

## Master 111

### Chapter 111

“So, does this mystery script also incorporate reflections on human nature?” In the restaurant, Brielle talked with Kenzo about the

new script he was currently working on. It was rare for Brielle to engage so openly with someone of the opposite sex, and her

genuine smiles and the clear light in her eyes were a testament to how much she was enjoying their conversation.

“Like, how should one live their life? Pursuing happiness or sticking to duties – which is the right course of action? Is indulgence

the correct path? Should we blindly follow the truths. professed by experts? Does an individual have the right to make their own

choices? Should the majority opinion dictate the political narrative? Your previous scripts touched on these themes, but my

favorite has to be the one from last year.”

She had watched that drama series the previous year, not merely to flatter him, but because she had thoroughly researched and

admired it.

Kenzo looked up, his fingers idly tracing the rim of his mug, “I liked that script too. I didn’t even want to adapt it into a TV show at

first; I felt like no actor could embody the protagonists the way I envisioned them. Luckily, the casting turned out to be a success

in the end.”

“In my eyes, you are a true artist,” Brielle remarked, echoing the conclusion she had reached back in the library.

Kenzo, hailed as a genius scriptwriter, had many sought-after scripts under his belt, each selling for millions. During interviews,

he had even confessed that his adapted TV scripts were not his most satisfying works; the ones he valued most had been

destroyed by his own hands.

He spoke these words with a nonchalant smile to the cameras, having created a world, seen its beauty, and then, with a touch of

pride and fulfillment, razed it to the ground.

Even if Kenzo hadn't been born into the prestigious Barnes family, his character would likely be the same – like a romantic

outlaw or the grandeur of ruins.

He wrote of his ideals; though they might be impoverished, mundane, or outdated, they were ideals nonetheless, lending him an

extraordinary allure that was independent of his lineage.

"That's why you've never changed," Brielle mused, stirring her coffee as her eyelashes fluttered down.

Her phone rang at that moment, her brow furrowed upon seeing Spencer's name flashing across the screen, and without

hesitation, she hit decline.

Spencer was relentless, calling again immediately. He's like a lion in fury, if Brielle were before him now, he would have been

hard-pressed not to strangle her.

Just a minute earlier, his drinking buddies had tagged him in a group chat, bombarding him with photos of Brielle dining with

Kenzo.

Enraged, Spencer's face turned crimson as he kicked over the coffee table at home. He couldn't fathom how this woman, whom

he had dismissed, could be associated with Kenzo, who,

despite his amiable demeanor, was innately aloof.

Fuming, Spencer learned the diner's location and drove there, intent on confronting the presumptuous woman who, in his eyes,

had become too brazen because of his previous leniency.

Unaware of Spencer's approach, Brielle rose to settle the bill only to be informed that it had been taken care of.

Kenzo waited by the door, casually draping his jacket over one arm, "I've got a membership card here, gets me a 20% discount.

No sense in not using it."

A smile broke across Brielle's face. Mr. Kenzo couldn't possibly care about saving a few dollars on a meal. It was just his

gentlemanly instincts that wouldn't allow a lady to pay.

“Then let me transfer you the money, minus the discount,” she offered.

Kenzo’s lips curved in a gentle smile, “No need. Next time I’m working on a variety show script, just give me some feedback,

alright?”

“Absolutely,” Brielle agreed readily, “I’m more than happy to help out.”

As they were speaking, a flashy sports car pulled up nearby, causing Brielle’s heart to skip a beat.

Spencer emerged from the car, his face a mask of fury. Spotting the pair chatting amiably, he strode over.

“Brielle!” he bellowed, his face contorting with rage, “Just how many times do you plan on making a fool out of me? Have you no

shame?”

He turned his scornful gaze to Kenzo, his voice dripping with sarcasm, “You don’t really think Kenzo would fall for you, do you?

Ever heard about Tiffanie and him? You think he gave Tiffanie a second glance, even after all she did for him? Let’s get real, he

wouldn’t bother with you even if you threw yourself at him. Don’t get too carried away.”

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Brielle’s expression darkened, but before she could utter a word, Kenzo interjected with a counter. “Mr. Spencer, do you always

speak so harshly to your fiancée?”

The word “fiancée” struck a nerve in Spencer. The disgust and disdain on his face were as clear as day, as if Brielle were some

piece of trash, disgusting to even glance at.

“Brielle is just trash. She deserves nothing more than my contempt. Kenzo, don’t tell me you’ve grown a soft spot for her? There

are a million women pining for you. Can you even keep track? And remember how Tiffanie got turned down by you in public?

Then she went on a spree, living it up. It didn’t seem to affect you one bit. Mr. Kenzo, your heart is as hard as stone. What right

do you have to judge me?”

