

## Master 221

### Chapter 221

Max felt a suffocating tightness in his chest, especially as he heard her continuing to inquire about Mason. Without a second

thought, he hung up the call.

“Mr. Dorsey.”

“Beep... Beep... Beep...”

Brielle was somewhat incredulous at the sound coming from the other end.

After Max ended the call, he walked back to his seat, his tone as icy as a December morning.

“Continue.”

Everyone shivered, feeling the room temperature drop even further.

The Finance Director, realizing he might have misspoken, attempted to mitigate the situation.

“President, I’d like to propose a

raise for Ms. Haywood. She’s been an exemplary employee. and she’s about to represent our company in negotiations. Her

current salary just doesn’t match her status.”

The HR Director chimed in, “Indeed, Ms. Haywood is exceptional.”

The sudden praise for Brielle baffled the others, especially since she was at odds with Ms. Alivia.

Ms. Alivia backed the Book, while Brielle was supposed to be negotiating with a new company—a task she had made no progress

on. No matter how it was viewed, it seemed like negligence of duty. And they still wanted to give her a raise? On what grounds?

Several people at the meeting voiced their dissatisfaction.

“Have the directors got their wires crossed? Ms. Haywood has been on leave for two days.”

“Yes, and if anyone deserves a raise, it should be Ms. Alivia. She’s not our employee, so Mwr. Dorsey would need to personally

select a gift for her.

They expected this flattery to delight Max, but his expression only grew colder. His gaze turned to the Finance Director, “Handle

the raise as you see fit.”

The Finance Director's face beamed, more convinced than ever of the need to curry favor with Brielle. Winning over Brielle was

akin to winning over Mr. Dorsey, which meant good days. ahead for him.

The others realized their sycophancy had backfired and fell silent.

As Max stood, his face clouded with gloom, he paused at the door. The thought of Brielle's indifference, yet offering her a raise—it

would be a blow to his pride if she found out.

A furrow formed between his brows, and he spoke coolly. "But don't make it too much.

To the Finance Director, this wasn't a sign of Max's indifference towards Brielle. Considering the Max's shrewdness, it must be a deliberate strategy to prolong the subordinate's promotion progress. After all, a hungry

hound hunts best. In this process, Brielle would undoubtedly become more reliant on the President.

Admiration glinted in the Finance Director's eyes, oblivious to his overactive imagination, "Understood."

Max had no clue what he understood. Back in his office, he still felt sour.

Patrick, knowing the probable cause of his mood, casually suggested, "Ms. Brielle has moved. into a new place. Should we send

a housewarming gift?"

To his surprise, Max sat down and turned on his computer, his voice tinted with a hint of reproach. "Even giving her a house and

land didn't elicit a word of thanks. What's the use of sending more?"

Patrick struggled to keep a straight face. Even Max himself seemed unaware that he was acting like a regular Joe trying to win

his girlfriend's favor and failing miserably.

"Mr. Dorsey, maybe women value other things more, like commitment?" Patrick was probing. curious about how Max truly felt

about his relationship with Ms. Brielle.

Max narrowed his eyes, a trace of confusion crossing his face. "Do you think I like her?" His question was about perception, not

certainty, suggesting even he was unsure of his feelings.

Patrick didn't dare respond directly, offering a noncommittal, "Perhaps."

Max's expression turned blank, as if void of color, "I won't dig my own grave." To him, affection. love, they were all graves, and he was not one to dig his own.

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And after Brielle was hung up on, she called back to find that Max had turned off his phone. With a frown etched on her face and

worry that she might not see Mason again if she left, she decided to call Patrick.

At that moment, Patrick stood by Max, expecting a call from a business associate. When his phone rang, he glanced at the

screen and saw Brielle's name flashing. His gut reaction was to steal a glance at Max.

Max sensed the shift in Patrick's attention, his grip on the pen tightening as if he was about to snap it in half. "Brielle?" he asked,

a hint of tension in his voice.

Patrick swallowed hard, "It's Ms. Brielle. Probably about the land deal."

"Answer it. Put it on speaker," Max commanded.

Patrick had never felt such pressure just from picking up a phone call. Worried that Brielle might say something out of line, he

took the lead with a professional tone, "Ms. Brielle, like I mentioned before, the land deal was all Mr. Dorsey's doing. If you have

thanks to give, you should really direct it to him in person."

Brielle

wasn't calling about the land, and she was anxious about coming off as too eager with Max. To avoid any misinterpretation of her

intentions, she played along with Patrick's prompt. "Patrick, I should thank you as well. How about I treat you to dinner

sometime?"

