

## Chapter 341 Saved Money For You

Gabrielle walked out of the shop with her dress in her hand. It was quite late, and she was exhausted.

"Jackson, thank you very much for accompanying me to buy the dress today. It's getting late..."

"Treat me to dinner then. You said you were poor and couldn't afford such an expensive dress. I already helped you on the reimbursement from Jason. You should have enough money to treat me to a meal, right?" Jackson had always been straightforward. He never saw the point in beating around the bush. He was known in the office for being direct.

Gabrielle initially wanted to tell him that it was time to separate and go back to their respective homes. She wasn't tired because of the shopping itself but the people she had to deal with while buying a dress.

She was surprised when Jackson told her

to treat him to dinner. So even though Gabrielle was dead tired, she had no reason to refuse him. It was a small favor, after all.

Of course she had money for a meal. She wasn't that impoverished.

Besides, Jackson helped her a lot, so it was a small thing to buy him a meal. She owed him that at least.

"Okay, sure. You can pick the place, Jackson," Gabrielle agreed readily. She was actually surprised that Jackson wasn't as insufferable as other people in the studio made him seem. ①

Anyway, it was just a dinner—nothing special. ①

The place where Jackson picked was cozy and quiet. He didn't like noisy establishments.

He drove directly to a restaurant that didn't have plenty of patrons dining at the time. It was private, and not everyone knew about it.

The owner of the shop was an old acquaintance of his. He was an enthusiastic middle-aged man, just like

Akiba, and he became more animated when he saw Gabrielle. He welcomed them with a huge smile on his face.

"Jackson, I see that you're not eating alone here today. Finally! It's the first time you're here with a girl for dinner. Welcome, welcome you two! Come in and have a seat. Your usual spot has been reserved for you,"

the man greeted them warmly. He even patted Jackson's back as he led the way.

Gabrielle was shocked by the man's enthusiasm. He didn't treat her as a typical guest. In fact, he looked at and talked to her as though she was his daughter-in-law.

Anyone watching Jackson and the man could see that they had a close relationship. Jackson, who was usually cold and distant, was clearly comfortable speaking to him.

"Talon, this is my colleague, Gabrielle. Gabrielle, this is the owner and chef of this private restaurant, Talon," Jackson said. Talon puffed out his chest, proud of the way Jackson introduced him.

Jackson also emphasized that they were

nothing more than colleagues, so Talon didn't think much about it.

Still, Talon couldn't stop grinning. The fact remained that Jackson brought a girl to his restaurant for the first ever—it was quite an improvement. He had been dining alone for so long.

This was a good start. With his hands clasped behind his back, Talon quietly observed Jackson's companion.

She was beautiful, warm, and gentle—a total opposite of Jackson's icy demeanor. Jackson had his default frown on while Gabrielle was smiling sweetly.

Maybe they had chemistry—it was too soon to tell. But Talon thought there was hope for them in the future.

"Hello, Talon. I'm Gabrielle—Jackson's colleague,"

Gabrielle greeted Talon, reaching out to shake his hand.

"Okay, okay. Hello. You and Jackson should have a seat first,"

Talon said happily.

Jackson led Gabrielle to a private room

and sat down, handing a vintage handmade menu to Gabrielle. The pages were tanning, and Jackson probably held it so many times already. "Have a look. What do you want to eat?"

"I'm allergic to seafood. Apart from seafood, anything else is okay for me," Gabrielle told him calmly.

"They don't serve seafood here, only homemade dishes," Jackson responded indifferently. He always liked to talk as though he didn't care either way.

"Then I have nothing to worry about. I know you and Talon are pretty close. You can order anything you like. I'm not a picky eater," Gabrielle said casually. She kept looking around the interiors, admiring how everything was put together really well.

It was the first time she had dinner with Jackson. She was nervous, especially because he could be rude and unpredictable.

Her workmates always spoke about him being the most difficult person to get along with in the studio. Even so, Gabrielle had to acknowledge that he had been patient and accommodating with

her today.

At least in Gabrielle's mind, he was so much better than Vivian. That woman was a thorn in Gabrielle's side.

"Since you are not picky about food, then I'll order for you." Jackson spared her a glance but didn't say anything more. He laid down the menu on the table and went out.