Spencer said this with a smug tone, not feeling the slightest bit ashamed for embarrassing his own cousin. In his eyes, Tiffanie

was no better—had she any self-respect, she wouldn’t have stirred up so many scandals. She and Brielle were cut from the

same cloth, utterly lost without

a man.

“Having dinner with Brielle, don’t you ever think of Tiffanie? They’re the same kind of woman, groveling at men’s feet, desperate

for attention—it’s sickening.”

Spencer was speaking out of sheer anger, his words as harsh as could be. By the time he regained his composure, Brielle’s slap

had already connected.

“Smack!”

It wasn’t the first time Spencer had been struck, but this slap carried an unusual force. His cheek stung fiercely, and blood

trickled from the corner of his mouth. He felt a bitter mix of self-pity and hatred as he touched his cheek, his chest trembling with

rage.

This bitch had hit him again—what right did she have? Wasn’t it her own sordid actions that shouldn’t be spoken of?

Underneath the thick hate, there was an unmistakable twinge of heartache.

Brielle withdrew her hand, “Had enough, Spencer? Who I sleep with is none of your business. We’ll annul this engagement

sooner or later. Why the temper tantrum? Are you disgusted by me but also waiting for your turn? Too bad, you’re not even on

my radar. You’ve been out of the game from the start, got it?”

Out of the game—such humiliating terms.

Brielle blew on her palm, which had reddened from the force of the slap, then turned to Kenzo.

Kenzo’s eyes still held a trace of surprise, probably not expecting her to resort to violence.

“Sorry for the scene, Kenzo. For the reality show script, feel free to contact me anytime. But I’ve got other matters to attend to, so

I’ll be leaving.”

Kenzo chuckled, feigning a cough, “Sure, I’ll get in touch.”

Brielle nodded and, without a glance at an astonished Spencer, got into her mid-range car and drove away.

Spencer, touching his face, stared at Kenzo, and wiped the blood from his lip with a sneer, “To fuss over a woman who’s been

played, Kenzo, I thought you had higher standards.”

Kenzo found the situation amusing, as Spencer desperately slandered Brielle like a petulant child. The more he seemed to want

something, the more he pretended he didn’t. Interesting indeed.

“Brielle is actually quite intriguing,” Kenzo remarked casually.

“Ha, then you must find Tiffanie intriguing as well. Don’t think I’m clueless about you two.”

Kenzo had no interest in tangling with such a child, resting a hand on the lapel of his jacket, “I am not familiar with Tiffanie.” To

blame Tiffanie’s downfall on him was a miscarriage of justice.

“Please.”

Spencer scoffed, turning his gaze away, “Anyway, Brielle is my fiancée, and even if you two tear up the bed sheets, it won’t

matter. Unless I call off the engagement, you’re nothing but a homewrecker.”

Kenzo had reached his car when he heard this. He paused, “Mr. Spencer, you should know that as writers, we often lack a moral

compass. Sometimes, for the sake of inspiration, we’re willing to do anything. I haven’t tried the role of a ‘homewrecker’ yet, but if

Brielle is offering the opportunity, I wouldn’t rule it out.”

Spencer was left speechless, fuming as he watched Kenzo’s car disappear into the distance. With a cold expression and for

reasons unknown even to himself, Spencer dialed Faith.

“Mom, I’ve made up my mind. I want to marry Brielle, immediately, right away.”

When Faith received the call, she thought her son had lost his mind. She glanced at her phone several times, double-checking

that it was indeed Spencer on the line before she managed to calm herself down.

She had also received those pictures and was pondering ways to take out Brielle.

The Sunflower Orphanage sprang to her mind. She had signed a five-year contract, and three years had already passed. If she

were to break the agreement prematurely, she would have to compensate Brielle with a hefty sum of two hundred million dollars.

That was too costly for her, but the orphanage was managed by an aging director and was home to a bunch of naive kids. To call

them vulnerable would be an understatement. She knew that with a little money, she could send some thugs to make life a living

hell for everyone at the orphanage.

Brielle dared to embarrass her son, and Faith was determined she would pay the price. But now, Spencer was insisting they get

married as soon as possible, and Faith thought she was hallucinating.

“Don’t even think about it. That slut has no place in our family. Spencer, I’d rather you be with Lillian. At least she’s obedient and

treats your word as gospel. But Brielle? Her scandals are all over the social circles. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is

for me? Everyone’s been asking me how I plan to handle this mess at our tea parties.”

The influence of the Barnes family in their circles was not to be underestimated, and now the scandal also involved Kenzo from

the Barnes family.

Faith had been with a group of high-society ladies for afternoon tea when she received the photos, and the embarrassment had

driven her to make an early exit. She had never been so eager to distance herself from the plague that was Brielle.

Spencer snapped out of his fury under his mother’s scolding and quickly backtracked, “Mom, I was just blinded by anger. I

couldn’t swallow my pride, so I thought maybe marrying her could be a form of revenge.”