Patrick's body tensed, his keen eyes catching Max's clenched jaw, the pen nearly at its breaking point.

Wiping sweat from his brow, Patrick stuttered, "That's really not necessary. I barely did anything."

"Patrick, you've worked hard. Besides, there's something else I need your help with."

Brielle was a very clear-headed person. Since she knew that Max saw her only as a fling, she didn't rush to plead with him.

Moreover, he had just hung up on her. If Max didn't care for her, she had no reason to fret over him. Matters of the heart were

reciprocal, and playing a solo act was utterly pointless. She had played that act before with Spencer; she knew better than to

stumble over the same stone twice.

"I need you to dig into Mason's troubles with Dorsey International," Brielle requested.

The weight on Patrick grew heavier, a wry smile on his face. "That might be difficult for me to look into. Perhaps you should ask—"

He was cut off by Brielle, "If you can't find out, could Kenzo do it? He's in good standing with Mr.

Dorsey, must have heard some rumors, right? O

It wasn't a threat from Brielle, just a genuine question. Patrick felt like his hair was standing on end. Should he let Ms. Brielle turn

to another man for help?

He quickly backtracked, "Actually, I can look into it. It just might take some time."

Relief spread across Brielle's face with a smile, "Alright, let me know when you have something." She hadn't asked about Max,

and she ended the call with a clean break.

Patrick, hearing the call disconnect, didn't dare meet Max's gaze.

Max set down the pen, his laugh cold. "You two seem pretty chummy."

Patrick hastened to clarify. "It's mostly about the land deal. I've told Ms. Brielle it's all thanks to you, sir."

"Hmph, I'm not bothered by that." Max replied dismissively, though his expression grew darker.

Patrick wiped away the sweat again, thinking, "If you didn't care, you probably wouldn't have me put it on speakerphone."

So much for not digging his own grave.

Standing there, Patrick felt an immense pressure, as if a mountain loomed overhead.

Max, feeling a sense of irritation himself, picked up a document from the side, trying to get lost in its contents. To think, all his

efforts for her seemed to be in vain, while a simple update from Patrick earned her dinner invitation.

Ungrateful.

Why should he care? There was no need to get angry.

## Chapter 223

After Brielle hung up the phone, she stayed put, waiting.

It took Mason half an hour to come down, and when he saw her still there, his brow furrowed in an instant, and he quickened his

pace.

“Mr. Mason.” Brielle called out. “I’ve done my homework on your company, and I believe it has the potential to be the investment

world’s unicorn.”

In the financial world, there was a saying that the most crucial aspect of investing was to back a “unicorn”—missing out on such a

company posed a far greater risk than making a mistake with a hundred others.

The term unicorn was thus a massive affirmation for any company, but evidently, Mason didn’t need such affirmation. He even

bypassed her and walked straight out of the hospital.

Brielle had never encountered someone so impervious. Dorsey International had taken the initiative to offer an investment, and it

was one thing to refuse, but to show such aversion was another.

Mason got into a taxi, and Brielle had no choice but to follow. “Mr. Mason.”

Mason raised his hand to his temple, clearly not expecting her to follow. “I’m off to a class reunion. Are you sure you want to

come along?”

Brielle pursed her lips, wary of losing this opportunity, not knowing when she’d get another chance to speak with him. “After the

reunion, could you spare me a few minutes, Mr. Mason?”

Mason gave her a serious look, “Ms. Brielle, can you speak for Dorsey International?”

“Yes, anything I agree to in our conversation will definitely be in the contract.”

Mason glanced at her face, then seemed to give up resisting. “Then attend the reunion as my date, and I’ll give you ten minutes

afterward.” It wasn’t that Mason particularly disliked Brielle: in fact, he admired her persistence.

Brielle nodded in agreement, relieved to have secured some time. Mason, however, stared at the ointment she was clutching, his

ears reddening in an instant. “Aren’t you going to put that thing in your bag?”

Brielle had been so focused on discussing a partnership that she had completely forgotten she had just come from the

gynecologist. Following his gaze to her hand, the shape of the medical product was too suggestive, and she felt embarrassed

having held it during their entire conversation.

She quickly stowed it away in her bag, as if trying to release heat from every pore in her body.

Mason also felt awkward and opened the taxi window. “The reunion I’m attending is with high school classmates. If you’ve been

around Beaconsfield, you might know some people there.”

Brielle thought he was just trying to ease the tension, but as they arrived, and she saw the Dorsey Hotel a bad feeling washed

over her.

Mason opened the door to the hotel and greeted everyone with a smile, “Sorry I’m late.”

The chatter among the people in the private room paused for a moment when they saw him and then continued.