There was no waiter here. The customers would have to go to the kitchen and tell Talon what they wanted to eat. They could even order dishes that weren't on the menu—just as long as Talon could make it.

Talon had been working as a chef for twenty or thirty years, and he was good at cooking homemade dishes. He was fiercely proud of the foods he served.

As soon as Jackson went out, Gabrielle felt like she could breathe again. She didn't realize how tense she was until he left her alone. Then, a shrill sound pierced the silence. She looked at her phone and saw that Westley was calling her.

After hesitating for a while, Gabrielle

answered it, "Hello."

"Where are you now?" Westley asked her directly.

'Where am I?' Gabrielle ran her fingers through her hair; her face screwed in frustration.

She actually didn't pay attention to the road signs. Jackson was driving, and she didn't even bother looking at where they were headed.

"I'm having dinner outside," Gabrielle could only answer vaguely. She honestly didn't know her exact location.

"With whom?" There was an anxious lilt in Westley's voice.

Gabrielle had guessed what caused Westley to worry. He wasn't the type of guy who constantly checked on her whereabouts. Besides, he sounded like he was more concerned about who she was with than where she actually was.

He probably heard some rumors, which wasn't exactly surprising.

She immediately thought of Mindy, who she saw in the clothing store. That

woman threatened Gabrielle that she would tell Westley about Jackson.

Mindy wasn't above spreading false stories, so Gabrielle assumed she told Westley that Gabrielle was out with another man.

There was seriously something wrong with Mindy. No one in her right mind would resort to something this desperate—all for one dress.

"I'm having dinner with Jackson in a private restaurant. Why? Did you receive any message or photo about us?" Gabrielle asked frankly. She didn't have time to entertain Westley's silent accusations, so she went straight to the point.

After a short silence, Westley breathed a sigh of relief and chuckled. "Yes, I received a message a minute ago from an anonymous sender. There is a photo attached in which you were shopping with a man. Is it Jackson?"

"Yes, it's him." Gabrielle closed her eyes and pressed her finger on her lids. Mindy surely didn't waste any time sending "proof" to Westley.



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"Yes, it's him." Gabrielle closed her eyes and pressed her finger on her lids. Mindy surely didn't waste any time sending "proof" to Westley.

Gabrielle didn't even know when Mindy took the photo. That woman was stealthy; Gabrielle had to give her that.

"He went shopping with you and paid the bill? Where is the card I gave you? Why didn't you use it?" Westley's voice became increasingly colder. Gabrielle knew where this conversation was headed.

She could tell that he was getting jealous. She didn't know whether she should be amused or irritated.

So, Westley didn't take issue that another man accompanied her while she went shopping. However, it bothered Westley that Jackson paid for her dress.

Westley probably wondered how close she was with Jackson for the latter to pay her bill.

"I didn't have the card with me when I went to the mall. Besides, I was there to buy a dress because I have to pick up our guest at the airport. It's a work-related purchase, so the studio will reimburse me. I don't have to pay for it myself. See, Westley? I actually saved some of your money." Gabrielle's tone was soft and

low. She was trying to make him see her point. She didn't want this to escalate into another senseless fight.

The last sentence made Westley happy. She was willing to save his money and not spend it carelessly, which meant that Gabrielle really treated him as her own man. She wouldn't care that much if she didn't.

This made Westley happy. He didn't know why but it warmed his heart to know how Gabrielle felt.

"Gabrielle, I don't need you to save money for me. I make enough money that you can buy anything you want. It doesn't matter how much. If you want it, you can buy it," Westley reminded her. It apparently still irked him that another man paid for Gabrielle's dress.

His wife, of course, could spend the money he earned any way she wanted to. He could afford it if she decided to live luxuriously. In truth, she didn't need someone else buying her clothes for her—even if it was for work. Westley made so much that he could have bought it for her in every color.

But his wife only needed his love and

affection. That was all she wanted from him—not luxury bags or expensive clothes. As for Westley, he didn't need others spending money on Gabrielle.

"Okay. I see!" Gabrielle agreed. Over time, she had learned to pick her battles. This time, she knew it would serve her if she simply relented.

"Send me the restaurant address. I'll pick you up in half an hour." Westley dropped the subject and decided to change the topic. Anyway, Gabrielle already agreed with him. There was no point making it a big issue.

