse came rushing out, her face alight with joy. "Mr. Saunders is awake!"

The hospital staff, long acquainted with Brenden's frequent visits, shared in the cheer. To them, his survival felt like a personal triumph. Fiona's heart, which had been dangling by a thread, finally found rest. She clutched Gabriela's hand tightly and cried through her tears, "Did you hear that? Brenden made it!"

It was as if their marriage itself had turned the tide.

Gabriela's taut nerves slackened. She pulled Fiona into her arms and smiled warmly. "Yes, he made it."

Nearby, Samuel offered a quiet nod and a faint smile before slipping silently out of the hospital. So deep was everyone's joy that no one noticed his departure.

Moments later, the doctor appeared, and they crowded around him like anxious children awaiting an oracle. The elderly doctor's face carried both relief and heaviness. "Mr. Saunders is out of danger — his life is no longer at risk. However..."

A shadow crossed his features before he continued. "He has suffered grave injuries. His left hand has lost sensation, and from the waist down, he is paralyzed."

The words struck like ice water, freezing their smiles midair.

It was Wesley who first broke the silence, his voice calm but edged with urgency. "Is there any chance he might recover?"

The doctor gave a slow nod. "That he's alive at all is already a miracle. Perhaps, when he regains strength, more miracles will follow."

The hope in his words softened the blow, offering them a fragile lifeline. Fiona steadied herself. Alive — that was enough.

"May I see him?" she whispered.

The doctor, recalling she was the bride from just yesterday, inclined his head. "Yes, but no more than ten minutes."

Fiona entered quietly, her eyes fixed on Brenden. He was awake, though weary — yet the moment he saw her, recognition sparked. “Fiona? Why are you the one at my bedside?” He had expected Gabriela, or perhaps Wesley or Loretta. Never her.

Fiona narrowed her eyes. “What? You’re not glad it’s me?”

Brenden forced a faint smile. “How could I not be? I just thought, after our quarrel, you’d want nothing to do with me for a while.”

Nothing to do with him? She had simply been waiting for his apology. Inwardly, she called him a fool and almost revealed the marriage certificate right then, to stun him with the truth. But fearing the shock would be too much for him so soon, she chose to wait — a few more days, until his strength returned. She stayed only a short while before stepping out.

In the hallway, her gaze swept the corridor until it landed on Myah — the very woman who had struck Brenden with her car. Before, Fiona’s mind had been consumed with his survival, leaving no room to deal with her. But now she was plotting retribution.

Noticing Fiona’s piercing stare, Myah shrank behind Wesley, feigning innocence like a frightened rabbit. Fiona’s fury simmered, barely contained.

Days later, with Brenden stabilized, Wesley brought Myah into his room to ask directly about the accident. “Brenden, think carefully,” Wesley said, his tone uncharacteristically stern. “Tell us exactly what happened that day.”

Chapter 837

Brenden frowned, surprised by the gravity in Wesley's voice. "Why so serious all of a sudden? Did something happen?"

Wesley pressed on, his words blunt as a blade. "Tell me honestly — did Myah strike you on purpose?"

At this, Myah's face paled. The question cut her deeply. So Wesley, too, leaned toward Gabriela's suspicions. Had Brenden not survived, Wesley would surely have believed her guilty, just as Gabriela did.

Both Gabriela and Fiona exchanged startled looks. Wesley had shielded Myah again and again — they never imagined he would waver.

Gabriela, however, had long since grown disillusioned, already weighing how to raise Truett alone if need be, without a father's steady hand.

Brenden closed his eyes, sifting through memory. When the car struck him, Myah's face had been stricken with panic. She had rushed to him, checked his wounds, and without hesitation called an ambulance. Such actions hardly matched the intent to kill. Yes, she could be cunning — but she was also the girl he had once cherished. Deep in his heart, he could not believe she would wish him harm.

He recounted the scene carefully and ended with, "I don't think Myah meant to hurt me. And besides, I'm alive and breathing — let's let the past rest."

Though now bound to a wheelchair, Brenden wore the mask of an optimist. “I can’t move much, true, but I’ve always been something of a couch potato. My dream was to lie back and enjoy life — now I get to start early. Wish granted!”

