

Master 181

Chapter 181

He undid the top two buttons of his shirt, maintaining a stern expression as he climbed into the waiting car.

Patrick glanced at him through the rearview mirror, swallowing nervously before speaking up.

“Mr. Dorsey, aren’t we waiting for Ms. Brielle?”

He had only just found out that Ms. Brielle was in the hospital, and was surprised to see Max leaving the Dorsey family gathering

to be here in person.

With his eyes closed, a rare trace of irritation crossed Max’s features. “No need. She can handle herself,” he said calmly, striving

to regain his composure.

Patrick pressed the gas pedal and dared not ask any more questions.

Meanwhile, at the Dorsey residence, Michael and Jose were deep in conversation, quite pleased with the impending marriage

between their younger family members and already contemplating setting a date.

Jose took a sip of his coffee, his mind on Alivia at the research institute, and a look of satisfaction appeared on his face.

“Alivia has been yearning for Max all these years. Now, it seems her wish is finally coming true.”

Dressed smartly in a tweed jacket, Michael looked spirited. “There’s no better daughter-in-law for my boy than Alivia. It’s a

shame Max has been so work-obsessed, poor girl. Is she also the one who facilitated the investment of Dorsey International in

Book this time?”

Jose chuckled, “She mentioned helping out, which is great. Both kids are too independent. rarely giving us old men a reason to

worry.”

Michael glanced up at the wall clock and instructed a nearby servant, “Go check if Max’s car has arrived.”

The servant nodded promptly and left.

Spencer, sitting not too far away, felt restless. He still reeked of booze and feared a reprimand from Michael, so he kept his

distance.

He'd been pulled in at the last minute, having planned to visit the Haywood family and see Lillian.

But now, with Max absent, Spencer's mind drifted back to the previous night when he stumbled upon Uncle Max in a

compromising position with a woman by the Haywood family's floral wall.

Even now, Spencer wondered if it had been a hallucination because the woman Max had been kissing, sheltered under his coat,

was definitely not Alivia.

Alivia had been abroad these past days, meeting with Noah to discuss the Book deal.

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So, who was this woman Max was so protective of?

Growing more anxious, especially as he listened to the elders discuss marriage arrangements, Spencer feared being

questioned, feeling a sweat break out on his back.

Eventually, Michael turned his gaze to Spencer, and took a sip of his coffee. "Spencer, why did Max attend the Haywood family's

banquet?"

Michael was genuinely curious; he hadn't asked Max directly, but Spencer had been on the scene and should know something.

Spencer felt his spine weaken, his palms slick with cold sweat.

Had he not witnessed that scene, Max's presence at the Haywood banquet would indeed have been surprising, b

ut having seen it, Spencer believed Max must have been there to meet the woman he desired.

Various speculations ran through Spencer's mind.

For instance, why hadn't Max arranged a private meeting with the woman?

Could it be that her identity was sensitive? And Max so captivated by her that he couldn't resist his impulses even by the floral

wall?

Spencer's thoughts were in turmoil, and an inexplicable fear gripped him.

"Grandpa, maybe Uncle Max was just there for a stroll. He barely spoke a word at the banquet." Spencer offered tentatively.

"Max is not one for casual strolls. In his eyes, nothing is more important than work," Michael replied, setting his coffee cup down,

his expression turning frosty. "You young ones are all the same, none of you give me peace of mind. And this matter with you

and that Lillian has become the talk of the town."

Spencer's throat went dry with fear, knowing he was in for a scolding and quickly admitting his fault.

"Grandpa, that was my

fault."

Michael nodded, but his words were devoid of emotion. "Stay away from Lillian in the future. Spencer. I know you've been

bewitched by others' words."

Chapter 182

Bewitched by others' words, all the disapproval was shifted onto Lillian,

Men will be men, and a little indiscretion here and there is nothing unheard of. If the woman made the first move, Spencer would

simply be a man who couldn't resist temptation.

With the Barnes family members around, Michael didn't lay it out too explicitly, b

ut Spencer had a hunch. Michael was hinting that he should cut ties with Lillian.

Without that fiasco at the Haywood family's soiree, Michael would have turned a blind eye to his actions. However, the scandal at

the Haywood banquet was too much, and Lillian's reputation was now thoroughly tarnished. Being associated with her could

significantly impact Spencer's own standing.

Spencer's defense of Lillian at the event had already been detrimental to him, tarnishing his reputation to some extent.

If he continued to be obstinate, even becoming the butt of jokes within their circle...

Spencer shuddered, a trace of concealed satisfaction flickering in his eyes.

Was his grandfather suggesting he continue his relationship with Brielle?

Or perhaps there was a condition. Until he found someone new, messing around with Brielle was as good as entangling himself

with Lillian once more.