Faith scoffed, her eyes flashing with cunning, "I've already figured out how to get back at her. Leave this to me. As for the

engagement, I'll talk to your father. If he drops his opposition, your engagement to Brielle will be off in no time." If it hadn't been

for Ryan's intervention last time, the engagement would have been called off already..

While Spencer felt a wave of relief, there was an undercurrent of regret, as if he was about to lose something important. He tried

to focus on Lillian, to recall the moments they had shared, and finally nodded in agreement, "Alright."

After returning to her apartment, Brielle learned about the photos from a message sent by Aubree.

Aubree was as bold as ever.

[Damn, Bri, is that Kenzo?! Do you know how hard he is to get a hold of? Tons of people in our circles are after him for his TV

scripts. I heard he's so obsessed with his work that he once secluded himself in the wilderness for a year. He doesn't even

attend social gatherings. And you got to dine with him?)

Kenzo was indeed the type to sacrifice anything for his art – his time, his relationships, even his life. Once, to craft a crime drama

script, he even went undercover in a South African

organization. Kenzo's understanding of life transcended the ordinary; he sought fulfillment on a spiritual level.

[First Max, now Kenzo, each one a better catch than Spencer, that unlucky charm. You need to kick Spencer to the curb; he's

been worn out by Lillian and can't satisfy you anymore.]

Brielle blushed at Aubree's brazen words. She glanced at the photos Aubree had sent – the angles were tricky, making it look

like there was something between her and Kenzo.

Remembering Spencer's comments about Kenzo and Tiffanie, Brielle quickly asked Aubree for the scoop.

Aubree hadn't heard about any entanglement between the two, and Tiffanie had always been the same since she came of age,

never known to have confessed to anyone.

But one thing was certain: Tiffanie knew how to party hard, scaring off the young heirs in their circles.

There was a time when a family elder suggested a marriage alliance with Tiffanie, but the prospective groom had theatrically

threatened to take his own life to break off the engagement, which eventually fizzled out.

Confused by the whole affair, Brielle decided to focus on her work instead. Just as she was about to boot up her computer, she

saw a message from Max. As usual, it was brief.

[Documents.]

For some reason, Brielle felt that his mood was off.

## Chapter 114

Brielle was familiar with the company Book and wasn't quite sure if Max's interest was intentional or accidental. After all, Book's

operations were strikingly similar to Alpha's. Was he considering investing in Book? If that was the case, Alpha was definitely out

of the running. Ryan's little show was over before it even began.

The thought of Ryan's misfortune brought a wicked smile to Brielle's face. She spent an evening gathering information on Book,

but her schadenfreude was cut short when she saw Alivia's name among the related personnel. The rumors online seemed to be

true—Max was ready to spend a fortune for his lady love. It was probably the first time in Max's career that his heart weighed in

on a business decision.

Brielle felt a brief pang of jealousy, but she shook it off and put together a comprehensive file.

The next morning, after rubbing her tired eyes, she sent the file off. Even after a long nap, there was no response from Max.

Not wanting to wait passively for a message, she decided to keep herself busy. After tidying up her apartment, she glanced at

the fridge. It was as empty as a ghost town, which gave her the perfect excuse to head out.

Slipping into her jacket, Brielle was about to leave when she caught a local news update about Sunflower Children's Home. Her

heart skipped a beat, and she rushed out to her car.

The home wasn't in the heart of Beaconsfield but rather on the outskirts—a two-hour drive



away.

She left at seven and arrived by nine. The familiar sight of the long, sycamore-lined street leading to the home, with its warmly lit

windows, brought a sense of warmth to her heart.

Parking outside, Brielle noticed several older kids sitting on the steps, wiping away tears. Upon seeing Brielle, they put up a

cautious front, arms spread out as if to block the entrance.

“Who are you? What do you want?”

During her first year on the job, she had visited the home. The children had been so welcoming, but now all she saw in their eyes

was wariness. She had rushed over without any sweets and had to explain, “I’m looking for the director. What happened here?”

One of the boys, with his rosy cheeks stained by tears, realized Brielle meant no harm and his eyes reddened further. “Some

drunk guys showed up and started shoving us around. Thank goodness the director shielded us, otherwise...” His voice trailed

off into sobs.

Brielle hurried inside and saw the director, Mark, in his seventies, bandaged arm and all, consoling a crying toddler with an

apple.

“Mark!” She called out and quickly strode over.

Mark stood up, and his eyes lit up when he saw her, “Brielle, what brings you here?”

She felt a lump in her throat, noticing a bunch of roses by the window—a tradition of the director, who loved to grow roses in the

plot behind the home, and kept fish in a small pond. This haven of tranquility was her personal utopia.