His jest drew no laughter. Fiona’s eyes brimmed with tears; she turned away, unwilling to watch him smile through pain.

Wesley studied him intently, searching for even a flicker of concealment. Finding none, he exhaled slowly. “If it wasn’t intentional, then Myah, you need not turn yourself in.”

Relief washed over Myah like a tide. She had gotten away with it.

But Wesley added sternly, “Still, your driving is reckless. You will not be behind the wheel for two or three years.”

“Yes,” she answered meekly.

Gabriela remained silent. Brenden himself had cleared Myah, so there was nothing more to pursue. Yet inwardly, Gabriela resolved to keep a sharper eye on her.

With their questions answered, they left the hospital for the villa. Now that Brenden’s life was secure, Gabriela finally exhaled fully. Back home, she confronted Myah.

“Myah, your eyes have healed. It’s no longer suitable for you to remain here. You should return to your own house.”

Wesley had already provided her a quiet home in the suburbs, with Delia to care for her. If that proved inconvenient, he would surely find her a finer place. But Gabriela would not allow such a volatile presence under her roof.

Myah clung to her sleeve, her voice trembling. “Gabriela, Brenden himself said I didn’t mean it. Why force me to go?”

Gabriela did not explain. She stepped back, her gaze cold and distant. “You should leave. Delia will tend to you.”

Neither Myah’s pleading nor Loretta’s mediation could move her. In the end, Myah returned reluctantly to the suburban home.

The very next evening, as she walked outside, shadows descended. She was ambushed, dragged into a narrow alley, and beaten mercilessly. She took a brutal blow to the eye.

Chapter 838

A brutal kick struck Myah’s right eye, the impact jolting pain straight up her skull. Sealed inside the suffocating darkness of the sack, she was powerless. Terror swallowed her whole, and all she could do was scream, again and again, “Wesley! Wesley, help me!”

Her cries only fueled the fury outside. A heavy stomp crashed against her back.

“When you ran him down with your car, did Wesley cross your mind then?” the attacker snarled. “He’s upright and decent. He’d never fall for a manipulative girl like you!”

The voice was unmistakably female, yet Myah’s pain blurred everything — she couldn’t grasp whose voice it was. Shaking, she bit her lip until blood touched her tongue, too afraid to utter another word.

The assault didn’t stop. Several more savage kicks rained down before the woman said, “Let’s go.”

Left curled inside the sack, Myah felt as though her bones had been torn apart one by one, the agony sinking deep into her marrow.

It was Delia who realized something was wrong when Myah never came home. Searching frantically, she found her dumped in a narrow alley. Unknotting the sack with trembling hands, Delia saw Myah unconscious, her body battered. Panic surged. Delia screamed for help, fumbling for her phone — her first instinct was to call an ambulance, then Wesley.

On the phone, Wesley’s calm cut through Delia’s panic. He told her to stay with Myah and wait for the paramedics, then hurried to the hospital himself.

By the time Wesley arrived, Myah lay broken in the hospital bed. Fragile as she was, the brutal beating had left her drenched in injuries, barely able to lift herself. Her right eye was so severely damaged that the doctors feared she might lose her vision again. They began immediate treatment, urgent hands working over her.

But Myah could only lie there, stunned and hollow.

As soon as the doctor finished examining her eye, Myah clutched Wesley's hand. "Wesley, please — don't let my eye go blind. Make the doctor save me."

Wesley squeezed her fingers, steady and gentle. "I'll find the best doctor," he promised. "Don't cry. I don't want you risking the other eye."

Myah forced the tears back and looked at him with a small, wounded plea.

Loretta, standing nearby, covered her mouth, her voice trembling. "Myah's neighborhood has always been considered safe. This kind of thing shouldn't happen there."

The remark lit a new fire in Myah. She turned toward Gabriela, her voice taut with accusation. "Gabriela, if you've got something to say, say it to my face."

Gabriela, who had rushed in on hearing the news, flinched at the sudden charge. "What are you talking about?"

"My attacker was a woman," Myah said, each word clipped by pain. "I couldn't make out her face, but it was a woman's voice." Her anger and disappointment poured out. "You hate me for the ring. You blame me for Brenden's accident, even though he said it wasn't on purpose. You could have let it go — but instead, you hired someone to beat me up so you could vent?"