"No, thanks. It's too far if you come here from the company..."

"Gabrielle, I'll pick you up," Westley insisted. He heard her sigh on the other end.

Gabrielle had no choice. Again, it wasn't worth fighting over.

"Okay, I'll wait for you." Gabrielle looked for the address and gave it to him. Even while she sounded annoyed, it warmed her heart that he was offering to fetch her.

Westley had already hung up the phone. With a small smile, she put her own phone on the table.

As soon as Jackson came in, he was surprised to see a faint smile on Gabrielle's face. He sat down and raised his brow.

"What's the good news? Why do you look so happy?" asked Jackson. He was genuinely curious.

"Someone will pick me up later. You don't have to bother sending me home," Gabrielle said. With her elbows on the table, she rested her chin on her hands as she continued to survey the decorations.

"Who? Your husband?"

## Chapter 342 The First Woman He Brought Here

'My husband?'

Gabrielle hardly stopped herself from making a sudden, surprised movement. The way that she never disclosed her marriage in the studio and yet Jackson knew about it was no small thing. Even Jason didn't know that Gabrielle was in wedlock. If there was someone aware of it at all, it was only Austin.

'Nevertheless, Jackson actually knows.'

Gabrielle was almost frozen. Her stupefaction wasn't hidden at all.

"Don't give me that surprised look. Your kind cousin told me, thinking that I had an affair with you," Jackson scoffed, sarcasm evident in his cold tone.

"I..." Gabrielle stuttered, thinking how Jackson must be feeling, "I'm truly sorry that you heard such ridiculous rumors because of me." She felt no need to explain herself and just made an apology.

And when her mind whirled towards Mindy, Gabrielle sighed. She couldn't doubt that Mindy wouldn't scheme against her in every possible way. Of course, Mindy wasn't able to digest Gabrielle's pureness, the reason she was always busy making it muddy in front of the world.

And this time, Mindy thought that Gabrielle was having an affair behind Westley's back when she saw her with Jackson in the mall. 'Dirty brains think dirty forever!'

Surely, Mindy's next aim was to tell Jackson that Gabrielle was a slut who changed men like clothes and that he was her next target. Mindy must have wanted to warn Jackson away from Gabrielle, ruining her reputation in his eyes.

'Mindy is exceptional in thinking evil.'

"Don't be sorry. After all, we don't share that kind of a relationship. Plus," Jackson said, looking Gabrielle in the eyes, and making himself as much straightforward as he could. "You're not my type, and since you're married, you can never provoke my interest."

Those words might have been prickly for another girl, but to Gabrielle, their explicitness was rather amusing. "I guess I am relieved to know that I am not your type then." Gabrielle stopped a smile coming to her lips before continuing, "Jackson, you disliked me from the beginning, didn't you?"

"Well," Jackson paused before continuing to explain his divergent thoughts. "It's not that I disliked you particularly, Gabrielle. I just don't like people who try to approach me. Also, I don't much love teaching new disciples. So you can say that I'm halfheartedly doing it just because Jason forced me to do so," Jackson explained calmly.

It was who he was. He didn't like to aim at someone and make them feel bad. He just didn't like getting too close to anyone.

"I understand. And I know it's not your fault that I lack in experience and knowledge and that you have to teach me everything," Gabrielle honestly admitted.

Being well aware of her strengths and flaws was a virtue Gabrielle used



beautifully.

"That's nice to hear that you know your liabilities." Jackson felt relaxed to know how well Gabrielle had a clear estimation of herself.

Hearing him, a small smile appeared on Gabrielle's lips. "I'll take it as a compliment."

"So," Jackson started the topic again that kept intriguing him. "What in heaven's name went so wrong that you decided to get married at such a young age? But, if you think you won't be comfortable telling me, don't tell me. I am surely not interested in talking about your private issues." Jason asked, curious but resistant because of asking about a personal matter of someone else, "And I guess no one, even Jason, knows about your marriage in the studio, right?"

Nevertheless, the idea of a young girl getting married at the age when most girls desired dresses, outings, freedom, and endearing romantic relationships, seemed quite contradictory.

Gabrielle was just twenty, a college student who should enjoy her life, but surprisingly enough that Jackson asked,

she'd already been wedded.