Brielle could tell in just a glance that Mason wasn’t popular among this crowd. As they got closer and she saw the woman

basking in everyone’s attention, Brielle’s expression soured. It was Tessa Rowland.

Everyone knew Tessa’s status. From the moment she stepped into the room, they couldn’t wait to put her on a pedestal. And

Tessa was accustomed to such flattery, not showing the slightest embarrassment.

That was until she saw Brielle, and her smile slowly drooped. “Brielle?” Her tone carried a hint of disdain before she looked

away.

Behind her stood Sophia, acting like a handmaiden, pouring water for Tessa and looking at Brielle as if her gaze was poisoned.

Brielle hadn’t expected to encounter them here; if she had known, she would have waited outside.

Sophia's look also made her very uneasy, as if the Sophia she was facing now was very different from the one she had known.

The others, sensing some history between Tessa and Mason's guest, began to inquire.

"Mason, who is this? Your girlfriend?"

"I've never heard about Mason getting close to anyone."

Mason pulled out a chair for Brielle, "A friend."

As soon as he finished speaking, Tessa let out a light laugh, "A friend or something more intimate? Ms. Brielle's reputation is

quite the mess, isn't it?"

## Chapter 224

The disdain in the room was almost palpable as eyes rolled and whispers grew louder. Brielle, unfazed, gracefully took her seat

on the chair Mason had pulled out for her. "Ms. Tessa's reputation isn't any better than mine. Last I saw her, she was leaving a

hotel with not one, but two gentlemen. Seems you're quite the free spirit yourself.

She spoke with a straight face, picked up her cup of water from the table for a sip, and casually offered Mason a cup as well.

A hint of a smirk tugged at Mason's lips. He'd seen Brielle's live streams before; it was only by chance, but the fact that she could

hold her own with Mr. Hartley was no small feat. When Brielle first struck up a conversation with him, he didn't respond, even

contemplating feigning ignorance of her, but her persistence piqued his interest.

Mason and Tessa were classmates back in high school. Tessa was often absent due to her frail health. Yet, wherever she was,

she seemed to be the center of attention. Everyone tiptoed around her, lest they be blamed if her health took a turn for the

worse.

Mason didn't care for Tessa. Even though she hadn't said a word and merely basked in the adoration and caution of those

around her, the vibe she gave off was unsettling. Those who rallied behind her flourished; those who went against her met their

doom. So even years after graduation, when they all gathered again, people still instinctively sought Tessa's favor.

But Brielle was different. At least, she was the first person bold enough to be so unrestrained in front of Tessa.

Tessa's eyes bulged in disbelief. Her face turned pale with rage, her chest heaving, "What did you say?"

Sophia, standing behind her, patted her back soothingly, "Tessa, don't get worked up. Please take your medication first." She

tenderly offered the medication, but Tessa slapped it away. No one had ever seen Tessa this furious. Her pale complexion was

now flushed as she glared at Brielle.

Sophia, pushed aside, took a step back, and in a spot hidden from the others, her lips curled into a subtle grin. She would love

nothing more than for Brielle to push Tessa over the edge. today. The Rowland family would never forgive Brielle, and neither

would Andrew. Even if Andrew did have a fling with that wretch Aubree, he truly doted on Tessa. Brielle messing with Tessa was

akin to courting death.

Brielle raised an eyebrow, noting Tessa's teetering composure, and chuckled softly. "I'm merely giving back what's been dished

out to me, Ms. Tessa. You spread rumors about my private life in public, so why shouldn't I return the favor? Surely, what's good

for the goose is good for the gander."

The others, unaccustomed to such a blatant lack of deference to Tessa, saw an opportunity to curry favor with her.

"How dare you, woman? Do you know who she is? She's a lady of the Rowland family."

"Mason, next time you bring a friend, at least bring someone who fits in, alright? We can do without the embarrassment from the

likes of her."

Mason pretended to be engrossed in his tea, "My apologies, I'm not really that close with Ms. Brielle."

He distanced himself cleanly. Brielle glanced at him, not realizing until then the extent of Mason's cunning.

Hearing his words, the others couldn't very well continue to berate Mason, so they redirected their fire at Brielle.



“Apologize to Tessa! If she suffers because of you, can you bear the responsibility?”

Tessa did look terribly unwell, as if she might faint at any moment. Normally, at such moments. those who had upset her would

be thrown into a panic. Her illness sometimes served as her shield.

Brielle just sat there, casually lifting her gaze to Tessa. “If I had a condition like Ms. Tessa’s, I’d stay home and take care of my

body, rather than going to great lengths to show up at a gathering. Wouldn’t want to risk an incident, right, Ms. Tessa?”