Michael's words had made his position clear.

Spencer thought of the photos that had spread within their circle and felt that his actions were probably in line with his

grandfather's wishes.

"Grandfather, I understand," he said.

Michael nodded, pleased. Hearing from a servant that Max had arrived, he rose with a smile.

Max's face had already adjusted to a neutral expression by the time he entered the room. He exchanged pleasantries with the

Dorsey family members, chatted briefly with Jose, and then sat quietly to the side.

Everyone sensed his sour mood, and apart from a few elders, no one dared to strike up a conversation with him.

At the hospital, Brielle had been staring out the window since Max left. The sky was a dreary shade of gray, offering nothing

pleasant to gaze upon.

It was seven in the evening after her IV had finished. She chose not to stay overnight at the hospital but instead went to check on

Mark in another ward.

Ever since the last episode that landed him in the hospital, Mark's health had been failing, necessitating a prolonged stay for

recuperation.

Before Brielle entered the room, she heard Mark's coughing and a nurse's kind inquiries.

"Sir, where's your family? With your condition, you need someone by your side. Otherwise, who will assist you if you need

something in the middle of the night?"

Mark coughed a few more times, then sighed heavily. "Divorced a long time ago. I'm fine like this, really. But I worry about the

kids at the orphanage. Without me there, I doubt they know how to take care of themselves.”

Brielle paused, then upon entering and seeing Mark’s pale face, she hurriedly said, “Mark. I’ll go check on the kids at the

orphanage.

Mark tried to sit up when he saw her, but after several attempts, he resignedly lay back down. nearly forgetting that he would

have to rely on a wheelchair in the future.

“Brielle, don’t worry about me. I’ve saved up a bit over the years. I plan to hire a caregiver for the kids.”

Mark’s voice was filled with guilt, and he couldn’t bring himself to meet Brielle’s eyes. “And the Haywood family donated ten

million to the orphanage.”

He seemed to feel he was betraying Brielle. He couldn’t just consider the grievances between the adults: there were children

who needed sustaining.

“Brielle. I’m truly sorry. But this money can get the kids into better schools. The Haywoods may have wronged you terribly, but

this is for the children.”

Brielle handed him a cup of water and sat beside him. “Don’t think like that. If the Haywood family’s money can improve the kids’

futures, we should use it.”

Mark coughed again, his complexion worsening.

That was all well and good, but he still felt he had let Brielle down.

Brielle quickly changed the subject, not wanting him to dwell on the Haywood matter.

“I’ve asked a friend to help find a new location for the orphanage. We should have options soon. I’ll arrange for someone to

discuss the design with you.”

Mark moved his lips, his eyes reddening as he patted her shoulder. “It’s the kids who owe you.”

Brielle didn’t respond, and then she heard him ask, “And the Haywoods?”

“I’ve cut ties with them. I’m not their daughter. Lillian is.”

“I know, Brielle. But...”

He didn't know what else to say, and eventually, it seemed like he was getting a headache. He closed his eyes to rest.

Brielle didn't linger to disturb him further. She left the room quietly, closing the door behind her. She waited by the roadside for a

while before hailing a cab back to her apartment.

However, the apartment door was wide open, the inside a complete mess; even the couch was overturned on the floor.

The neighbor lady and the police were at the doorstep. On seeing Brielle, the lady clutched her hand in fright.

"Brielle, dear, check if anything's missing. I came over and saw your door wide open, everything in disarray. I was so scared I

called the cops right away."

Chapter 183

Brielle stepped into the living room, immediately struck by the chaos that greeted her. It was like trying to find a square inch of

peace in a rock concert. Thankfully, aside from a bit of cash, everything else was untouched.

The audacity of the thieves was astonishing, especially with the police right around the corner.

After reporting the incident to the cops stationed nearby, Brielle tidied up her company's computer and documents, grabbed a

few clothing items, and decided to crash at a hotel for the night.

Her apartment was no longer a safe haven, at least for the time being.

No sooner had she stepped out of her building than she spotted Max's car lurking behind a tree. Her heart skipped a beat,

pounding uncontrollably against her chest.

The car cruised forward and came to a halt in front of her.

The window rolled down, revealing an empty backseat without Max.

Instead, Patrick emerged, "Ms. Brielle, I was at the hospital, and the doc said you were discharged. Mr. Dorsey sent me to keep

an eye out here. If you need anything in the middle of the night, just holler."

Holding a small suitcase, Brielle felt a pang of heartache mixed with numbness.

Patrick, puzzled by the suitcase in the dead of night, hurried over to take it from her. "Ms. Brielle, where are you off to at this

hour?"

She got into the car and replied with a raspy voice. "Take me to Premier Palace."