Even in the toughest of times, when meals were scarce, and despite witnessing many so-called elites with ulterior motives, this

place remained a beacon of beauty. That was why Brielle never hesitated to donate her monthly salary, keeping just enough for

living expenses. She would even sign a dubious contract with Faith for the sake of this kind man and his children.

"I saw the news and couldn't rest easy until I checked on you."

Mark chuckled and gestured to a chair, "It was nothing serious, just a few drunks causing trouble. They've been taken away and

won't come back. Brielle, you're even more beautiful than the last time I saw you."

"Lillian was here just a moment ago. You girls, always worrying me. You should've called before coming."

Brielle's stomach churned at the mention of Lillian's name. The director thought they were still as close as sisters, speaking with

such affection.

"Lillian was so thoughtful, even brought her boyfriend along."

Brielle glanced at the pile of gifts on the table, undoubtedly from Lillian, who always had impeccable presentation. Compared to

Brielle, Lillian indeed seemed more considerate, but Brielle didn't care, nor did she want to discuss dirty secrets in front of the

director.

"Director, it's not safe for you to be here alone. Maybe I should look into hiring some security guards."

Just as she finished speaking, the children's excited voices could be heard from the entrance.

"Lillian, you're back!"

"Are those guys with you bodyguards?"

Their innocent voices were filled with joy and a touch of coaxing. Then came Lillian's comforting words, "Yes, after tonight's

scare, I was worried about your safety. So, I arranged for some security guards to come. They'll protect you if anyone tries to

cause trouble again."

Of course, Lillian had enlisted Spencer's help for the bodyguards.

## Chapter 115

"Lillian, you're the best, seriously. All these treats and even got us bodyguards to watch over us," the children's voices chimed

with unrestrained joy.

"We love you the most, Lillian."

The affection from kids was always pure and simple. Showing them kindness, and they would return it twofold.

Lillian stepped through the door, Spencer trailing behind her. When Spencer had heard that Lillian wanted to visit the orphanage,

his heart had melted. She was always so kind and pure-hearted, never forgetting her roots even after finding her own slice of

happiness, far from the days of the orphanage.

As Lillian entered the hall, her gaze immediately landed on the woman sitting across from the director.

“Bri?” she paused, then slowly approached, “Bri, you’re here too?”

Brielle’s lips curled into a sardonic smile upon seeing Lillian’s familiar face.

All the drama with Emily and Sophia was Lillian’s doing, yet here she was, playing the role of the devoted friend. With the

director present, Brielle wasn’t keen on causing a scene.

Mark glanced between the two women, his face beaming with pride, “You’ve both grown up so much. Especially you, Lillian,

even bringing a boyfriend along. Bri, you should take a break from work now and then, think about settling down yourself.”

Spencer hadn’t expected to bump into Brielle here. After a moment of discomfort, he puffed up with pride. After all, it wasn’t he

who had been unfaithful, and he wanted Brielle to see what it was like to have a man who spoiled you rotten.

Like now, for instance, accompanying Lillian to the orphanage late at night and arranging for security through his contacts.

Meanwhile, Brielle was on her own. What did it matter if she had all those men? They were just toying with her, tossing her aside

like yesterday’s news once they were done.

A surge of satisfaction ran through Spencer, and he casually wrapped his arms around Lillian. “Mark, you have nothing to worry

about. Lillian’s a gem, and I’ll take good care of her.”

The director, oblivious to the underlying tension, was all the more reassured. “Lillian’s been sensible since she was a child. She’d

always stick close to Bri, who was mature beyond her years and so quiet. There were folks interested in adopting her back then,

but when they wouldn't take Lillian too, Bri refused. She could've left for a new family, but she stayed here for years, all for

Lillian's sake, until the Haywoods came along."

Director Mark seemed lost in the past, a nostalgic look crossing his face.

"Bri was in tears, insisting the Haywoods take Lillian too. They were hesitant, naturally. They'd finally found their own daughter,

why take on another? But Bri stood her ground, and in the end,

Lillian went with her. I was worried Lillian might be mistreated with the Haywoods, but Bri took good care of her."

He patted Brielle's shoulder as he spoke.

"Bri, you've done well. You never complain, no matter how tough it gets. Now that Lillian's found her place, I worry about you.

When you find someone, bring him by. I'll vet him for you."

Lillian squirmed with discomfort at the director's words. She never expected such a candid acknowledgment of her debt to Brielle

in front of Spencer. It was unsettling, even if it was the truth. And Spencer, feeling the weight of his arm around Lillian as if it were

suddenly scalding, slowly withdrew it.

Brielle, indifferent to the atmosphere between them, looked at Mark with touched eyes.

"Don't worry, director. When I find my other half, I'll be sure to bring him to you."

The director nodded, "You've always been reliable. I know you've taken good care of Lillian after bringing her to the Haywoods.

But don't neglect yourself, Bri. You deserve happiness too."