Tessa struggled to breathe, her nails digging into her palms, “You... you bitch.”

As soon as she spat out the words, she slumped back into her chair, clutching her chest in agony.

Sophia, who could have quickly taken out the medication, instead just stood by Tessa, holding her shoulder, “Tessa, don’t be

upset, I’ll get you to the hospital.” Triumph shone in her eyes. knowing Brielle had stirred up trouble.

Brielle frowned, seeing right through Sophia’s ploy. “Give her the medicine. What good does holding her do?”

Sophia’s face froze, and with a pitiful look, she scanned the room. “The medicine is gone. That was the last of it.”

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Brielle rolled her eyes internally. Just moments ago, Sophia had taken out several bottles of medication, and now she was

blatantly lying through her teeth.

The others were petrified, Someone was frantically dialing for an ambulance while cursing Brielle under their breath, Chaos

reigned for a moment, and Tessa’s gaze was fixed on Brielle with disbelief. She refused to accept that Brielle wasn’t scared.

She absolutely loathed it when someone made a mockery of her health. That was her red line. Today, Tessa was determined to

make Brielle pay.

Tessa wasn’t anywhere close to fainting, but to strike fear into Brielle, she feigned losing consciousness. Sophia and the other

classmates hurried to help Tessa out the door, casting malevolent glances at Brielle on their way out. "I'd like to see you wriggle

your way out of this one," Sophia sneered.

Brielle remained silent. In less than twenty minutes, the private room was left with just her and Mason—an outcome she hadn't

anticipated.

Mason, ever so collected, served her a bowl of soup and teased, "Congrats, Ms. Brielle, on a

victorious first battle."

Brielle furrowed her brows. "Why do I get the feeling she was faking it?"

"Probably was. It's not the first time she's pulled a stunt like this."

Brielle was taken aback. After all, Tessa was born with a silver spoon in her mouth and protected every step of the way by

Andrew. Was all this really necessary?

Mason twirled the glass in his hand, his voice nonchalant. "In high school, there was this girl who did well academically, our class

rep. She once pressed Tessa for homework. That girl was a bookworm, not the type to butter up Tessa like the others did, and

Tessa had it out for her from the start. Plus, that girl was quite the looker—had a bunch of guys in our class crushing on her—

which made her a thorn in Tessa's side."

As he rotated the glass, Mason continued, "When she pressed for homework, Tessa collapsed. The whole class turned on the

girl, and the Rowland family intervened, forcing her to withdraw from school. Within a week, she jumped off the tallest building on

campus. Her mother fainted from grief when she came to identify the body."

Brielle had not expected Tessa to have such a dark history and felt a tightness in her chest. "Didn't the Rowland family pay any

compensation?"

Mason chuckled dryly, setting down his glass, "Not a dime. Instead, they took the girl's mother to court and had her fined fifty

thousand for emotional damages.”

What kind of world was this? Brielle felt sick just hearing about it.

Mason casually continued eating, seemingly accustomed to such stories.

“That girl’s family had always struggled. Her father was paralyzed from a fall, and they were all pinning their hopes on her getting

into a good university. Fifty thousand means nothing to the Rowland family, but it was everything to hers.”

Brielle wanted to ask how they were doing now but feared the answer would only add to her worries.

Mason pushed a plate closer to her, “Ms. Brielle, do you know why I despise Dorsey International?”

Brielle shook her head. She was indeed curious, but Mason wasn’t obligated to explain. She’d never asked outright.

Mason appraised her for a long moment before speaking in a hoarse voice, “My dad, his name was Everett.”

The cup in Brielle’s hand fell to the ground, and she was shocked as if struck by a bolt of lightning.

Seeing her reaction, Mason guessed she might have heard about Everett’s ordeal. “My father was a brilliant pianist,

internationally acclaimed, and he had a lovely, loving girlfriend. But then Victoria from the Dorsey family set her sights on him.

She tried everything to harm his girlfriend, who miraculously survived every attempt. When Victoria ended up violated by

someone else, the Dorsey family blamed my father, forcing him into a marriage with Victoria. Tell me, how are the Dorseys any

different from the Rowlands?”

“Ms. Brielle, are you still interested in discussing a partnership on behalf of Dorsey International?”

## Chapter 226

Brielle was at a loss for words, finally understanding why Mason had started by talking about the class representative – it was all

to make her step into those shoes and experience that sense of powerlessness. So, when it came to dealing with the Dorsey

family, she could see things without any rose-colored glasses.