Joy flickered across Patrick's face as he loaded the suitcase into the trunk. "Great, Mr. Dorsey will be thrilled."

As the neon lights blurred past the window, Brielle mused, "Really? He'll be happy that I'm going to Premier Palace?"

"Mr. Dorsey was in a foul mood on his way to the family estate. I'm pretty sure it had something to do with you, Ms. Brielle."

Brielle fell silent. Thinking about Max feeding her in the hospital and being the first one to notice her fainting, she felt a bit

regretful at the moment.

She had been nothing but a canary in a gilded cage, seduced by greed into hoping for a response.

Max hadn't done anything wrong. As far as patrons went, he was more decent than most.

The fault was hers, for harboring foolish hopes.

It seemed an apology was in order tonight.

weren't frightened."

Max's typical aloofness didn't surprise her. If she could ensnare him on the first try, there would be no thrill of the chase.

All she needed was to keep appearing before him. If he could see something in that wretch. Brielle, then he would surely fall for

her own charms.

After all, she had always been more alluring than Brielle, which was why Spencer and Cameron had been so easily ensnared.

Chapter 184

Lillian's lips curled into a smug grin as she uttered those words, only to see the window slide down.

It wasn't Max's indifferent face that was revealed but Brielle's.

Brielle had a smile on her face as her gaze fell on the slightly open neckline, carrying a meaningful expression. This kind of look

felt like a slap, leaving Lillian bruised and battered.

Taking a step back in alarm, Lillian heard Brielle's voice cut through, "Is this the kind of stunt you pulled to snag Spencer?"

Lillian thought last night was embarrassing enough, but this moment now was the ultimate humiliation.

They were both women; Brielle undoubtedly knew what Lillian had just been attempting.

Feeling a burning shame on her cheeks yet holding her ground, Lillian retorted with a sneer. "If it works, it works. Spencer always

said you were dull and boring. Brielle, now I am the lady of the Haywood family. Your future days won't be easy."

Brielle withdrew her glance, chuckling lightly. "Even if I have it rough. I wouldn't be caught dead throwing myself at a man in the

middle of the street."

Lillian felt the sting of humiliation, her nails digging into her palms, leaving trails of crimson, but she was dying to know why Brielle was in Max's car.

"Brielle, have you hooked up with Max?"

Her tone was a mix of anger and delight.

If she could leak this tidbit to the Dorsey family, they would never let Brielle off the hook.

But part of her envied Brielle for being close enough to Max to ride in his car.

Lillian's lips almost bled from biting them, her eyes brimming with resentment.

Before Brielle could reply, Patrick approached, addressing them respectfully. "I'm colleagues. with Ms. Brielle. It was merely a

coincidence that I ran into her, and I offered her a lift. Please refrain from making baseless remarks."

So, she hadn't snagged Max, but Max's driver instead.

How ludicrous, Brielle had sunk so low.

Lillian's face twisted with mockery as she sized up Patrick without restraint.

Patrick, as Max's assistant, was a handsome man with some competence, but he was no match for Max.

Brielle was only fit to involve herself with such underlings.

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Well, she was just a bastard after all.

Lillian chuckled at her previous suspicions, figuring that Brielle's appearance with Max was nothing but a chance encounter.

And Max's defending her was probably just out of distaste for Faith's behavior.

After all, the Dorsey family was rife with conflict, and Max and Ryan were hardly on good terms. Lillian burst out laughing, her

derision unmasked, "Colleagues? That's rich. Everyone knows about the string of men Brielle keeps, and it seems you're one of

them."

Her gaze flitted over them, a contemptuous smirk on her lips.

Patrick wanted to retort but knew better; arguing would only fuel Lillian's gossip. It was better to let her misunderstand.

Brielle seemed to share the sentiment, closing the car window coolly. "Mr. Patrick, please discuss the compensation details with

Ms. Lillian."

Patrick nodded, dialed the insurance company, and relayed the compensation details to Lillian.

Lillian couldn't care less about the money. As she got into her car, she couldn't resist sneering at Patrick, "A driver's the best

Brielle can do in her man-hunting game, huh."

Patrick pursed his lips, and once inside the car, he vented, "Ms. Brielle, is she insane?"

Brielle couldn't help but laugh, the complexity of emotions she had felt in the car earlier dissipated by Lillian's antics.

"Maybe she is," she said.

Patrick hit the gas, unable to stop his mouth from twitching. "She's trying to climb up to Mr. Dorsey?"

"Isn't it obvious enough?" Brielle propped her chin in her hand, "Do you think Mr. Dorsey would go for someone like her?"

Chapter 185

Patrick gripped the steering wheel with barely contained frustration. "Ms. Brielle, please don't sell yourself short."

