

Chapter 61 I Could Only Endure

Gabrielle shifted her eyes at the studio's door. Initially, she was planning to visit everyone in the studio today. Unfortunately, she had to see Estelle. As such, Gabrielle had to reschedule her visit to the studio to a later date. Moreover, she was also afraid that the wounds on her face might scare other people.

It didn't take long for Austin to arrive with the car. As soon as Gabrielle got inside the vehicle, he gave her a bottle of water. "You can take off your mask since you're already inside the car, Gabrielle. Otherwise, you'll feel hot. I can already see the sweat on your forehead. It'll be painful if it contaminates your wound."

With a relieved sigh, she removed her mask and her jacket.

Meanwhile, Austin couldn't help but gawk when he saw the wounds on her arms and face.

"This is much more relaxing for me. Thank you, Austin." After removing the bottle cap, she took a sip of water. Since she had so much wrapped around her earlier, she felt quite relieved at the moment.

"How did you get those wounds, Gabrielle? Are you in pain? Have you disinfected and

dressed it appropriately?" Feeling pity for her, Austin couldn't help but get teary-eyed.

When he noticed the gauze on her forehead, he knew that the accident must have badly hurt her. However, he had no idea how terrible her wounds were until he saw the rest of her face and arms.

"Okay, I'll be honest with you. I got these wounds while I was fighting women. However, it doesn't hurt anymore since Remy tended to me. Aside from some scratches on my skin, I have no major injuries. Unfortunately, I can't say the same for Sloane. She's in a hospital right now because she was struck on the back of her head," Gabrielle said with a straight face. She wanted to be honest so that Austin wouldn't worry too much.

"Where are we heading now? Are you planning to meet Estelle, the woman who ordered that attack on you?" he asked, wanting to get to the point.

"That's correct. Unfortunately, we still have no evidence against her." Frustrated, Gabrielle could only look down.

Estelle was the main culprit. She only used those three pitiful women as scapegoats. Moreover, people didn't dare to offend the Johnson as they were famous in Antawood.

Although Austin wasn't completely familiar with Estelle, he had heard of her name before. The elite class of Antawood was small enough for him to be aware of her existence.

Estelle had a bad reputation. She was known as the arrogant daughter of the Johnson. Because of her family background, she grew up self-centered and had offended a lot of people. However, she was also generous. As such, most people adored her and treated her as the princess of the upper-class circle.

Hence, Austin realized that she wasn't a good person.

There was no way he could forgive Estelle for bullying Gabrielle.

"Gabrielle, since Estelle wants to bully you, I can help you retaliate. You're looking for proof that Estelle ordered the attack on you and Sloane, correct?" He briefly looked at her with furrowed eyebrows.

Anger built up in his heart when he saw the wounds on Gabrielle's face. At that moment, he wanted to beat Estelle to a pulp.

How could Estelle do such a vile thing like ordering people to hurt Gabrielle? Austin was afraid of what else might happen to Gabrielle.

"Is that so? Can you help me find proof to

indict Estelle? The Johnson is a powerful clan in Antawood. There's no way I can fight against them," she admitted with a sense of hatred.

The cruelty of her situation was that powerful people could sentence less influential people to death without any punishment. The Jones couldn't compete with the Johnson.

Additionally, Gabrielle was merely an adopted daughter of the Jones. Since she wasn't a blood relative, she didn't want to involve them in that matter. Otherwise, Wendy and Tobias would see her as a disgraceful daughter.

Meanwhile, Sloane came from an ordinary family with not much influence. Although she could rely on Benny, he had a complicated relationship with Estelle. As such, he couldn't help Sloane and Gabrielle retaliate against Estelle.

"Gabrielle, Westley is your husband. His influence in Antawood is more than enough to deal with both Estelle and the Johnson. Maybe you should ask him to help you," Austin suggested with a hint of curiosity as he was also interested in Gabrielle's marriage with Westley.

If there was nothing wrong with their marriage, Westley wouldn't let something

terrible like that happen to Gabrielle. Moreover, he would do something about the culprit.

When Westley's name was mentioned, Gabrielle immediately stiffened. "Austin, you're Westley's younger cousin, correct? You already know his attitude. It's not easy to convince him to do anything I ask. Additionally, I only married him as a sign of atonement. Love and care don't exist in my relationship with him. Westley couldn't care less about my troubles." 3

Austin didn't know what to say. Since they were cousins, he knew Westley very well. However, because their characters are almost opposite of each other's, they weren't very close. It wasn't surprising for them to not like one another.

Moreover, Westley married Gabrielle, the girl Austin desired. As such, the tension between the two grew worse.

Even since they were young, Westley had continually bested Austin in everything they did. Now, Westley not only took away the woman Austin cared about but had also been treating her poorly. Hence, anger and frustration crept into Austin's heart as he thought about the marriage between the two. 3

"What's happening with your marriage with Westley, Gabrielle? How can you say that it's

merely a form of atonement? Even though you never knew each other before, you suddenly married. Why did you marry even though he was intended for Nellie?" Austin wanted to get to the bottom of it. The mere thought of the situation was making him miserable.

"My brother ran away with Nellie. As such, I became Westley's bride as compensation. The initial plan was to have a fake marriage. Unfortunately, Miley forced us to go to the courthouse for a marriage certificate. Despite our fake relationship, we are still legally man and wife. However, we will divorce each other once Nellie returns. Then, I'll cut off all my ties with Westley." A painful expression painted her face as she explained everything.

She took the blame for Bryce's ridiculous decision. Maybe it was also her punishment from the heavens for liking the wrong person.

"Why are you the one being punished for Bryce and Nellie's decision to elope? Moreover, Westley is more than powerful enough to track them down and bring them back. No place in heaven and earth can hide them from his influence. There's no need for you to marry him." At that moment, Austin realized some aspects of Westley's personality that he still didn't know.