She fixed Gabriela with a tearful glare. "Gabriela, how could you? Allan treated you with nothing but kindness. Even if you despise me, can't you forgive me for his sake at least?"

She bombarded Gabriela with accusations, not giving her a chance to respond.

Loretta stepped between them, alarmed. "Myah, don't say that without proof. Gabriela wouldn't hurt you. She cares about you."

Myah's eyes hardened. "She's paranoid. She regrets helping me with my eye surgery and now she wishes to see me blind again." She called her by full name for emphasis. "Gabriela Hayes — it was you, wasn't it?"

Gabriela's face tightened. "I don't have to swear to prove what I didn't do."

She turned to Wesley, jaw clenched. "Do you believe any of this?"

Chapter 839

Confronted with Gabriela's unyielding stare, Wesley felt his resolve waver, a sudden tenderness stirring in him. He met her gaze, his voice low and even. "I believe evidence."

Gabriela pressed, incredulous. “So if there’s no evidence, you won’t believe me?”

“I...” His gut told him she was innocent. But before he could answer, Myah — shaking with tears and fury — interrupted.

“If hitting me makes you feel better, do it in front of everyone. Use a whip or a stick. I’ll kneel and take it. But don’t send thugs to break me in the dark. They ruined my eye. If it doesn’t heal, I’ll never forgive you.”

Gabriela stared at her, a mixture of disbelief and sorrow in her eyes. Was this really the same girl she had cherished like a younger sister all these years? When had she become so warped — so different the moment no one was watching?

Gabriela’s gaze drifted across the hospital room — Myah, red-eyed and furious; Loretta, doubt flickering in her expression; Wesley, cold and unreadable. These were people she had once treated with her whole heart.

A weary heaviness settled over her. She no longer wanted to argue. Her voice came out flat, detached. “Believe what you want. If you think I did it, call the police. I won’t waste words here.”

She cast Wesley one final look before leaving. Disappointment shadowed her expression — but beneath it lingered a strange kind of relief.

That look unsettled him, tugging at something deep inside. He called after her, “Gabriela,” and started to follow.

But Myah seized his hand, her tears wet against her lashes. “Gabriela knows I’d never dare call the police. Allan cared for her so deeply — how could I betray that? She’s using his love, knowing I’d always listen to him. When did she become like this?”

The mention of Allan’s name sent a sharp pang through Wesley. Rival in love. Savior in life. The contradiction always left him restless, pulled in two directions he couldn’t escape.

Before he could untangle his thoughts, Myah’s body jerked. A searing pain stabbed her left eye, and she cried out, clutching it. “It hurts!”

Wesley’s composure snapped. He rushed to the door, calling urgently for the doctor.

Myah’s right cornea was irreparably damaged, plunging her once more into darkness, her chances of recovery slim.

When word spread, Fiona felt triumphant. “Serves her right,” she said. “Call it karma.”

Brenden frowned. “She can be mischievous, sure, but she’s not evil. Do you really need to curse her like that?”

Fiona rolled her eyes and shoved a peeled apple into his mouth. “You fool. That girl used driving lessons as an excuse to nearly run you over, and you’re still pitying her? What are you, some kind of saint?”

Brenden chewed, muffled around the apple. "But... she didn't mean it."

"Didn't mean it?" Fiona's laugh was sharp. "You know nothing. Right after your accident, Gabriela slapped her several times — in front of everyone. Even Gabriela, who spoiled her most, suspected her. Do you still think it was that simple?"

"Gabriela... slapped Myah?" Brenden froze. No one had told him this since he woke up. His eyes widened. "Gabriela slapped her... for me?"

His face brightened with a joy Fiona found maddening. "Unbelievable. That's what you take from this?" She threw her hands up. "The point is, Myah is manipulative!"

But Brenden was already grinning ear to ear. "So Gabriela values me over her now?"

The thought thrilled him. Maybe it wouldn't be long before he surpassed Wesley once again.

Chapter 840

Brenden lay motionless in the hospital bed, his left side unresponsive. Every basic task — eating, drinking, even turning over — now relied on others. The loss of independence had stripped him of nearly every shred of dignity.