Sell herself short?

Did Patrick really think she was better than Lillian?

Sure, she could admit that she was more capable than Lillian when it came to work, but when it came to charming men, Lillian

had a natural gift.

Otherwise, she wouldn't have Spencer wrapped around her finger, acting like he was under some kind of love spell, or have

Cameron willing to play the fool.

Brielle lacked confidence in that department, so most of the time she just consoled herself by saying she was walking a different

path than Lillian.

Even if she looked down on Lillian's man-catching tactics, maybe that's exactly what the guys went for?

She remained silent all the way to the Premier Palace, both of them engulfed in their own thoughts.

Meanwhile, Lillian returned to the Haywood estate with a sour expression.

Miranda couldn't help but stand up when she saw her. "Lillian, where have you been?"

The Haywoods had just bailed Lillian out from the police station, and Miranda was on an emotional rollercoaster.

On one hand, she couldn't believe Lillian would do something so reckless, but the evidence presented by the police was

irrefutable.

She could only comfort herself with the thought that Lillian might have just taken a wrong turn, probably pushed to it by Brielle or

set up by her.

In any case, it had to be Brielle's fault.

Lillian sat down in a huff, pulling her collar straight. "Mom, do you know? Brielle's been messing around with Max's driver. No

wonder she showed up with Max that night."

As she spoke, her face was smug, her lips curling with scorn.

Miranda's eyes widened in disbelief, clutching her hand. "Lillian, are you sure?"

"Of course, I'm sure. I just caught them outside. Brielle and that driver were sitting in the car, all lovey-dovey without Max. It was

absolutely sickening.”

Miranda’s feelings had been complicated, even feeling a sense of dread that Brielle might have a brighter future than her own

daughter.

After all, Brielle had earned significant acclaim at last night’s banquet, coming out on top.

1/2

14:13

The only thing she seemed to lose was the engagement to Spencer, but it was clear that Brielle herself didn’t mind.

Miranda had been worried that Brielle might have found a more powerful ally, but now, hearing she was involved with Max’s

driver, she couldn’t help but smile.

“Lillian, you are our daughter. Don’t stoop to her level. Keep Spencer happy, and you can still marry into the Dorsey family.”

Lillian wanted to say she was over Spencer, that she had bigger fish to fry, and that Cameron had promised to help her.

Eventually, she would find a way to tie the knot with Max sooner rather than later.

But she worried that voicing these thoughts would unsettle Miranda.

She had long realized that the Haywoods were spineless in the presence of Max.

Not just the Haywoods, but even Faith seemed like a junior before him.

The more Lillian noticed this, the more she felt the need to have Max completely enraptured by her.

“Mom, don’t worry, I would never let myself get tangled with a driver. Brielle has so many men after her already, it seems this

driver is just another notch on her belt. Utterly indecent.”

Miranda’s face also lit up with triumph, her grip tender on Lillian. “Don’t worry about Brielle. She may have talent, but she’s got no

backup. We can handle her easily. I’ll make sure you get the best of everything.”

Lillian snorted coldly, feeling somewhat disappointed in the Haywoods.

The Haywood business relied too heavily on the Dorseys, and even though they had clawed their way into the Beaconsfield elite,

they had no real standing in the eyes of their peers, other than their wealth.

“Mom, Brielle works at Dorsey International, and we’re bound to run into her. Tell Dad and my brother to not go easy on her if

they do.”

She was determined to regain the dignity she lost that night, at Brielle’s expense.

Miranda nodded, her voice soothing. “Don’t worry, I’ve already spoken to your father about it.”

But Lillian stood up, “I want to tell Dad myself. Where is he?”

A sly smile crept into Miranda’s eyes. “Your dad and I have found a suitable match for Brielle. He’s in the drawing room

discussing it as we speak.”

Chapter 186

Lillian was absolutely livid. How could the Haywood family even consider finding another suitor for that bitch Brielle.

Even if the Haywoods had fallen on hard times, they still had serious cash to their name. Was it really necessary to pair Brielle

up with some up-and-coming young hotshot?

As her face contorted with rage, Lillian overheard the next words from Miranda,

“Mr. Connor, from Apex Dynamics, is in his fifties. Divorced a few years back. His wife couldn’t bear his constant infidelities and

ended up taking her own life from depression. He hasn’t remarried since then, though he’s had his fair share of flings with young

things. Not exactly the classiest of acts. Brielle and him? They’re a match made in heaven.”

A wicked thrill darted through Lillian’s eyes. A twice-married man in his fifties with a penchant for playing the field?

Miranda hit the nail on the head. This man was the perfect match for Brielle.