He knew Westley as a ruthless and decisive

man who never tolerated any kind of betrayal.

People trembled in fear because of his cruelty and viciousness. ②

As such, Austin couldn't understand how Westley let Bryce and Nellie off the hook so quickly.

Maybe he didn't want to offend the Collins.

Even though it had already been five years, he still hadn't moved on from Helena's death.

However, involving Gabrielle was stepping over the line even for him.

"I have no idea what's happening on Westley's head. Anyway, he told me that I can marry him and wait for Bryce and Nellie to return. Otherwise, he'll track down Bryce and kill him. There's no way I'll let my brother be murdered. Therefore, I can only endure Westley's torture," Gabrielle admitted in a miserable voice. ②

Chapter 62 Friendly Advice

The atmosphere between them was tensed. Austin was very sure that there was only one person Gabrielle loved very much with all her heart. It was her brother, Bryce, who had no blood connection with her.

If she didn't love Bryce, she would never have agreed to pay for his sin by marrying Westley who everyone knew as the king of hell. This showed how she loved her brother and was ever willing and ready to do anything for his sake.

In that case, Austin would never be able to compete with Bryce. If he had lost Gabrielle to Bryce, he would have easily admitted it. But now, it was Westley whom Austin lost to which made him angry. He was furious that Westley married her without him being aware of it.

"Gabrielle, do you need me to help you leave Westley?" he asked. He knew that he didn't have any right whatsoever to interfere in her business, and presently, there was no way for him to go against Westley.

But then, he couldn't bear to see her suffer. If it was possible, he wanted to hold her tightly in his arms to shield her from every hate in the world.

"I don't need to leave Westley now. Although he is very unfriendly and unwelcoming to me, at least he didn't hurt me. I will do my best to ask the Jones to bring back Bryce and Nellie as quickly as possible so that I can get rid of Westley and live my life in peace. After all, he is your elder cousin and I don't want your relationship as brothers to be shattered because of me," she said seriously.

'What an ignorant girl! Even in a situation as crucial as this, she still had the time to care about other people's brotherhood,' he thought.

This was one of the reasons he worried so much about her. She preferred putting other people's happiness and comfort before hers.

"Okay, I understand. But if Westley ever tries to intimidate or bully you, Gabrielle, I'll take you away from him right away," he blurted out.

The duo had known each other for quite a long time. He treated her like he would treat his younger sister which made her very emotional.

She never imagined that her relationship with him would turn out this way. She became his elder sister-in-law, while he was her husband's younger cousin.

Even though the relationship between Austin and Westley was sour, she didn't want it to get worse because of her involvement in their lives.

"Austin, can I ask you a question, please?" She thought of a problem.

The scenario that Westley held the arm of another woman with so much affection in the hospital stayed long in her mind. She didn't know so much about Holly, and she knew that it was not a celebrated thing for her to ask about the people who were around Westley from another person.

But still, she just wanted to know if the relationship between Holly and Westley was like what she thought.

Sometimes, the intuition of women was correct. She felt that something going on between Holly and Westley.

But even if the relationship was not simple, it was none of her business. It was Westley's private affair and it would be better if she didn't interfere.

So, should she ask or not?

"Okay, go ahead," he urged her. Austin was looking straight ahead and didn't notice the perplexing expression on her face.

"Why don't you ask your question?" he queried her. Gabrielle still kept silent even after he waited for a long time. He started thinking that something was wrong with her but he couldn't bring her to say what it was.

"Do you know anything about Holly?" Looking a little agitated and tensed, she finally spoke. In her opinion, Austin was Westley's cousin anyway and so he might know a little, if not more, about the women around his cousin. Which was why she decided to ask him.

"Holly? Do you mean Nellie's elder cousin?" Austin looked at Gabrielle. He was confused and wondered why she was asking about Holly.

He was not interested in Westley, let alone the women around him. Austin only knew that when Westley and Helena were together, Holly, who was Helena's younger cousin and a best friend stayed with them very often. So they became friends.

Holly had visited the Morris on several occasions and so he had an idea about her. She was more beautiful than Helena and smarter too, so she was very cunning and crafty.

"Yes," he answered her. Gabrielle only got to know from Neil that Holly was Nellie's elder

cousin. Apart from that, she didn't know anything else.

"Why do you suddenly want to know about her? Has she come to you? Did she disturb you?" he asked worriedly.

She shook her head immediately. "I don't know Holly, neither do I know anything about her. She didn't come to me. I just heard her name and I am a little curious about her which was why I asked you about her. Just forget about it," she said with a wave of the hand.

Austin was not an idiot. He couldn't be easily deceived. Since she had asked about Holly, it showed that she cared about Westley.

"Gabrielle, is your marriage with Westley fake?" he asked reluctantly. 10

She didn't understand his question at the moment and looked at him uncomfortably. "Austin, my marriage to your cousin is fake. We will get a divorce immediately Nellie comes back. Then I'll be out of his life for good. Is there any problem?" she asked. 1

"No." After saying that, he didn't say anything more, but drove silently.

She also felt that the atmosphere in the car was gloomy. She tried to think of a topic to talk about with him, but felt that it was not

appropriate to talk about anything at that moment, so she decided to keep mute.

When he stopped the car at New Buds Cafe, she unfastened the seat belt and was about to open the door of the car.

"Gabrielle, if you don't care about Westley, I feel you should pay less attention to his affairs because Holly will constantly appear by his side. I'm very sure about that," he finally reminded her. ②

Her hand paused when she pushed the door open. She looked back at Austin with uneasy eyes. "What do you mean, Austin? I don't understand your statement."

"You don't have to understand. Just do as I have said. Don't pay too much attention to Westley. It would be better if you stay away from his private affairs and Holly. She is not someone you can deal with." Just then, he pushed the door open and got out of the car. ⑥

'Huh? What does he mean? Holly is not someone I can deal with?'