Yet somehow, he could still beam like a fool, grinning all day as if the world hadn't just come crashing down. Fiona could only sigh in exasperation. But as she watched him, a flicker of warmth rose in her chest. Hadn't this unshakable optimism been the very thing she had always admired about him?

Brenden's childhood had been lonely. After his parents' divorce, neither had spared him much thought, leaving him to stumble through life on his own. And now, even as he hovered between life and death, his own father couldn't be bothered to visit. Still, Brenden had never complained, never cursed his fate. Somehow, he had grown into a man whose heart remained uncorrupted.

A sudden laugh escaped Fiona's lips before she could stop it, startling even herself. She couldn't deny it any longer — she really did have a soft spot for this charming idiot.

Brenden noticed immediately, suspicion flickering in his eyes. "Fiona, are you laughing at me?" he asked. "Do you secretly think I'll never measure up to my cousin?"

"Of course not," Fiona replied.

She set aside the apple and knife, then clasped his warm, calloused hand. Her voice softened. "Honestly, I think you're the better man now."

The way her voice carried both gentleness and weight unsettled him, sending a cold tremor down his spine. "Fiona, what's gotten into you?" Brenden said, eyeing her warily. "Are you feeling okay?"

"You're the one who's not okay!" Her carefully built warmth shattered, and she shot him an exasperated glare. "Tell me honestly, Brenden — how tough is your mind these days? If I hit you with something serious, are you going to faint on me?"

He snorted, half amused. “What could possibly be worse than being paralyzed?”

The joke was still forming on his lips when a dark thought struck him, wiping the humor from his face. His expression tightened. “Wait... am I dying? Is this my big, clear-headed moment before the end?”

“Don’t you dare say that!” Fiona swatted his chest with a playful punch, her voice sharp but laced with worry. “You’re going to be fine. People say troublemakers live forever — you’ll probably be annoying us all when you’re a hundred.”

“Then what’s there to panic about?” Brenden leaned back with surprising calm, his gaze steady on her. “Go on, just spit it out. Even if you told me I was broke and bankrupt, I’d survive that news.”

Fiona drew in a steadying breath, then quickly pulled a marriage certificate from her bag and pressed it into his still-usable hand. “Brenden, we’re married now.”

Brenden blinked in confusion, fumbling the certificate open. His gaze landed on the photos inside, and disbelief flickered across his face. “Fiona, did I lose my memory too? I don’t remember a wedding!”

“You didn’t forget anything,” Fiona said calmly. She repeated Samuel’s explanation before adding with a stubborn tilt of her chin, “Your mother even transferred me three percent of the Saunders Group shares. And if you think you can back out now, those shares aren’t going anywhere.”

She spoke for several moments, only to find Brenden staring at her as if frozen in place, his expression blank.

“What’s with that look?” Fiona crossed her arms, her irritation rising. “Is marrying me such a nightmare for you? You were lying here half-dead and I still chose to marry you. I haven’t complained once — yet you have the audacity to act like I’m not good enough?”

With Fiona’s relentless complaints ringing in his ears, Brenden at last came to his senses. His gaze, edged with wounded reproach, settled on her. “So all this bad luck — every scrape and injury — was because of you? You and that unreliable Mr. Guzman set me up?”

Fiona faltered for a heartbeat, then bristled. “That’s not the point! The point is we’re married!”

“Married?” Brenden let out a bitter laugh. “That’s nothing compared to what I’ve lost. Look at me — I’m stuck like this. And it’s partly on you.” His expression turned solemn. “So from now on, you’re stuck with me. You get to look after me forever.”

Fiona shot back, her tone sharp with irritation. “Could you at least pay attention to the real issue here? We’re married!”

Brenden was nothing short of exasperating. When he dated other women, he showered them with flowers, jewelry, and endless sweet talk. Yet with her, he acted like the most clueless man alive, completely failing to grasp what mattered. The sheer unfairness of it made her furious.

The sight of her irritation drew the mischief right out of Brenden. His expression turned solemn as he met her gaze. "Fiona, what were you thinking? If you had married me only to wind up a widow, it wouldn't have been worth it. Were you out of your mind?"

Fiona let out a derisive snort. "Why wouldn't it be worth it? I walked away with three percent of Saunders Group shares!"