She could hardly wait for Brielle to tie the knot with him, her voice laced with glee. “Is Mr. Connor on board with this?”

Mira Sheered, “Mr. Connor is all about the looks, and Brielle’s got the kind of face he goes for. He’ll definitely bite. With this, the Haywood clan can skim off some benefits.”

It was as if they were auctioning off Brielle to secure a lucrative deal for the Haywood estate.

Lillian felt a weight lift from her shoulders, her lips curving into a smile, “Mom, you’re too kind to Brielle. The wife of the CEO of

Apex Dynamics is far better than being some chauffeur’s wife. Brielle ought to be thanking you.”

Miranda shared the sentiment. After all, they had raised Brielle for years; they couldn’t let her just walk away without getting

something in return.

Meanwhile, in the adjacent parlor, Robert was sitting across from Mr. Connor.

Apex Dynamics was a major client for the Haywoods.

Mr. Connor, barely five foot seven, sported a belly that hid his shoelaces from view.

Dressed in a bespoke suit, his shirt tucked neatly in, an Hermes belt around his waist stood out conspicuously.

“Mr. Haywood, I’ve had other companies courting me for a partnership, offering better rates. than the Haywood estate. And with

all the recent scandals

including Ms. Lillian’s tarnished. reputation, your stock prices have taken a nosedive. It’s hardly the opportune time for me to

make an offer.”

The trouble with public companies was that a little bit of bad press could ripple through the stock market.

A major scandal could even cause a stock market crash.

Connor might have been nouveau riche, but he knew how to talk the talk. After so much back and forth, he still hadn’t budged.

Losing Apex Dynamics to a competitor would be a massive blow to the Haywoods.

Robert had no choice but to play his trump card.

“I hear you’ve been on the lookout for a suitable marriage partner, Mr. Connor. What do you think about Brielle?”

A gleam of excitement sparked in Connor’s eyes, Brielle’s stunning visage flashing through his mind, his chubby cheeks flushing

with excitement.

He had seen Brielle once before, and her beauty had left an indelible impression.

She might be a bit too demure for his taste, but that was no issue. Once she was in his grasp, he'd mold her into the perfect

plaything.

Still marriage was business, and business meant negotiation.

He immediately pinpointed Brielle's flaws to drive the price down.

"Brielle, yes, I've seen the girl a few times—quite the looker. But word on the street is that her personal life is a bit messy."

Everyone knew Connor craved excitement and couldn't care less about a woman's past indiscretions, as long as she was

disease-free. He was not one to turn down company.

His wealth enabled him to lavish gifts worth millions, and those women who had been with him turned up their noses at his looks

while simultaneously clinging to the luxurious lifestyle he provided.

Over the years, he had discarded countless playthings.

Robert's smile widened, "Brielle is very obedient and quite competent. She might even become a formidable ally for you, Mr.

Connor."

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Connor had long been smitten, and among the women he'd been with, none held a candle to Brielle.

"Alright then, I'll cut three percent from my profits as a gift for Bri," he offered.

Three percent, that was a profit well into the millions, b

ut for Robert, this was far from sufficient. After all, Brielle was a powerhouse in her own right. certain to bring much more value to

Apex Dynamics.

"Mr. Connor, Dorsey International's youngest director surely warrants more than what you suggest," he countered.

Connor cursed inwardly, calling Robert a sly old fox for selling out his own daughter.

It was a clear-cut transaction.

Connor was so captivated by Brielle's beauty that he clenched his jaw. "Five percent tops. Mr. Haywood. The word on the street

is that Brielle isn't the Haywood's little girl anymore. Can you make decisions on her behalf? I don't think she's the type to just

accept whatever comes her

way.

A shadow of malice flitted through Robert's eyes. The Haywood family had nurtured her for so long, and a little sacrifice was due.

"I have my ways," he said darkly.

He would have her tied to Tanner's bed if necessary.

Did Brielle really think she could sever ties with the Haywoods in public and escape everything? Her debt to the Haywood family

was more than ten million dollars.

Robert's eyes darkened with resolve. He was determined to show Brielle that a woman without money or influence had no

chance of making it in Beaconsfield.

To crush her would be as simple as stepping on an ant.

"Mr. Connor, just await the good news."

Connor's chubby face beamed with smiles. After exchanging pleasantries, Robert stood up to show his guest out.

Descending to the foyer, Connor's gaze fell on Lillian.

She was pretty in an innocent sort of way, but off-limits as a Haywood lady.

A fire lit in his abdomen as his mind drifted back to Brielle's face.

Brielle's allure trumped Lillian's, and her academic accolades promised an exotic encounter.

The mere thought had him burning with desire.

Lillian, seeing Connor's portly figure, greasy hair, and sparse balding scalp, was overjoyed.