His words confused her even more.

Anyway, she wouldn't pay too much attention to Westley. She would avoid anyone or anything related to him now and also in the future.

Without delay, she put on her mask and hat and then got out of the car.

"Let's go inside," she said. She had adjusted the way she looked and they both walked towards the coffee shop.

She saw that Estelle was fashionably dressed from a distance, but she also noticed that she had a grumpy look on her face.

They both sat opposite her, and she still hadn't realized what was going on.

"Austin, what a coincidence! I didn't expect to meet you here or are you sitting in the wrong place?" Estelle recognized him immediately she saw him. She smiled sweetly, completely ignoring Gabrielle, who had covered herself up tightly.

"Estelle, I can understand if you can't recognize me for a while." As she spoke, she took off her hat and mask, thereby revealing her face covered with a bandage.

Estelle breathed very deeply. The previous night, with so much chaos going on, she didn't pay attention to Gabrielle's condition. She only knew that she was also injured and bleeding profusely. What Estelle cared more about was the condition of Sloane, who had almost died.

When Estelle heard that Sloane was not dead this morning, she was quite dejected. For a long time, she kept thinking why she was still alive. 10

Chapter 63 Stand By Her Side

"Sorry to frighten you, Estelle. Unfortunately, you're the reason why my face looks like this," Gabrielle frigidly uttered. Her apathetic glare made Estelle feel like she was surrounded by ice.

If a simple stare could kill a person, her body would've been riddled with holes already.

"What are you talking about, Gabrielle? When did I ever lay a hand on your face? Also, why is Austin here with you?" Estelle calmly replied with a concerned look on her face. Pretending to be a virtuous woman in front of the upper class was something she was always good at. In fact, she was even famous for it. However, she couldn't help but feel a bit uneasy. She didn't expect that Gabrielle knew Austin and would bring him along for help. Since he was there, how could Estelle get even with her anymore?

Even if it was hard, Estelle managed to keep her composure. The last thing she wanted was to disgrace herself in front of Austin.

"Gabrielle is a good friend of mine," Austin casually answered. The simple act of explaining his relationship with Gabrielle was a subtle hint for Estelle to watch her mouth. At that point, it was clear that if she did anything rude to a friend of his, he would

take it as an insult directed towards him.

She wouldn't dare to offend Austin, would she?

"I see, so Miss Jones is Austin's friend. I honestly had no clue," Estelle meekly mumbled in shame. ②

"It doesn't matter if you knew or not. What's important is that you don't forget it. Gabrielle told me that you're the reason for the wound on her face. Is this true? If yes, do you have a reasonable explanation for doing so?" Austin asked earnestly. There was no doubt that he was determined to seek justice for his friend.

In his youth, Austin was well-known for his calm and agreeable demeanor. If something happened and it had nothing to do with him, he wouldn't care at all. Getting into trouble was something he avoided at all costs.

But once he set his sights on something, his pacifist attitude completely disappeared.

When he gave his word to Gabrielle that he would sort out her affairs, he truly meant it. He wouldn't let anything stop him from reaching that goal.

At that moment, Estelle had no idea what to do. Her original plan to deal with her foe failed miserably. The three women she ordered to attack Gabrielle got caught and

ended up in jail. They wouldn't be released until the litigant allowed it. Such a move couldn't have come from Gabrielle. It was obviously Westley's doing.

Not having any information about Westley and Gabrielle's relationship made her feel anxious. To make matters worse, Austin was now involved. Weren't Westley and Austin cousins?

Gabrielle was truly an enchantress. Not only did she manage to seduce Westley, but she also had Austin on a string. With that in mind, how many more bigwigs did she have under her control? Estelle had completely underestimated Gabrielle, hadn't she? 7

One of the litigants was Sloane, who was lying in a hospital bed and suffering from a coma. The other one was Gabrielle. Estelle had planned to use some special means to force Gabrielle to release the three women. But since Austin made it clear that he would stand by Gabrielle's side, Estelle knew her plan wasn't an option anymore. 1

Frankly, Estelle couldn't help but regret messing with someone she shouldn't have in the first place.

"Estelle, haven't I made myself clear? Or do you need me to repeat it a second time?" Austin asked in an irritated tone. He got annoyed when he noticed that Estelle was

glaring at Gabrielle from time to time without saying a single word.

"I heard you loud and clear, Austin. I'll explain why Gabrielle's face got injured now," Estelle calmly replied. But when she looked at his ice-cold gaze, she immediately felt nervous.

In the upper-class circle, Austin was well-known for his sweet smile, gentle eyes, and a gentlemanly charm that could woo a thousand girls.

But at that moment, all of those traits disappeared. His frightening glare sent shivers down Estelle's spine. Was the man in front of her still Austin?

"Very well then, I'll listen to every word you say carefully. Hurting a friend of mine is a big deal. If I sense that you're not telling me everything about the incident, I'll find out the truth myself. If it has to come to that point, I can't promise that the outcome will be good for you, Estelle." Austin casually spoke, but there was a hint of malice in his voice. Understanding how important Gabrielle was to him, Estelle knew that if she couldn't give a satisfactory answer, she would get herself in a lot of trouble.

"I understand, Austin. Her injuries were caused by my three friends. I had no clue that they were planning to hurt her. If I had

the attack. I won't deny that I haven't seen eye to eye with Sloane. But I'm not crazy enough to kill her because of that. My best friends did it behind my back. I don't care whether you believe it or not. But I swear I didn't tell them to do it." Estelle told the same story, thinking it was the best way to defend herself.

"I'm not that kind of a person. Austin, please believe me," she pleaded with him. Her eyes were filled with sorrow.