This collaboration was going nowhere. Even if she could use her professional skills to persuade Mason, her conscience would

suffer for it.

Brielle forced a smile, "Let's drop it, but Mr. Mason, are you really Everett's flesh and blood?"

Mason nodded, "When my mom was forced to leave, she was already pregnant with me. She begged Michael on her knees to

stay by my dad's side, but Michael was ruthless. He sent her abroad and had her watched, so my dad couldn't find her. I don't

even know if he ever looked, considering the Dorsey family's vast empire who wouldn't be dazzled by such splendor? I haven't

contacted him in all these years. He might not even know he has a son."

—

A self-mocking smirk crossed Mason's face as he poured Brielle a drink. "If you ever meet him, Ms. Brielle, could you ask him

for me how he's been?"

Brielle's nose tingled, and she felt an unexpected urge to cry. A family that should have been happy, torn apart for years because

of the Dorsey family. No wonder Mason was so repulsed when he found out she represented Dorsey International. But then, his

willingness to talk to her showed he was a man of exceptional upbringing. Mason himself was the picture of youthful charm,

looking every bit the energetic college student.

"Sure, if I ever have the chance to meet Everett, I'll pass on your message."

Mason looked down at his glass, lost in thought, "Yeah."

Brielle stood up, intending to leave, when he said, "Picking a fight with Tessa, that's bold. The Rowland family will be knocking on

your door soon."

Mason then stood up and went to settle the bill, "I'll drive you home. Where to?"

"Pearl Estate."

Mason gave her a surprised glance, "You make that much at Dorsey International?"

Brielle couldn't very well say it was Max who bought it, so she brushed it off. As they reached the hotel lobby, she heard

someone calling her name.

"Brielle!"

She stiffened, turning around in disbelief, only to see Tiffanie, arms covered in tattoos, swinging a purse and sucking on a

lollipop, waving at her from nearby.

Brielle hadn't expected to run into Tiffanie here. Seemed like her grounding had ended. Then, remembering Mason was by her

side, she figured this was about to turn into a battlefield.

One, the son of Everett with another woman; the other, the daughter Victoria was forced to have – a generational feud indeed.

Tiffanie strode up, her eyes lighting up at the sight of Mason. "Brielle, look at you, keeping a pretty boy behind my back and

Maxie's."

Tiffanie's blunt comment was scandalously shocking. Brielle hurried to explain, but Tiffanie had already grabbed Mason's chin.

"Got to admit, the pretty boy is quite a looker, Brielle. You've got good taste, though not as good as Maxie. Where did you pick

him up? Tequila Sunset? I want to snag one too."

Mason frowned, trying to push Tiffanie's hand away, but she skillfully slid her palm down, giving his waist a squeeze. His face

darkened instantly. "Please, show some respect."

Having spent years abroad and at odds with the Dorsey family, Mason hadn't kept up with their affairs and had no idea Victoria

had a daughter. And Tiffanie had no clue Everett had a son out there. The only one in the know was Brielle.

Feeling incredibly awkward, Brielle tried to remove Tiffanie's hand, but Tiffanie seemed quite taken with Mason's looks,

persistently asking where Brielle had found him. Plus, the fact they were seen at a Dorsey International hotel made things look

all the more suspect.

Mason looked even more outraged, especially after seeing Tiffanie's provocative outfit and her expert flirtation skills, and finally

snapped, "Let go.

Tiffanie's hand stung, and she quickly blew on it in disbelief, staring at Mason.

Taking a deep breath, Mason turned to Brielle, "Let's go, I'll take you home."

Brielle wished she could vanish on the spot, especially as Tiffanie blurted out even more brazenly. "Have you two done the deed

yet?"

Chapter 227

Brielle was utterly baffled, and Mason even more so. She desperately wanted to spill the beans right there, to let each of them

know who the other was, but Tiffanie grabbed Mason's hand with a firm grip, pulled a card from her purse, and slid it over.

"I meant it when I said I liked your look. Why the long face, big guy? Brielle, she's Maxie's girl, hands off. Stick with me, and you'll

live the sweet life.

Brielle opened her mouth to speak but ultimately said nothing.

Instead, Mason seemed galvanized by the card, looking at Brielle, "Ms. Brielle, you should head out."

Brielle wanted to interject, but Tiffanie's stare was unyielding, clearly signaling that if Brielle didn't leave, they were no longer

friends. With a heavy heart and frequent backward glances, Brielle made her exit.

Technically speaking, there was no blood relation between the two, but their respective identities were enough to make each

other's skin crawl.

Once in her car, Brielle felt the need to inform Tiffanie about the situation and texted her, but Tiffanie didn't respond, and Brielle

was left wondering what had become of them.