This was Brielle's future husband, and it was perfect.

That bitch deserved no better.

Lillian was ecstatic, itching to broadcast to the world just how pathetic Brielle's future spouse

was.

Meanwhile, Brielle was unaware of the Haywoods' persistence as she entered Premier Palace.

The butler, Wesley, brightened at her arrival. "Ms. Brielle, have you had dinner? I'll have the kitchen prepare a light supper."

Having been at the hospital, Brielle hadn't eaten and shyly nodded her thanks.

Wesley's wrinkles deepened with his grin. "With Ms. Brielle here. Mr. Dorsey will surely come home tonight."

He hurriedly instructed the kitchen to prepare extra food, emphasizing a light meal, then gleefully went off to discuss the menu.

Brielle had no bedroom of her own at the Palace; she always stayed in Max's master suite.

So Patrick placed her luggage directly there. She wanted to protest but didn't want to seem prudish.

After all, everyone assumed her relationship with Max to be intimate.

She settled into the master suite, taking it in for the first time.

Everywhere, she sensed Max's presence, comforting and steady.

After supper and a bath, Brielle opened her laptop to work.

Elsewhere, Max hadn't been informed of Brielle's arrival at Premier Palace.

After a meal with the Dorseys, Michael offered him a room, but Max, frowning, declined.

He initially thought about returning to Premier Palace, but he felt stifled. In his heart, he thought, there was no one waiting for

him at Premier Palace anyway. Whether he went back or

not, it didn't matter.

Parking on the street, he felt a strange pang. Before Brielle, he never minded the solitude of the Palace.

Why did her absence now make it so uncomfortable?

His phone rang. It was Andrew, inviting him to a bar, mentioning Dustin wanted to

dentally" run into Little Canary at Dorsey International the next day.

Annoyed, Max replied coldly. "She won't be there."

Chapter 188

Sitting beside Andrew, Dustin's ears pricked up every time Andrew fondly mentioned "Little Canary," stirring a slight discomfort

within him.

Max said that Brielle wouldn't go, and he took the phone back.

"Mr. Dorsey."

Loosening the buttons on his tailored suit, a smile danced on Dustin's lips. "I'm only in Beaconsfield for three days. Surely, Mr.

Dorsey, you're not so petty as to hide your treasures?"

He pulled out a box of matches, specially crafted with tiny red heads and white bodies. With a single strike, a pale flame

emerged.

Dustin often preferred matches to lighters; they seemed to hold more character.

Lighting one up, he touched the flame to his cigarette.

Max's expression turned frosty, his fingers playing absentmindedly with the beads on his wrist. "She's my little canary, and if I

wish to keep her hidden, she stays hidden.

Dustin squinted his eyes. If it wasn't for Max personally saying such words, he would never believe that someone like Max would

care about a woman like this.

He smiled. "Mr. Dorsey, if you're so intent on caging her, haven't you considered that your little canary might wish to fly out and

explore? I happen to have a far more splendid cage at my place, yet to find its mistress."

The insinuation was clear: You may see her as a canary, but I could make her a queen.

The air tensed sharply, prompting even Andrew to frown in disapproval.

After a moment of silence, Max hung up the call.

Dustin handed the phone back to Andrew, quite satisfied. "Seems Mr. Dorsey won't be in the mood for a drink tonight."

Andrew's mouth twitched. "Are you seriously interested in her? Secondhand goods don't bother you?"

Andrew dismissed Brielle with contempt. "Fun for a fling, sure, but hardly Infinity Brilliance's First Lady material."

"Quite the contrary." Dustin replied, taking a sip of his drink. "Women aren't commodities to be labeled new or used. If she

pleases me, it matters not who she's been with before. The body's pleasures are easy to come by, but only this little canary can

satisfy the soul.”

Andrew set down his glass, his mood darkening. Unsure whether Dustin was joking or serious. he didn't appreciate the thought

of someone poaching from his friend's territory.

Before he could speak, the room's door swung open, and in came Aubree.

Aubree didn't expect company: this booth was usually Andrew's private spot.

Dustin caught her eye and gave her a roguish wink..

Andrew, watching from the side, gestured towards Dustin. “Aubree, why don't you sit next to Mr. Lynch?

Aubree remained silent for a long minute before slowly approaching Dustin.

Dustin, a hedonist at heart, wasted no time in pulling Aubree into his embrace.

“Miss Clements, sister to Andrew?”

Andrew's grip tightened around his glass, fighting an unwelcome twinge of discomfort, “Yes.”

Dustin wasn't one to turn down an attractive company sent his way.

He lifted Aubree's chin, examining her striking features. Her luminous eyes drew him in.

Leaning in, he traced a path from her ear down her neck with his nose.