Brielle fought back the tears, touched, "I've indeed looked after Lillian well. Her boyfriend here, I had a hand in that match."

The director looked surprised, then turned to Spencer, "Ah, so Bri introduced you two? Then I'm sure he's a fine man."

Brielle couldn't help but smirk, sensing an unspoken irony between her and the director, "Of course, they're perfect for each

other."

A perfect match indeed – a jerk and a slut.

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Hearing this, the faces of Lillian and Spencer darkened. Lillian felt like she was being roasted over an open flame, the heat

unbearable. Her hand, hanging limply at her side, suddenly clenched, her nails digging into her palm.

That bitch, she had the audacity to insinuate things about her in front of the director.

And the director, he always favored Brielle. Lillian regretted splurging on all those gifts for nothing. Was he blind? Couldn't he see

that Brielle hadn't brought anything? And yet he still sided with her?

Taking a deep breath, Lillian maintained a perfect smile on her face. "Mark, these are two bodyguards I've hired for you, so that

what happened tonight won't happen again," she said.

Mark nodded. "That's very thoughtful of you, Lillian."

Sensing the conversation finally shift to herself, Lillian quickly gestured towards the items on the table. "These are for the kids. I

was in a rush this time and didn't bring much, but I'll have someone deliver more when I get back."

After speaking, she turned to Spencer and playfully grabbed his sleeve, "Spencer, what do you say?"

Spencer reflexively glanced at Brielle, knowing she had long seen through his relationship with Lillian, but this was the first time

they were flirting so openly in front of her. At the Haywood family dinner, they had been restrained, but now it seemed they were

laying it all out in the

open.

He couldn't quite understand his own feelings; on one hand, he wanted to crush Brielle, on the other, he toyed with the idea that

if Brielle showed him any sign of weakness with her eyes, he wouldn't be opposed to playing along.

Brielle wasn't looking at him. Instead, she was helping Mark unpack the items on the table. She adeptly tore open the packaging

and started categorizing the items.

He felt a surge of irritation, “Brielle, you came to visit Mark and didn’t think to bring anything? What’s with the sudden eagerness?”

Brielle paused, thinking Spencer could really be emotionally dim at times. She smiled, “The Haywood family raised Lillian for years, and I introduced you to her. Her money is essentially mine. That bracelet on her wrist? My brother spent a million on it.

Why, can’t I help unwrap a few thousand dollars’ worth of gifts?”

Spencer darkened as he glanced at the bracelet on Lillian’s wrist. Lillian awkwardly tried to hide the bracelet, but it only made her look more conspicuous.

Brielle had no intention of letting them off easy, especially since Spencer had been the one to make the nasty comment first.

“Besides, the villa Lillian is living in now, don’t forget that was a gift from Uncle Max to me. I told her to move out within three

days, but she didn’t comply. You

just reminded me, tonight I’ll contact an agent to sell the house. Make sure the property is legally transferred to my name,

otherwise, I’ll have to go to Uncle Max for an explanation.”

Spencer was just venting his frustration, but Brielle had left him speechless with her retorts. Even Lillian felt the awkwardness.

Lillian hadn’t realized that the villa was a gift from Max to Brielle. When Brielle asked her to move out, she found it ridiculous;

after all, Spencer had bought it for her, what right did Brielle have to kick her out?

Lillian’s face turned pale. Why would Max give Brielle such an extravagant gift? That villa was worth over twenty million, more

than most people make in a lifetime.

Lillian’s chest heaved as she glared at Spencer, realizing he didn’t refute Brielle’s claims—it must be true. Resentment flickered in

her eyes. Why did people still help Brielle? Wasn’t her promiscuity well known in their circle?

Her lips trembled, and she couldn’t meet Mark’s gaze.

Mark stopped unwrapping the gifts, his irritation evident as he stared at Spencer, "Spencer, your words were too harsh. I'm

happy as long as Brielle is willing to visit me. And the orphanage has been receiving anonymous donations for years now, so

we're no longer as destitute as before. The children are well-fed and warm. Plus, it was Brielle who took Lillian away back then,

and seeing her thrive now, she should be grateful. As her boyfriend, how could you speak to Brielle like that?"

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Spencer felt like he had just shot himself in the foot. And to make matters worse, Brielle wasn't done yet. "Spencer, if you find the

house transfer too bothersome, then get a realtor yourself, But I want the money from the sale in my account within a week."

After she finished, she turned towards Mark, her face earnest. "Mark, do you remember the land dispute the orphanage had back

then? The agreement's got two more years, and I worry someone might play dirty. We should start saving and scouting for a new

location."

Mark remembered that agreement all too well. If it hadn't been for Brielle, they would have been kicked out on their ears three

years ago. That incident made Brielle give up a lot, something that weighed heavily on his conscience. As the director, it was his

responsibility to secure the future of the children in his care, but somehow, that burden had shifted onto Brielle's shoulders.