"Estelle, I don't care what kind of woman you are. Please do not beg for my belief. In my opinion, the innocent do not need to stoop that low. If what you're saying is true, rest assured that I won't blame you. But if I find out that you're lying to me—"

"Why would I lie to you, Austin? I'll repeat it as many times as you want. I really didn't know that my friends were going to hurt them," Estelle interrupted him in desperation. At that point, she had run out of ideas to defend her innocence.

"Let's go, Gabrielle." Austin stood up without batting an eye at Estelle.

"What?—where are we going?" Gabrielle asked in confusion. Why would they leave when they hadn't even gotten to the bottom of the issue?

"We're going to the police station right now. The women who attacked you are still locked up there, right? I think asking them will get us closer to finding out the truth," Austin replied while putting one hand in his pocket. At that moment, he felt a bit of relief. But as soon as he saw Gabrielle's face, he couldn't help but feel miserable. ①

It was Estelle's fault, but she still tried so hard to look innocent. How could he let her get away with it?

"Oh, I see. Let's go ask them then." Understanding what he meant, Gabrielle put on her mask and hat.

"Austin! I—" Frightened, Estelle exclaimed, hoping to stop Austin.

Chapter 64 This Annoying Couple

Once Austin and Gabrielle asked the women involved, everything would be out in the open. Estelle believed that it would be irredeemable if the truth came from someone else. At least, if she were to confess on her own accord, Austin might be able to understand.

Because if it were proven, Estelle wouldn't be the only one facing the backlash, but the Johnson would also suffer the consequences. Sloane was lucky to get away this time.

"Estelle still has something to tell us, isn't that right?" Austin's cold eyes could freeze Estelle where she sat.

Their heated conversation caught the attention of the other customers. People stared at them with curious eyes.

They couldn't tell it was Gabrielle behind the mask, but they could clearly recognize the other two.

"Estelle, if you have anything to say, just say it. Don't waste any more of my time. Besides, I don't want others to start talking about us. I'd hate to hear any rumors." Austin tilted his head, shooting a piercing gaze at the onlookers, making them scurry to their seats in embarrassment.

"Austin, I admit it. I asked those girls to teach Sloane a lesson. Could you blame me? She seduced the man I fell in love with, but I really didn't expect that they'd hurt her. Please forgive me. I'll do anything you say!" Estelle begged, eyes watery.

"Gabrielle," Austin called, tossing his head. "What do you think? It's up to you."

Gabrielle had been quiet for a while, but she broke her silence. "Do you realize what you did to Sloane? She's unconscious, lying in a hospital bed! All because of your selfish jealousy." She sneered. "We'll decide what to do with you when Sloane wakes up. Don't you even dare think of running away. If you do, I'll make sure you'll never be able to come back to this city again. Got that?"

Feeling threatened, Estelle nodded, agreeing without hesitation. "I won't leave! I'll do what you want!"

"Let's go, Austin." Gabrielle gave Estelle a cold parting glare and walked out of the room.

She fiercely raised her head and strode confidently. But as soon as they got out, Gabrielle felt her knees going weak.

"Austin, thank you so much." She held onto him for support. "Otherwise, I wouldn't have

been able to face Estelle like that." She was able to unmask the arrogance off the wicked girl's face. Seeing Estelle tremble made her feel powerful. Gabrielle was immensely pleased with herself, and she couldn't help but smile. a

Bringing Austin was a good idea. He could easily influence people just by talking to them.

"Are you satisfied now?" Austin helped her stand. He knew she was wearing a smile of victory.

That was enough for him.

He came here to help Gabrielle settle the score with Estelle, but more than that, he wanted to make sure she was feeling alright.

"I am. I couldn't have done without you. Ahh, the perks of having big shots as friends." Gabrielle giggled, teasing him with a praise.

"Gabrielle." Austin's eyes softened, looking at her affectionately.

"Won't you let me stay with you?" "Austin, you..."

"I mean, whenever you need to keep up appearances, you can always call me for help. Then, you can take me to dinner as a treat." Austin chuckled, trying to change the

subject. Gabrielle didn't pursue the topic anymore.

"Of course, I'll invite you to dinner. You've been such a huge help, after all. Fighting fire with fire. You were able to easily make Estelle admit to her faults because she knew you were above her."

Even behind the mask, Austin could tell Gabrielle was grinning.

Gabrielle was beautiful, especially when she smiled. Her lips would curl, and her eyes would sparkle like diamonds. ①

"From now on, let me help you. You can use me as much as you want," Austin offered generously.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course." Austin smiled tenderly, making his face look softer. A warm feeling spread through Gabrielle's chest, and she turned away from him, feeling a little bit shy.

"Then, what do you want to eat?" Gabrielle asked instead.

"Hmm, I'll let you choose." Austin said, pulling her as he walked towards his car.

Gabrielle got in the car, fastened her seat belt, and began to search for a restaurant using a

phone app.

"Oh, let's try here. This place is super popular. Let's hope they have open reservations."

Gabrielle called the restaurant, and to her surprise, there was a table available. It would usually take months to reserve a spot, but talk about luck!

After parking the car, Austin and Gabrielle walked through the entrance and saw a cozy courtyard house with two floors under black tiled roofs.

The sign said, "Beacher Restaurant".

Gabrielle thought it was true to its name.

"Austin, did you know? This place has been on business for thirty years. It's always on people's recommendations."

Austin looked around. "It does look like a nice place."

The old house was settled in quiet neighborhood, housing a well-maintained yard filled with various plants and flowers. It was the very definition of simple comfort.

Less of an establishment, it felt more like home.

"It's your first time here, right? Sloane and I had only been here for a couple of times, but we enjoyed the food a lot. It was so delicious!" Gabrielle excitedly continued, "There are only six tables in this restaurant, and we can't just drop in randomly. We're so lucky that other group failed to show up!

And I know you like quiet places, so this is perfect." "I'm glad I get to try it here with you," Austin replied.