Aubree seethed, her hands clenching at her sides.

Unperturbed, Dustin grabbed a bottle, took a swig, then clasped Aubree's chin, feeding her mouth-to-mouth.

Choking and coughing, tears welled up in Aubree's eyes.

Dustin chuckled, pulling her closer. “You look much better flushed. Mr. Clements, how about she keeps me company tonight?”

Andrew's expression shifted. He wanted to interject, but his phone rang—it was Tessa.

Irritated, he dismissed the matter, “Whatever you wish, Mr. Lynch.”

He sounded indifferent, not sparing Aubree a glance, as if she were nothing but a disposable item.

Aubree's gaze fell. Her heart had long ceased to feel pain. Loving Andrew, this was a process that had to be experienced.

Her eyes reddened, a struggle to break free brewing, but Dustin deliberately held her tight, his fingers teasing her waistline.

She held back anger until her phone rang. It was Brielle.

Grateful for Dustin's loosened grip, Aubree rushed out to the corridor, answering the call, "Bri?"

Brielle was almost falling asleep but the thought of a stranger invading her apartment made her stir. She hadn't had a chance to

inform Aubree yet..

"Aubree. I..."

Before she could finish, Aubree's muffled sobs came through.

Standing beside the ladies' room, Aubree slumped against the cool wall.

Brielle sprang from her bed, knowing only Andrew could distress Aubree so.

"Where are you? Send me your location. I'll come get you."

Chapter 189

Aubree felt a tightness in her chest that threatened to suffocate her. She couldn't utter a complete sentence, her tears streaming

down her cheeks uncontrollably like a faulty faucet that wouldn't stop leaking.

Brielle hastily got out of bed to change her clothes. As she was leaving, she bumped into Patrick, who inquired where she was

headed.

"Tequila Sunset."

Patrick assumed she was going to pick up Max and a hint of joy flashed in his eyes as he handed her the car keys. "Ms. Brielle,

here are the keys."

It didn't strike Brielle as odd, given Patrick had always been kind to her.

She took off in Max's usual ride, and no sooner had she left than Patrick was on the phone with Max.

"Mr. Dorsey, Ms. Brielle's

coming to pick you up tonight."

Meanwhile, Max had settled into a private booth at Te

Sunset. Usually, it was Patrick who

picked him up after a night of indulging, but now Patrick was saying what?

Brielle was coming to get him?

Max thought he must be hallucinating. If he remembered correctly, this would be the first time Brielle had ever picked someone

up.

The frustration that had been simmering all evening lifted instantly, even making Dustin, who sat opposite him, seem more

agreeable.

A smile played on Max's lips as he picked up a glass from the coffee table. "Mr. Lynch, your certainly move on quickly with your

ladies."

Just as he had finished expressing his interest in Brielle, he was now cozying up to Aubree.

Dustin didn't take it as a jibe; his reputation was well-known across North America.

Max was certainly aware of it.

"Mr. Dorsey seems to be in a much better mood. You looked pretty sour when you walked in. All because I have a genuine

interest in your Little Canary? Mr. Dorsey, you should have the confidence to keep your talent close, especially since you're

Max."

Even within the North American social circles, there were numerous women who desired to be with him intimately.

Unexpectedly though, Max didn't respond.

Tonight, Brielle mentioned ending things, which seemed she didn't care much for him.

He couldn't help but ponder whether one truly didn't know what they had until it was gone.

Maybe it was the couple of drinks he had, but a rush of frustration surged through him.

Then, thinking that Brielle was coming to get him tonight, perhaps to apologize for her impulsive words earlier?

His mood began to settle once more.

As long as she took back what she said, he could pretend nothing had ever happened.

Brielle arrived quickly, spotting Aubree in the hallway.

Aubree was curled up in a corner, her eyes red-rimmed. On seeing Brielle, a mix of annoyance and relief crossed her face. "Bri."

She managed to call out, attempting to rise but her legs were numb and she nearly stumbled forward.

Brielle rushed to steady her, frowning with concern. "What happened?"

Aubree felt embarrassed, unable to disclose the truth.

Brielle grew angry. "Aubree, where's that spirit you used to encourage me with?"

Aubree's face turned pale, and after a long pause, she said self-deprecatingly, "If Max asked. you to accompany other men, would you go?"

Brielle's pupils narrowed sharply, her voice a mix of shock and anger. "Who did Andrew want you to be with?"

Aubree just shook her head with a bitter smile. "He's quite handsome. Last name is Lynch."

Brielle's mind instantly conjured Dustin's face. Could it be that he was in Beaconsfield?

She pursed her lips, watching Aubree light a cigarette with practiced ease, and said earnestly. "Maybe you and Andrew should just call it quits."