Stepping out at the entrance of her neighborhood, Brielle noticed several luxury cars parked, turning heads. She took a closer

look and was about to enter when a group of bodyguards emerged from a car and approached her.

Before she could react, they forcefully grabbed her shoulders. “Ms. Brielle, we’re with the Rowland family’s security. We need an

explanation for the malicious harm you’ve caused our young miss.”

Brielle’s brow furrowed, feeling as though her shoulders were about to be crushed. She had anticipated the Rowland family

might retaliate, but not this swiftly. And the lead car’s doors remained closed, leaving her to wonder who was inside.

Brielle bit her lip, struggling briefly. “By what right are you detaining me? Do you have any evidence that I’ve harmed Tessa?”

The bodyguards ignored her protest, pushing her towards the car, “The Rowland family has decreed that should anything befall

the young miss, Ms. Brielle, you will pay the price.”

Brielle ceased her struggle, surrounded by five fancy rides, each seating four, with a total of twenty bodyguards—not counting the

one in the lead car. The Rowland family’s show of force was like mobilizing to capture a traitor.

Once in the car, Brielle’s wrists were shackled with cold cuffs. She chuckled. “Since when does the Rowland family perform

police duties?”

The bodyguards felt she was incredibly naive. In their world, powerful families could do as they pleased, untouchable by the likes

of common folk. No one answered her.

Meanwhile, in the front car, Andrew twiddled with his phone. He had stayed put, curious about the Rowland family’s intentions for

Brielle.

Now that they had taken her, he debated whether to inform Max. Max’s true feelings for Brielle were a mystery. If he wasn’t

serious, she might not make it out alive from the Rowland family’s clutches.

After some thought, Andrew texted Max, asking for his location.

Max was in a foul mood that evening, joining Kenzo for a drink at his spacious villa, where Kenzo, an artist with a wide social

circle, had stashed away an impressive collection of fine liquors.

Members of other influential families, including Zaiden from the Rowland family and Sammuel from the Hatfield family, were

present.

In this upper-crust gathering, Kenzo's popularity was evident as everyone vied for a hint about his next project, knowing his

scripts could rake in millions.

As Kenzo entertained his guests, Max sat in solitude in a corner, nursing a drink, lost in thought until Andrew strode in and took a

seat across from him.

They drank silently for a moment before Andrew ventured, "I heard you bought some land from the Hatfield family. What's your

plan with that lot?"

The property was out in the suburbs, and any construction would typically require a bidding process. Max had signed a contract

with no bid in sight, as if he had bought it just for kicks.

"Brielle needs it, and I can provide," was all Max replied.

## Chapter 228

Andrew felt a pang in his chest. Aubree was also a woman he kept. Although he was known for his generosity, the idea of buying

real estate was still a bridge too far.

"So, I heard from Kenzo that you bought that house?" he asked.

"Is there a problem?" Max's reply was nonchalant, but his next words nearly sent Andrew through the roof. "Money is just a

series of numbers to me. If she likes it, then it's hers."

Andrew tightly gripped the wine glass, even considering raising his hand to test Max's forehead to see if he had a fever. Was this

guy for real? Did he not realize how absurd he sounded? Was this the same Max he knew?

Andrew felt a tightness in his chest, but the thought of Brielle deliberately provoking Tessa made it hard for him to swallow his

pride. Even if Max wanted to protect someone, he thought. Brielle should first get a taste of hardship with the Rowlands. He



could always play dumb about it later. So, he took a sip of his drink and decided not to tell Max that Brielle had been taken to the

Rowlands.

Instead, he sent a message their way: [Mess with her if you must, but leave her breathing.]

But just because he didn't spill the beans didn't mean no one else would.

Across town in the lobby of the Dorsey Hotel, Mason watched with an icy gaze as Tiffanie approached him again and again.

"Brielle just made Tessa pass out in anger. The Rowlands are going to come after her, and since you're her friend, you should

probably do something about it, right?"

Tiffanie's smile froze, her eyes widening in disbelief. "Tessa?! Oh no."

She had warned Brielle before: of all the ladies in Beaconsfield, Alivia and Tessa were the ones to steer clear of.

Seeing Tiffanie's reaction, Mason knew she was aware of who Tessa was and the consequences of crossing her. "Yeah, that's

right. Tessa, out cold thanks to Brielle."

Tiffanie, sweating bullets, seized the opportunity to grab Mason's wrist, while frantically dialing. Max on her phone. Everybody

knew Tessa was the Rowlands' darling. If something truly went wrong, Brielle wouldn't have enough lives to pay the debt. With

the Rowlands' reputation, would they let her off the hook?