Gabrielle led Austin inside, and he followed right behind her. She continued to give him an overview of the place. Hearing Gabrielle's cheery voice and seeing her so spirited made Austin feel tremendously delighted.

They passed through the flowery yard and arrived at the hall. Their table was just up ahead, right at the corner.

"Austin, here, here!"

"Austin!"

Just as they were going to enter, a woman's voice echoed in the hallway.

Gabrielle and Austin turned around and saw a woman sitting in the cubicle next to them.

'Holly?' Gabrielle thought in surprise. Just then, another head popped out of the cover. Austin walked over to them. "Holly, Westley,

you're here too."

All of a sudden, Gabrielle's mood sank. Why did she have to see this couple again today? 7

"I knew it was you!" Holly smiled. "Are you taking out a friend to dinner?" Holly curiously stared at Gabrielle, but she didn't recognize her with a mask on. "Is she some secret celebrity? Who did you get your hands on this time?"

"Oh come on, it's not like that." Austin laughed. "I just wanted to try this place out. It's such a coincidence to meet you two here. When did you come back, Holly?" Austin shifted his gaze, fixing his eyes on Westley this time. He found him intently staring at Gabrielle. Suddenly, he felt anxious. Did Westley recognize her? 7

Chapter 65 He Was Waiting For Her

Gabrielle's body froze in horror. Westley was right in front of her. 'Of all the people in the world, ' she thought. At least her face was covered in a mask, so he wouldn't notice her.

"Ha! How cool is this, Austin?" exclaimed Holly. "I've been back only a few days, so haven't had time to call. But I'm happy see you! Let's do dinner tonight! Your friend can join us, too!" Holly seemed friendly and generous. She was ready to invite Austin's friend to dinner, without even knowing her.

No sooner had Holly invited them, than Gabrielle tugged at Austin's sleeve, whispering urgently. "Please, no, Austin," she begged. "Get us out of this dinner plan. I don't want to do this. Please."

Gabrielle was mortified. What if Westley recognized her? His eyes hadn't left her once since the group had met. It was as if he wanted to know who this woman was behind the mask, and would give anything to take it off.

He followed her hands as they tugged at Austin's sleeve. It gave him a sense of déjà vu. 'Who is she?' he thought to himself. 'Why does she seem so familiar?'

Gabrielle tried her level best to avoid making eye contact with anyone, especially Westley. Heaven forbid, he should look into her eyes and discover how guilty she really felt. That would be enough for her to bolt from there and never look back.

'On the other hand, ' Gabrielle pondered, 'Westley was out with another woman right now. So why should I have to hide the fact that I'm with someone else, too? I have every right to be here with Austin. 6

And if we're all just friends, we should certainly be able to have a meal together without any awkwardness.'

This moment of defiance was short-lived, though, as Gabrielle's anxiety of being exposed resurfaced. She tugged at Austin's sleeve a little harder this time.

"Austin... Let's go. I... I'm a little hungry," she pleaded. Even though her voice was lowered, it was apparent that she was uncomfortable with the idea of hanging out. 1

Austin already knew this way before Gabrielle said anything, so he didn't hesitate and turned to Holly and Westley. "Tonight won't be possible, Holly," he said jovially. "It's so sweet of you to ask but my friend is a bit shy with new company. I'll take a rain check, though!"

Holly didn't push the topic any further. Quite frankly, she was relieved he declined her invitation. She, too, didn't like the idea of hanging out with a stranger. Especially, when it was so apparent that Austin's date had no interest whatsoever in socializing or being remotely pleasant.

"That's alright," she replied, politely. "Maybe when my leg recovers, I'll hit you up and we'll make a plan!" Holly was in no hurry to create a new plan to hang out with Austin, while his date was around. So she decided to keep it open and vague.

"Wait, what happened to your leg?" Austin asked, concerned.

"Oh, nothing catastrophic, trust me. It happened last night. I got up to go to the bathroom, and slipped on the way. I sprained my ankle. Luckily, Westley was awake, when I called him. He rushed right over and took me to the hospital. It's just a little swollen. I'll be fine soon enough!" Holly explained, casually, as if she hadn't given it a second thought.

"Well, I'm glad it wasn't too serious and Westley was there in time to help you out." Austin smiled, as he replied. He feigned interest in Holly's leg only because he was curious about how close she was to Westley.

'Clearly, close enough,' he imagined, 'if she could call Westley in the middle of the night.' It wasn't breaking news that Westley could care less about his own wife's injuries. But he was certainly concerned about other women. 'What was he playing at?'

Did he not care about Gabrielle at all?'

Holly's late-night adventure may not have been much of an event for her, but it certainly pinched Gabrielle. She was used to Westley being uncaring and indifferent. Learning that he was so attentive and proactive with other women burned her soul.

"Hey, you okay?" Austin gently asked, seeing her frown.

"I'm fine," Gabrielle clipped through gritted teeth. "Can we go now? I'm starving." She wasn't starving. She was aching to the point of screaming. But she couldn't scream. And she couldn't let Austin see how betrayed and sad she felt.

Westley watched the entire scene in silence. He didn't feel the need to contribute to the conversation. He was only interested in one thing: the mystery woman Austin had brought along. And he derived a weird sense of pleasure from watching her squirm in his presence.

"Holly, Westley," he nodded. "See you

around. Bye!" Austin turned and guided Gabrielle by her arm to the booth he had reserved for them.

The booth had walls on three sides, creating a cocoon of privacy. They were comfortably cut off from the rest of the world. Gabrielle could relax, knowing there would be no more unwanted disturbances.

Austin pulled the chair back for Gabrielle to sit down. She followed his lead and sat down quietly. He was dying to comfort her, but couldn't find the words.

"You know, Holly and Westley—" he started.