Who else but Brielle would agree to spend over two million to secure a future for the orphanage?

Mark was at a loss for words. Should he nobly refuse? But if he did, where would that leave the kids once their time here was

up? He personally couldn't care less about material possessions; he could live under a bridge for all his life if it came to that. But

these kids were growing, and they couldn't be expected to rough it out on the streets.

He knew Brielle was all about loyalty and honor. She never forgot that to save her, he had sold his own house, and in the

process, even his wife had left him.

Mark patted her shoulder, his eyes brimming with tears, "These kids can never repay you." Compared to the millions Brielle

offered, the few thousand bucks' worth of trinkets Lillian bought were peanuts. Lillian, wearing her million-dollar bracelet, thought

she could win hearts with her petty favors? Not a chance.

Lillian's face had turned an ugly shade of green, her teeth practically grinding to dust. But what could she say? That she wouldn't

move? The villa was a gift from Max to Brielle. She had no right to stay.

When Brielle had given her three days to move out, Lillian hadn't taken it seriously. Now that Brielle was using Max to push her

out, neither she nor Spencer dared object.

The more arrogant they had been before, the more pathetic they were now. Even Spencer couldn't find anything to say, just

feeling utterly embarrassed.

Brielle didn't have time to deal with these two clowns; she turned back to help Mark with the presents. Not wanting to stick

around and further humiliate themselves, Lillian and Spencer made a quick excuse to leave.

Mark, not one to hold a grudge against the young, saw them out personally.

Once in the car, an eerie silence fell between Lillian and Spencer. It was only after they had driven some distance that Lillian,

with red-rimmed eyes, finally spoke up. "Did Max really gift

that villa to Brielle?"

Spencer, already in a foul mood, couldn't help but respond sharply. "On the first day Max took charge at Dorsey International, I

happened to walk right into trouble, and the villa was then gifted to Brielle as a ceremonial present."

A ceremonial present?

Lillian trembled with envy. She had been Spencer's secret lover for years, bending to his every whim, and all she got was this

villa. And Max just casually gifted one to Brielle as a ceremonial present?

VANE



The phrase “ceremonial present” felt like a slap to her face, leaving her emotionally bruised and battered.

“How could Max give such an extravagant gift? What if they’re...”

Spencer was quickly losing patience. “Extravagant? He was raking in foreign capital on Wall Street by the time he was sixteen or

seventeen. Twenty million is pocket change to him. He’s the president of Dorsey International, but nobody knows exactly how

much he’s earned

abroad.”

The young Dorsey crowd admired Max to no end. He was an industry benchmark, a towering figure they could only aspire to.

When someone stands too tall, envy gives way to awe.

Spencer’s words only fueled the fire in Lillian’s heart, spreading heat to her limbs, her eyes burning with desire. If Max were to

take notice of her, even the stars in the sky wouldn’t be out of reach.

## Chapter 118

She had long harbored the ambition to cling to Max’s coattails, and Spencer’s words only made her want to hasten her stride.

“Max has such a standing in the business world. Maybe you should set up a dinner to schmooze him a bit,” she suggested,

hoping to imply her own presence at the meal.

But Spencer’s next comment was like a gavel sentencing her to a grim fate. “Even if I was to arrange a meal, it’s Brielle that

should be my plus one. The rest of the Dorsey family can mess around all they want, just not in his line of sight. If I were to take

you out for dinner with him, I might as well kiss my career at Dorsey International goodbye.”

All color drained from Lillian’s face, leaving her seething with silent rage. Was she doomed to be nothing more than a mistress,

forever hidden in the shadows? She couldn’t accept that. She wouldn’t.

Spencer, sensing the sting of his words, tried to soften the blow, “Let’s talk about it after I call off my engagement with Brielle.”

But this did little to comfort Lillian. She had been feeling insecure about Spencer's recent aloofness, especially his odd behavior

toward Brielle. "Spencer, are you really going to break off your engagement with Brielle?" she asked, her voice quivering, tears

threatening to spill

over.

Hearing this, a brief panic flickered through Spencer's heart. Deep down, he knew he wasn't ready to let Brielle go. She had

always been so supportive and obedient, and now her disdain was like a slap in the face. Had all her past affection been a lie?

Was it possible she had never loved him? The very thought was humiliating.

"Yes. The engagement will be off in two months, tops," he declared with false certainty.

Lillian bit her lip, nodding pitifully. "Then I'll wait for you," she whispered.

Spencer avoided her eyes, gripping the steering wheel so tightly his knuckles turned white.

Meanwhile, Brielle had just finished sorting through the gifts.

"Mark, you can distribute these to the kids tomorrow. I've organized everything. Here's the food, and there's the clothing."

Mark glanced at the clock on the wall. "It's late, and you're by yourself. Why not stay the night?"