Every second waiting for the call to connect was torture for Tiffanie. When there was no answer, she quickly called Brielle to

make sure she was safe, but Brielle's phone went straight to voicemail.

A bad feeling creeping in, Tiffanie dialed Max again, desperation in her taps.

Max, meanwhile, was still at the Kenzo residence, noticing it was getting late and thinking about heading home. But Kenzo

stopped him, suggesting they talk on the terrace.

Max had already ditched his suit jacket, leaving it with his phone on the sofa, and followed Kenzo outside.

Kenzo, sleeve rolled up to reveal a pale, delicate wrist, handed Max a cigarette. They rarely smoked, but neither would decline

the occasional drag.

Max lit up, his expression indifferent. "What's on your mind?"

Kenzo, with a wry smile, knew that to Max, his engagement with Alivia was only a business. merger. But to Alivia, it was her

heart's desire. She considered Max her possession, and anyone who tried to get in the way would pay a price.

Kenzo's gaze drifted through the glass doors to where Andrew was tampering with Max's. phone. He considered warning Max

but held his tongue.

Unaware of the unfolding drama, Max took a drag. "If I decide on who I want, I'll make it clear to

Alivia."

"And how will you decide?" Kenzo asked. How could a man who didn't know love understand about this intangible concept?

A flicker of frustration crossed Max's face. He could negotiate business deals, trade currencies with ease, but understanding his

feelings for a woman was uncharted territory.

Inside, Andrew had already answered the phone, Tiffanie's voice coming through urgently.

"Maxie, you need to call Brielle. I can't get through to her, and I heard she's made Tessa pass out. If it's true, the Rowlands won't

let it slide, and that jerk Andrew won't either. You have to do something—fast."

Andrew, that jerk? Was that what Tiffanie called him behind his back?

## Chapter 229

Andrew's face darkened in an instant, and he spoke with a chilling tone. "What did you say?"

It was then that Tiffanie realized she wasn't speaking to Max, but to Andrew. She swiftly thought to hang up, but considering

Brielle's situation, she knew she couldn't afford any delays.

"Aren't you? If you weren't backing Tessa, would she be so bold? I'm telling you, if anything happens to Brielle, Maxie won't let

you off the hook."

Andrew felt like his chest was about to explode, his teeth clenched tightly, "Tiffanie, who do you think you're talking to?"

"I'm not afraid of you like everyone else. Pass the phone to Maxie. I need to discuss Brielle's matter with him."

But Andrew hung up abruptly, leaving her with a headache from the frustration. Tiffanie tried to call again only to find she had

been blocked. A sharp glint passed through her eyes. This Andrew, he had crossed the line.

She then called Patrick, succinctly conveying the possibility that Brielle was having troubles. with the Rowlands. Patrick didn't

dare delay and immediately contacted Max. By this time, Max had already come back from the balcony, his phone gripped tightly

in his hand. And right on cue, Patrick's call came through.

"Mr. Dorsey. Tiffanie reports that Ms. Brielle upset Tessa and Tessa passed out, and now Ms. Brielle's phone is unreachable. I've

already had someone trace Ms. Brielle's cell, but the signal is being jammed."

Max's brow furrowed deeply, and he instantly turned toward Andrew.

Andrew was casually leaning back, legs crossed. Noticing Max's gaze, he looked up with a smirk.

"Andrew, is Brielle with the Rowlands?"

Andrew raised an eyebrow, leaning back further, "Yes, she must have gone through a round of punishment by now."

The moment his words fell, Max grasped the collar of his shirt. Their distance closed abruptly. and it was the first time Andrew

had been treated this way by Max, the air between them growing thin.

The other heirs in the vicinity had never seen the two in such a tense stand-off. Everyone knew how close they were, so what

was happening now?

Kenzo quickly stepped forward, placing a hand on Max's wrist. "Max, let's talk this out."

Max's gaze was

icy as he released Andrew's collar and strode out the door. Andrew adjusted his collar and followed.

Kenzo, seeing things escalate, quickly tried to ease the tension with a smile to the others. "Everyone, please, let's stay calm. I'll

go up and check on them.”

In the presence of these three big shots, the others didn’t dare to speak up.

Kenzo saw Max getting into his car, with Andrew following suit in his own vehicle. After a moment’s thought, Kenzo tapped on

Max’s window, but Max floored the accelerator, leaving Kenzo in a cloud of exhaust.

Standing still, Kenzo then turned to knock on Andrew’s window. The window rolled down, revealing Andrew’s frosty face, “What?”