"You don't have to say anything, Austin," she interrupted. "I don't need pacifying. I know where things stand. He can have dinner with whoever he likes and take whoever to the hospital in the middle of the night, too. Honestly, I couldn't care less." Her tone was passive aggressive, although she did her level best to sound matter-of-fact. She took off her hat and mask in a huff, as though she was repelled by them.

Austin wasn't born yesterday. It was crystal clear that Gabrielle was putting on an act. And he knew that, deep down, she was hurting.

Gabrielle still had strong feelings for Westley, whether or not he reciprocated them.

And that broke Austin's heart.

"They're just old friends, Gabrielle," he rationalized. "They're just catching up for dinner after a long time. That's normal, isn't it?" Austin was running out of ways to cheer her up. He had no interest in justifying Westley's actions. He simply wanted to make her feel better.

Her happiness meant a lot to him.

"I get it, Austin," Gabrielle muttered. "It's no big deal. Let's order." She tried to give her best I-Am-Okay smile, before she buried her embarrassed face into the menu. Thank goodness, for huge menus!

Only a fool would think there's nothing going on between Westley and Holly. Westley wouldn't hold anybody in his arms in the middle of the night at a hospital. They had to be something more than just friends. ③

'And I just asked Austin about Holly today,' she thought to herself, grudgingly. 'How embarrassing.

I guess one should never talk about anyone behind their back. Somehow, it always backfires.' Today was proof enough.

The only saving grace was that Westley didn't recognize Gabrielle. That would have

opened an entirely different can of worms.

"Gabrielle, what's wrong?" Austin asked softly, breaking her train of thought. He had noticed her eyes drift from the menu and travel faraway, where her thoughts were. It worried him.

"Oh, nothing at all," she chirped back, slightly jolted. "I'm just trying to pick something from this huge menu. Everything looks so good. I don't know what to order!" Gabrielle's voice was shrill and fake, as though she was forcing enthusiasm about a lunch she barely cared about.

"Order anything you like. I'll have the same thing," replied Austin, warmly and knowingly. Her pretentious tone and distracted disposition were telling.

'Westley really did a number on the poor girl,' he thought to himself. 'I've never seen her so scatterbrained and distracted.'

"Let's just get the specials, then," Gabrielle said, with a sigh, chucking the menu to the side of the booth. Now, she wouldn't have to focus anymore and neither would Austin chew her brain over a stupid order.

After they were done with lunch, Gabrielle and Austin decided to take a walk along the alley near the restaurant. It was a fine day to be outside, and they could digest their meal

at leisure.

But as they approached the entrance of the alley, there he was, leaning against the wall, having a smoke — Westley. Both Austin and Gabrielle stopped in their tracks, completely taken aback. Gabrielle automatically moved her hands as if to cover her face with her hat, but realized soon enough that she hadn't brought her hat along for the walk. Her face was in plain sight. And Westley had seen her.

As soon as his eyes locked with hers, Westley's face turned to stone. It was clear to him now, that the mystery woman, who was tugging at Austin's sleeve earlier, was none other than Gabrielle. The same woman that had captured his attention the whole time Austin and Holly were talking. He took one last drag, before flicking his cigarette to the ground and stubbing it with his shoe. He glared coldly at her, as if to challenge her to move a single muscle without his permission.

"Don't be scared," Austin spoke slowly and carefully, as if having approached a wild predator in the jungle. Even though he was as surprised as Gabrielle to see Westley blocking the alleyway, Austin was already on guard, ready to protect her. 'What is he even doing here?' Austin thought, mildly irritated.

It wasn't like Westley to hang around in random alleys by himself. But then, nobody

could really tell what went on in Westley's complicated mind. He was capable of doing anything.

And yet, ironically, he couldn't recognize Gabrielle through her mask before. How poetic was that?

"I'm not scared," Gabrielle muttered. Her jaw clenched and her voice trembled. But she pretended to be strong, even if it was to assure Austin she was fine.

'How could I not be afraid?' she asked herself. 'Westley is right in front of me. He knows it was me earlier. He could lose his temper any second and let me have it just to take revenge.'

Chapter 66 Stay Out

Gabrielle walked up to him and asked, "Why are you here, Westley?"

"Waiting for you. I see you have become a celebrity now. Covering up yourself like that." He was clearly mocking Gabrielle.

"Westley, there are wounds on her face." Austin stood up to him calmly.

The last thing Gabrielle needed was Austin standing up for her as this would only make Westley angrier.

"I don't need you to tell me about that. Didn't I remind you not to be so intimate with her? Gabrielle is my wife and your elder sister-in-law. People might have the wrong idea." Westley stared straight at Austin, his eyes devoid of any emotion.

Sensing that an argument was about to start between the two, Gabrielle quickly pulled Austin away.

"Austin, thank you for all your help today. You can go on ahead. Westley and I have to talk about some other personal matters." In reality, the mere thought of having a talk with Westley made Gabrielle uncomfortable. She just used it as an excuse for Austin to leave.

"Gabrielle, you know I can drive you home."

Austin insisted. He didn't want to leave her with Westley. ①

Hearing what he said, Westley sneered at him. "Don't you understand what she said? You were told to leave. I'm her husband. There is no one else more fitting to send her back."

"Well, Austin, I'll see you again soon." Gabrielle urged him to leave. She was only trying to protect Austin. Things would really get out of hand if he continued to get on Westley's nerves. Westley could be a very dangerous man when angry.

Whether the one was Westley's younger or elder cousin, it wouldn't matter to him anyway.

"Austin, I don't care if we don't see eye to eye. But I wouldn't want to ruin the relationship between the Morris and the Foster all because of your actions. I don't think your mother wants to see it either," Westley threatened him coldly.

Austin fell in silence. He knew the weight of Westley's words. The Foster had relied on the Morris for many years, and Austin's mother didn't want to see any conflict between him and Westley.

Westley could ignore Austin's mother, but Austin couldn't disrespect his own mom.