"Thanks, but I've got work in the morning."

Not wanting to push further, Mark retrieved a few links of homemade sausage from the fridge. "I made these for the holidays.

Take some with you."

Mark was a jack-of-all-trades, teaching the kids to make all kinds of delicious food. Back when Brielle lived there, times had

been tough, and each holiday was a feast to make up for the

scarcity.

Back then, wealthy folks would come to adopt, making a big show of it for the media, proclaiming their generosity. What

happened to the kids afterward, though, the media didn't care to follow up on.

"Thanks," Brielle said, taking the bag of sausages.

By the time she returned to her apartment, it was past midnight. She quickly washed up, checked her emails and direct

messages, but there was still no word from Max. No feedback on the documents either.

The next morning, she barely arrived at the office before being summoned to a meeting on the top floor.

Max was the last to arrive, and with him there, Ryan was conspicuously absent.

William adjusted his glasses and cheerfully broached the topic of the Alpha project. "Max, you've been briefed by Brielle, I

presume. What's your take?"

Max barely lifted an eyelid. "Who proposed investing in Alpha?"

Everyone in the room knew he was asking knowingly, but no one dared to answer. After all, allowing someone who had been

dismissed to enter the boardroom was a breach on their part. Under their pleading gazes, William softly responded, "Ryan visited

the boardroom earlier, claiming father's approval. He's got a cozy relationship with Alpha's president and suggested they might

let Dorsey International invest first."

"In the future, let security keep such individuals out. If I've dismissed someone, I don't want them back here causing a stir."

His tone was indifferent, dismissing Ryan as if he were nothing.

Brielle, seated not far away, couldn't help but smirk at Max's imperious and strategic demeanor. To others, it might seem

detestable, but to her, it held a certain allure. It was a shame, though, that such a cold person could still bend his principles for

Alivia.

Would The Priest ultimately be forced to walk among mortals?

She lowered her gaze, choosing not to engage in the conversation at hand.

The other executives didn't dare to make a peep in Max's presence, knowing full well the weight of the shares he held in his iron

grip. Cross him, and you'd be packing your bags faster than you could say "Pink slip." Hadn't Ryan been the perfect cautionary

tale? If Max could cast aside his own flesh and blood without a second thought, the others stood no chance of mercy.

William, savvy as ever, didn't bother to defend Ryan, instead smoothly changing the subject. "Max. I hear your trip abroad is

about courting that company. Book?"

Brielle's ears perked up instantly, curious as to how Max would respond.

Max casually flipped through the documents on the table, his expression unaltered. "Hmm, it's under consideration."

Patrick, standing beside him, almost reflexively glanced at Brielle, then with a businesslike demeanor, fired up the projector.

"Ladies and gentlemen, please direct your attention here. This is all the intel on Book. It's a wildly popular app overseas,

currently valued at a cool billion dollars."

Word on the street about Book had already seeped out over the last few days, and the media, which didn't dare spill much ink on

Max, had a field day dissecting Alivia's side of the story.

Discovering that Alivia was a shareholder and that the company's CEO was a senior colleague from her research institute had

the public thinking Max was ready to throw down a fortune for his lady love. Thus, the executives in the meeting room, ever

opportunistic, eagerly began to brown-nose.

"The CEO of Book is impressively young, and the user base they've built in less than six months is remarkable. If this momentum

continues, it's going to be a staple on everyone's smartphone."

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"If they're seeking funds, Dorsey International must be in the running."

“With a market cap of a billion dollars, the investment figure will likely be in that ballpark. It’s a sure bet.”

Even if it tanked, what did it matter if Max spent a few billion to woo a woman? His happiness was paramount, and no one could

fathom the depths of his wealth.

Besides, the rise of Book was nothing short of meteoric, almost impossible to duplicate. If Dorsey International could snag this

project early on, the return could easily multiply tenfold, or even a hundredfold.

The room buzzed with chatter, but Brielle sat quietly to the side, her lashes lowered, absorbed in thought.

Patrick, ignoring the hubbub, dutifully displayed Book’s details on the large screen. “Several venture capital firms are already in

talks with Book. By early next month, after the CEO meets with Ms. Alivia again, we’ll need to lock down the investment amount.

I’ll circulate the details

for everyone’s consideration. Until then, feel free to weigh in.”

Brielle glanced at the information on the screen, much of which she had compiled. The founder of Book was indeed formidable,

backed by a mentor who was a titan in the academic world and supported by a lady of Alivia’s standing. Its potential seemed

limitless.

Brielle’s gaze dropped as she noticed the room’s volume dip suddenly. Then silence fell, and she looked up to find Max’s gaze

resting on her. Unsure of what had transpired, she stood, feeling awkward, “The founder is, indeed, remarkable.” With that half-

hearted remark, she sat

back down.