"That's not an option, Bri. You'll understand when you're in my shoes. Some people you meet are just there to teach you a lesson."

Brielle couldn't grasp the depth of her words, but seeing her pale face, she took Aubree's arm. "Let me take you home first."

Aubree really didn't want to return to the booth, her eyes downcast. "Okay."

As Brielle escorted her out of the Tequila Sunset, Aubree's steps suddenly halted.

Outside the bar, a luxury car pulled up, its license plate displaying a string of identical numbers that Brielle didn't recognize

It wasn't until a delicate-looking woman stepped out that she realized who it was. The woman, looking frail and pitiful, gave off a stark contrast to Aubree's demeanor.

Tessa was dressed simply, her makeup light.

As she passed by Brielle, she paused and frowned, "Brielle?"

Chapter 190

Having finished her piece, Tessa seemed to only then notice Aubree by her side, pursing her lips with impatience. "Is your

brother around?"

Aubree was only spineless in Andrew's presence. Facing Tessa, she was much more composed. "You looking for him for

something?"

Tessa nodded, and after a while, let out a light chuckle, "Whatever's going on between us should be none of your business,

Aubree. You're not getting any younger. Shouldn't you be thinking about settling down soon? I've heard the Clements family has

been nudging you for a while now?"

After saying her piece, Tessa turned to Brielle, "I've heard your name tossed around before, and now we finally meet. Brielle, you

better pray you've got nothing to do with what happened to Sophia, otherwise, the and family won't let you off the hook."

Tessa was in a foul mood over Sophia's disappearance.

And facing people she loathed, she couldn't bother with pretenses and went straight for the jugular.

"Plus, you've made the headlines again tonight. Photos of you and Spencer are all over the place. Spencer's been saying you've

been begging him to get back together."

Brielle frowned at this. "What photos?"

No sooner had she asked than she remembered the snaps taken by the paparazzi earlier that day, and her face went pale.

Tessa's lips curled slightly at the sight of Brielle's reaction. "Seems like you know exactly which photos I'm talking about."

Brielle felt sick to her stomach, appalled that Spencer could stoop so low.

Her chest heave emotion, but her face betrayed nothing. "Whatever's going on between us should be none of your business," she retorted, using Tessa's own words against her.

A thin veil of anger passed over Tessa's eyes as she let out a scoff and made her way inside.

Brielle watched her leave, then turned to Aubree, "Are she and Sophia really that close?"

"Seems like it."

Then Brielle thought about the break-in at her apartment but decided not to mention it, not wanting to worry anyone.

She helped Aubree to the car, and Aubree raised an eyebrow upon seeing it, "Max's ride?"

Max allowed someone else to touch his stuff?

Aubree had given up on trying to convince Brielle earlier, but now seeing Max's apparent special treatment, her resolve strengthened.

"Bri, why not try to win Max over?"

To Aubree, Brielle had a unique charm—beautiful without knowing it.

Perhaps that was exactly Max's type.

Brielle had already hit the gas as she thought about the Barnes family meeting at the Dorsey family's mansion tonight, her mouth

twitching slightly, "The Barnes family's over at the Dorsey place tonight to talk marriage. Wonder when they plan to set the date."

Aubree reclined in the passenger's seat, her head tilting back at the mention, "Alivia, huh? I hear she's tight with Tessa too."

Just as they were about to drive off, Aubree's phone rang. It was Andrew.

She didn't want to answer, closing her eyes and even softening her breathing.

Brielle didn't rush to drive off; after a while, she heard Aubree pick up.

Andrew's voice came through, asking where she was.

"I'm not going back to the booth. Planning on heading home."

"Aubree, did I say you could leave?"

Andrew's tone was nasty. He was nursing a glass of booze, annoyed at the thought of Aubree sharing mouth-to-mouth drinks

with someone else. "Mr. Lynch is still waiting for his night of delight with you."

Aubree's face went pale at once, her grip on the phone tightening, "Andrew, do you really have to do this?"

Andrew chuckled darkly, lighting a cigarette, "Maybe this is what you're looking forward to, huh? After being in my bed for so

long, we're both tired of it. Trying someone new might be nice."

It felt like a sword through her chest.

“Aubree, or is it that you just love sleeping with me?”

Andrew took a drag of his cigarette, his attitude as contemptuous as ever.

He had stepped out of the booth and was now casually leaning against a wall. His shirt was unbuttoned, revealing a muscular

chest, giving off a wild vibe

Andrew sneered, his mind wandering back to the last time in the restroom of the booth, when she clung to him like a boneless

vine.

Over the years, Aubree had always been at his beck and call, occasionally temperamental, but mostly docile to his demands

He was indeed getting tired of her.