"Gabrielle, it's time for us to go." Westley grinned in victory after seeing Austin's face. He felt elated as he strode towards his car, beckoning Gabrielle to follow him.

"Goodbye Austin. Thank you for what you did today." After a moment of hesitation, Gabrielle finally walked towards Westley.

As soon as Gabrielle turned her back on him, Austin knew that he couldn't take her away from Westley. He felt entirely helpless as he punched the stone wall with his fist.

Gabrielle felt uneasy upon entering Westley's car. She held the seat belt tightly and looked nervous.

It was obvious to her that Westley was in no mood to talk. He immediately started the car and sped away.

"Westley... It wasn't a dinner date or anything like that. Austin accompanied me to see Estelle today and helped me vent my anger, so I invited him for a quick meal. " Gabrielle felt it was necessary to explain the situation to Westley just in case the misunderstanding between him and Austin would get worse. ③

Gabrielle continued to reason with him, but Westley didn't say anything.

"Westley, I hope you won't ponder much of my relationship with Austin. It's clearly not what you believe..."

"What should I think?" Westley asked in a cold tone.

"Well ... Austin and I are just friends, nothing more than that," Gabrielle said truthfully.

"You may see it this way, but it doesn't mean others will think the same." Westley thought that Gabrielle was really good at playing dumb.

"Westley, what do you mean by that?" Gabrielle really didn't understand what Westley meant, but she knew for certain that he had put a wrong interpretation on the relationship between Austin and her.

"I think you know exactly what I mean. Being close to other men when you are still my wife will damage my reputation." He still didn't want to talk too much with Gabrielle. He thought she was a poseur in the middle of a scheme.

'What Westley said didn't make any sense', Gabrielle thought. Their marriage was never made public. Everyone knew that Nellie was Westley's fiancée, but Westley had married

Gabrielle without anyone's knowledge.

"Westley, what you're saying isn't fair. There is nothing going on between me and Austin. You and Holly... Where is she?"

Gabrielle suddenly realized that Holly, who just had dinner with Westley, is nowhere to be seen.

Holly's leg was still injured. Shouldn't Westley be right by her side? How could he even spare time to talk to Gabrielle?

"Holly went back. She is not someone whom you can compare with," he sneered.

Gabrielle knew that she couldn't surpass Holly's worth in Westley's eyes. She never pictured being in a competition with her in the first place.

"It's not like me to compete with another woman," she mumbled.

Westley glanced briefly at Gabrielle's unhappy face. He decided to keep his mouth shut and continued driving in silence.

As they arrived at the Vineyard Villa, Westley cast an icy stare at Gabrielle and told her to get out of the car.

"We're here. Get out of the car."

She didn't need to be told twice. Upon pulling over the driveway, Gabrielle had already unfastened her seat belt. She pushed the door open and hopped out.

It was not until Westley started the car that Gabrielle realized something and quickly ran to the driver's window.

"Westley, did you drive me back specially?" There was a hint of expectation in her eyes.

"Gabrielle, do you honestly think I'm that idle?" Westley gave her a cold look, which dampened Gabrielle's heart full of hope.

Sure enough, Gabrielle had assumed too much. How could Westley send her back specially?

"By the way, Westley, you did ask the police to lock up the three women who hurt Sloane, right? Can you keep them imprisoned for a while? I would be grateful." Gabrielle looked at him earnestly. She knew she had no right to make a request, but this lady still wanted to try.

"They hurt you and Sloane. That lot will be locked up for as long as you want." Westley calmly glanced back at her, not quite in the mood.

"Really now? That would be great. You have my gratitude, Westley." Gabrielle smiled at

him happily.

Although her face was covered with gauze, her bright smile radiated warmth and her beauty shone through.

Westley was caught in a trance for a moment. He quickly came to his senses and started the car with a serious face. The black car immediately drove away. ③

Gabrielle remained standing on the lawn, grinning from cheek to cheek.

Now all she had to do was wait for Sloane to wake up and share the good news with her.

Neil came out and saw that Gabrielle was standing there alone. He approached her out of curiosity.

"Hello Miss Jones, I just saw Mr. Morris' car leaving. Where is he off to?" he asked inquisitively.

"Oh, Westley has some unfinished business with the company." Gabrielle didn't have the slightest clue to what Westley was going to do. She hoped that Westley had left to deal with official work, and not to attend to Holly.

"I see that Mr. Morris specially sent you back. Miss Jones, it's too hot out here. Let's go inside and I'll cut an ice watermelon for you." Neil liked Gabrielle very much. She was

beautiful and had a good character.

"That's sweet of you, thank you, Neil."
Gabrielle entered the house with Neil, both
chatty and in a good mood.

Chapter 67 A Woman Answered The Phone

Westley hadn't been back for two days. This made Gabrielle uneasy, who resorted to pacing around the house, going upstairs and downstairs to no avail.

Gabrielle drank a cup of water in the living room as she stared blankly at the lawn in the yard from the window. Upon hearing a car enter the driveway, she ran out eagerly.

A silver car was driving in, but the person who emerged from the vehicle was not Westley—it was Remy.

When Gabrielle noticed him, she felt a small surge of disappointment as her bright eyes faltered slightly, but that was immediately replaced by a smile. ↻

"Remy! Nice to see you here." Gabrielle greeted him.

Remy had noticed the flash of disappointment in Gabrielle's eyes.

He figured he had shown up at an awkward time, or maybe he wasn't the person Gabrielle had been hoping to find in her driveway.

It was plausible to think that Gabrielle was

waiting for Westley, but instead saw Remy, which would've upset her.

"Yes, nice to see you, too. I'm actually here to change your dressing into a fresh one for your wounds. Remember I told you that I'll be changing the dressings every three days? Well, if I'm right, three days have passed, so here I am at Vineyard Villa. But... is everything okay? You don't seem too happy to see me," Remy teased Gabrielle.