The atmosphere grew subtly charged, and Brielle wondered if she’d misspoken.

As the meeting dispersed, she hoped to slip out unnoticed with the crowd of executives, but then Max’s quiet tap-tap on the

table halted her. “Stay behind.” The voice was very soft, and only she, walking at the back, could hear it.

She lingered to close the door, then faced him. "Mr. Dorsey, I've compiled the Book information thoroughly. Is there something unsatisfactory?"

"Are you upset?"

A pang hit Brielle's chest, a sour twist. It was rare for him to notice the mood swings of her, but what right did she have to be

upset? Wasn't she just a little canary he kept?

Max stood and as he passed her, he drew her gently into his embrace. "Come to my office."

It's brief embrace, followed by a release. Like a bee sting straight to the heart.

Brielle stood rooted, waiting until the room emptied before she collected herself. Did she like Max? She wasn't sure, maybe it

was just a woman's instinctual response. She tried to suppress such instincts, knowing sometimes that wise surrender was

better than blind persistence.

## Chapter 120

When Brielle entered Max's office, the rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee greeted her.

Max didn't drink instant coffee. There was a small tea room in the office, and just around the corner from the floor-to-ceiling

windows was the lounge. At that moment, he sat in a chair, one hand adorned with the rosary resting on the marble tabletop, his

eyes calm as the snow settled at the corners.

"Mr. Dorsey." She called out to him, trying to shake off the sting of anxiety that had settled in her heart.

Max slid a folder across the desk, his hands folded neatly in front of him, all business. "You weren't telling the truth in the

conference room."

Brielle felt a wave of frustration wash over her. She was struggling not to let his demeanor affect her, but he seemed all too

composed. "How do you know I wasn't telling the truth, Mr. Dorsey? The executives were all in favor of investing in Book, and

Ms. Alivia is one of its shareholders."

"Do you think my investment has anything to do with Alivia?"

“Doesn’t it?”

She regretted her retort instantly, feeling as if she had lost her fundamental ability to judge the situation. Before she could

salvage the conversation, the office door swung open, and Patrick, along with two other executives, made their way in,

seemingly ready for an impromptu meeting. The two executives, sensing the mood, settled on a sofa to one side, waiting quietly

for Max to finish up.

Max didn’t glance their way but instead furrowed his brow at Brielle, “Why would you think there’s a connection?”

Brielle noticed the executives casting curious glances but without much surprise. They probably would never guess that she and

Max were entangled in an affair.

Brielle pursed her lips, feeling once again that singing a solo seemed too pitiful when she was the only one in the act. “If Mr.

Dorsey’s interest isn’t because of Ms. Alivia, then this project is indeed up for debate. If you really want my opinion, I suggest we

don’t invest.”

Her blunt honesty took the seated executives by surprise, and they almost wished they hadn’t entered, now facing the potential

wrath of the president.

Brielle was bold, daring to speak to the president in such a manner and suggesting they shouldn’t invest. What did her

suggestion matter?

Internally criticizing her, they maintained a composed exterior, as any high-ranking official at Dorsey International would.

The situation was clear. Brielle had irritated the president, and if they sided with him, perhaps a hefty year-end bonus would be

secured. The executives exchanged glances and feigned a

cough before speaking up.

“Ms. Haywood, these matters aren’t so simple,” the head of HR began with an air of

righteousness. “Book has only been established for less than a year and has a stellar research team backing it. It deserves

investment, and we can’t let your personal feelings cloud our judgment.”

Following his lead, the Finance Director chimed in, “Indeed, investment is serious business, not to be swayed by emotions. The

president has sought your counsel privately, surely valuing your expertise. You shouldn’t be capricious.”

As they finished, Max closed the file in front of him, his voice even, “Did I ask for your input?”

Having tried to brown-nose and failed, the executives shrank back, wishing they could disappear.

Max pushed his chair back slightly, his gaze fixed on Brielle, “You suggest we don’t invest. What’s your reasoning?”

Brielle thought of the information she had seen on the large screen earlier and decided to be forthright. “The reason is the

founder’s willingness to give up control clauses. Isn’t that concerning enough? If the founder doesn’t control the company, who

will dictate its future? Dorsey International? That would mean we’ve essentially bought a business, not made an investment. The

founder’s quick surrender of control suggests a focus on short-term gains. Even if Dorsey International invested billions to

become the majority shareholder, what about the other investors? With the current mindset of the founder, as long as the price is

right, they’ll be allowed in. However, if those investors are quick to sell their shares for a quick profit, where does that leave the

company’s long-term growth?”

“Once investors start selling off, it will inevitably lead to instability within the company, a neighborly risk, which I’m sure Mr.

Dorsey is aware of. It’s like buying a house. You have to consider who your neighbors are.”

Her words resonated with Max, as if they were on the same wavelength.