"Jackson, I may feel better if we won't talk about my personal life. Whether I am married or not, I don't think it should affect my professional life in the studio. No one said that married women can't work, after all," Gabrielle said in a confident tone, avoiding showing her heartfelt guilt.

She came as a bachelorette employee in the studio but within a flash, Gabrielle got married. Her marriage was too much for her to take, let alone for her to spread the fire of it in the studio, the reason why she thought the better of it than telling everyone.

"I have no objection with that." Jackson didn't control the faint smile coming to his lips.

Of course, he wasn't one of those old-fashioned people to whom work was a ban for married women.

But doubtless, to admit, Jackson met a polar version of Gabrielle. Before today, she was just an intern, a student of Jason, and a hardworking girl who got too immersed in work that she was seldom noticed by others.

But today, Jackson was quite stunned to comprehend her new identity.

'She has got some wits.'

Since day one, Jackson had seen her as a reticent girl who seemed to stay away from any spotlight. But now he felt that Gabrielle was quite cunning that she kept doing her job soundlessly, without disturbing anyone else.

Right now, Jackson's wrong perceptions of Gabrielle were quite visible, or maybe she was well hidden under her mask. He wasn't sure.

'She has the potential to win big dreams if she tried though.'

"I feel like Jason is clueless about your marriage. Am I right?" Jackson asked, propping his chin on his fist.

"Only Austin knows," Gabrielle paused before managing to explain herself further. "When the time comes, Jason will know too." ①

Hiding her marriage from Austin would've been impossible since he was Westley's cousin. Plus, Austin must be going through a hard time accepting his

junior, Gabrielle, as his cousin-in-law.

Under the layer of selected words, Jackson interpreted that Gabrielle was restricting him to stop raking her marriage. Whenever she would tell Jason was Gabrielle's own problem.

Jackson, being the man who already was the least interested in someone's personal matters, silenced the topic finally. 'Of course, Gabrielle knows the best she had to do with Jason.'

"Don't get bothered by me. I am already too busy to question your life," Jackson said. Then his mind drifted to the reality that he had no time to think about himself than to dare and extract time for others.

"But," Gabrielle's face revealed a slight uneasiness and curiosity as she spoke. "Do you still dislike me?"

"Talk to me about liking you when I see your designs. Does it make any difference if others dislike you since you're married now?" Jackson showed his usual indifferent face that he wore more often than usual.

"That's not it. Others' opinions about my

design work indeed matter to me the most. What people say about my marriage or myself are of almost no importance to me."

Gabrielle honestly smiled.

Having Jackson ask her about her personal life felt way better than anyone else in his place, for he didn't keep on probing her. His trait of not wanting gossips made Gabrielle more relaxed.

At least she wasn't worried about finding herself on a newsflash because of someone's hearsays.

It surely wasn't Mindy's day to burn the town with gossip because the guy she met was a coldhearted apathetic person who wasn't going to give rise to any sparks.

As always, it was another one of those pathetic attempts of Mindy in which she tried to show Gabrielle her doom. This time, she tried using Jackson, the utterly wrong person and failed.

"Let's continue to eat." Starting eating again, Jackson said, "You may wait for your husband after you finish." Continuing with his food, Jackson didn't

say anything more.

His mind, though, still was on the way Gabrielle changed most of his thoughts about her. Yet, they did little to no good in improving his impression of her.

With silence engulfing both of them, they peacefully ate their dinner.

Talon, who was silently watching them share a serene aura, couldn't help the possibility of them having a chance together.

When, after finishing their meal, they were about to leave, Talon brightly said to Gabrielle, "It will be an honor to serve you again with Jackson, Miss Jones. I've never seen him have dinner here with a girl. You're the first." Talon smiled with hopefulness.

"You know, Talon, Jackson is too busy to tag along with me anytime I want. So, preferably, I will bring my friends here to devour over your deliciously cooked dishes." Gabrielle returned Talon a polite smile. <sup>1</sup>

'She's amazing! A pretty, innocent, and kindly girl. I am not going to accept that the cold and arrogant Jackson mistakenly

brought her for dinner.'

"It's fine so long as you accept to come, alone, with or without friends or Jackson. You're always heartily welcome, Miss Jones." Talon was beaming. "Be careful on your way back!"

"Sure, Talon. See you then. Bye!"