Gabrielle shook her head immediately. "No, are you kidding me? How can I not be happy to see you? I just hadn't expected three days to go by so fast—time sure is flying."

Without probing the topic further and voicing his suspicions, Remy turned around and took out the medicine cabinet from his car trunk.

"Gabrielle, let's go in. I'll just pretend you warmly welcomed me in your driveway because that would make me happier." Remy was only half-joking.

Gabrielle was amused by Remy's humor. "Remy, welcome to Vineyard Villa.

I take it that you are here to change the dressings for Miss Jones' wounds? What would you like to drink?" Neil came up to greet Remy and took his slippers from him.

"Just a cup of coffee would be great. Thank

you, Neil."

"Sure, I'll grab it in a moment."

"Gabrielle, do you want to change the dressings in the living room or are you comfortable in your bedroom?" Remy respectfully allowed Gabrielle to choose for herself.

"Let's go to the living room. The wounds are on my face and arms, so I don't have to lie on the bed in order to get the dressing changed." Gabrielle led Remy to the sofa in the living room.

"Is Westley at home?" Remy put down the medicine cabinet and glanced around the room.

There didn't seem to be any sign of Westley at all. It was definitely him who Gabrielle had been expecting.

"No... Westley hasn't been back for two days, actually. I'm sure he's very busy at work,"

Gabrielle said, failing to hide the disappointment in her voice. Even if she hadn't realized it, Remy had immediately noticed it.

"If you want to know what Westley is doing, why don't you take the initiative to check in with him and see for yourself? I think he will

be very happy to hear your concern. After all, he works very hard every day—many days and nights on end without rest. It's terrible," Remy said, with purposeful dramatic effect.

It was true that Westley was a workaholic, but he definitely had notions of day and time and he took all the rest and self-care he needed.

But when Gabrielle heard that Westley would work days and nights without rest, her heart sank.

'Isn't that really terrible, to be working non-stop, without sleep? Wouldn't it lead to death in extreme cases?'

"Are you joking, Dr. Remy? You don't really mean that, do you?" Gabrielle looked at Remy longingly, unable to believe him.

"Well, Gabrielle, if you don't want to believe that, just forget it. If Westley knows I said this, he'll be quite upset with me. The last thing he wants is someone else talking about him." Remy shrewdly picked his words deliberately as he silently observed the expression on Gabrielle's face. As expected, Gabrielle looked worried and uneasy.

This time, it seemed, Westley had found the right person for him; the right person who truly cared about him this much.

"If you really care about Westley, you should call him and check up on him," Remy suggested.

The relationship between two people worked if there was one between them to take initiative. If neither of them did anything and let things be as they were, how would their relationship grow and improve?

"I'd better not call Westley. I don't want to disturb his work and annoy him." Gabrielle finally made up her mind after some deliberation.

"Okay. Let me change the dressing for you first and examine the scab on the wounds. Have you touched water these days?" Leaving their personal situation aside, Remy opened the medicine cabinet, put on his mask and gloves, and began preparing to change the dressing for Gabrielle.

"I haven't touched a drop of water—I haven't even washed my face for three days! It's never been so dirty. I honestly feel as though this face is not mine anymore." Gabrielle flared up as she spoke about this. She felt like it was torture to not be able to wash her face for three days. Fortunately, she was able to wrap her arms in plastic and this allowed her to have a shower, but washing her face was out of the question.

"It's not dirty! And you can wash your face after the scab is healed, but only with clear water and don't scrub too hard. Avoid facial cleanser and skin care products." Remy reminded Gabrielle as he dealt with her wounds.

Gabrielle kept what Remy said in mind.

After changing Gabrielle's dressings, Remy left. Gabrielle continued to pace back and forth in the room for more than half an hour with her phone in her hand. She hadn't decided whether she should call Westley or not. 4

Gabrielle began to feel more worried for Westley as she recalled what Remy said.

However, she was afraid that her call would disturb Westley while he was working. This would only make him angrier. What should she do?

It was really a head-scratcher.

Finally, after much hesitation and internal conflict, Gabrielle decided to call Westley. She decided to overlook Westley's anger—his health was the most important factor and she wanted to communicate this to him.

Gabrielle sat on the bed with her fists clenched in anxiety. The call rang twice and was answered on the third ring.

"Hey, Westley..."

"Hello? Who's that?"

A woman's voice interrupted Gabrielle before she could finish her sentence.

The voice sounded familiar to Gabrielle, but she was unable to place it in that moment.

"Are you calling for Westley? He's unable to answer the phone right now. I can pass on a message if there is anything urgent." 2

"No... it's nothing." Gabrielle hung up the phone as she fingers trembled and her heart beat fast. She was shaken. She finally realized who had spoken—Holly.

It seemed that after all, there was no need for Gabrielle to worry about Westley. He had already been taken care of by Holly, who he was busy with, rather than his work.

Gabrielle recalled Holly's insistence on meeting Westley more often. Had Westley been with Holly these last couple of days?

Gabrielle began to feel upset as these thoughts ran through her mind. She didn't feel like it was her right to feel sad, because Westley was Gabrielle's nominal husband, and they didn't have a real marriage, but a fake one. It was up to Westley to choose the

woman he wanted to actually be with because he wasn't "really" married. That had nothing to do with Gabrielle. So why was she still upset?

"Miss Jones, dinner is ready downstairs. Please come when you are ready." Neil's voice rang from outside.

"Got it, Neil, thank you. I'll be right there."

Gabrielle didn't feel like being alone in her room anymore. She put down her phone, changed her clothes and went downstairs with a mask and a hat in her bag.

"Neil, my friend asked me out to dinner last minute, so I won't be having dinner at home tonight. I won't be home at all tonight, in fact, as it's already late," Gabrielle said, and then went to the garage before driving away. ②