His tone was unfriendly; he was clearly irate.

Kenzo couldn’t help but chuckle as he opened the door and slid into the passenger seat. “Your guys are grown men, still acting

like kids throwing tantrums?”

Andrew gripped the steering wheel, unable to hold back his complaints. “Wasn’t it him who threw a fit first? He himself said he

doesn’t like Brielle, so what’s wrong with teaching her a lesson for deliberately knocking out Tessa today? Plus, it was out of

consideration for him that I asked the Rowlands to go easy on her; otherwise, knowing their nature, Brielle would already be

dead.”

Andrew hit the gas, heading towards the Rowland estate. “Kenzo, you know Tessa is my life. Today she was rushed to the ER,

and I couldn’t even ask the doctors how she’s doing. I’m just so afraid that something would happen to him. Her health has

always been fragile over the years; sometimes I have nightmares that she’s suddenly gone. Brielle knew her condition and still

pulled this stunt. What does she take the Rowlands for, and what does she take me for? Without Max backing her, she wouldn’t

dare be so reckless.”

The more Andrew talked, the angrier he got, his eyes flashing sharply. “She wants to use Max to break into our circle, but in the

end, she’s just a clown.”

Chapter 230

Kenzo sat idly by, watching as a frosty expression took hold of Andrew's face, a fleeting glimmer of something indefinable darting

through his eyes.

Nobody could ever read Kenzo; of all his friends, he was the most even-tempered but also the most inscrutable. Max was as

cold as ice, Andrew as fiery as a blazing hearth, and Kenzo? He was the deep, unfathomable ocean.

The shallows were gentle, with hints of sun-kissed beaches and carefree days, while the depths were dark and impenetrable,

secrets lurking in the abyss.

Their other friend, he was the blade-sharp and sheathed, ready to cut deep at a moment's notice. Alas, he was still enlisted, his

return eagerly awaited.

Kenzo tilted his head down, slowly straightening the cuffs of his sleeves with deliberate nonchalance.

"You really don't like

Brielle?" Kenzo inquired, the words slipping out smooth as

silk.

Andrew scoffed at the question. "Of course, I don't. Women like her, with her background, they only latch onto a guy like Max

with one thing in mind. Ever heard of 'targeted hunting'? They make an effort to mimic what he likes, deceive him, win his heart,

and once they've got what they want, poof—they vanish without a trace. Today's women are too clever by half."

In Andrew's eyes, Brielle was worthless.

The distance from the Rowland estate was a good hour's drive, and with the present congestion, he didn't believe Max could

make it in under two hours. In fact, he quite relished the thought that the Rowland clan might have already done away with

Brielle. He regretted the orders he had given them because that meant Brielle was likely still breathing.

The Rowland family had no intention of sparing Brielle's life. Once Tessa woke up, they would have her come and dole out the

punishment herself, play with her prey until she was satiated. As for Brielle, she was nothing more than a fake heiress, utterly

insignificant.

Sophia, who knew the dynamics between Brielle and Max all too well wasn't going to be the one to expose this charade. After all,

if she did, the Rowlands would have to tread carefully around Max, not daring to lay a finger on Brielle. This time Sophia played it

smart, realizing that using others as pawns was the most advantageous strategy—a lesson learned from William, whose

directives were gospel to her.

Sophia watched as Brielle was tied to a chair, surrounded by several bodyguards, all awaiting Tessa's awakening. Through the

throng, Sophia's gaze met Brielle's, if only for a moment.

Brielle thought Sophia would dismiss the guards and then torment her personally. But no such luck. Sophia just flashed her a

strange, unsettling smile before walking away.

There's a saying: it's the silent dogs that bite the hardest.

After leaving the scene, Sophia headed to a hospital a few hundred meters from the Rowland

estate. Tessa had been admitted that very night, and for the sake of a convincing performance. she instructed the doctors to play

along once she was in the emergency room. Her health wasn't actually in jeopardy: she couldn't have the doctors actually use

their tools on her. So, under her menacing orders, the doctors idled away in the emergency room, doing nothing. After an hour,

Tessa was finally wheeled out, looking pale and weak, as if she'd been through an ordeal.

The doctors looked miserable. It was their first time being coerced into such a farce, all while real patients waited for treatment.

Their faces bore resentment, but out of fear of Tessa's threats, they remained silent.

Once in the hospital room, Tessa slowly opened her eyes and coughed weakly. "You do know what to say if anyone asks, right?"

Her frailty wasn't entirely feigned, every smile and frown seemed to drain her.

"Yes, Ms. Tessa," they replied.

Thirsty, Tessa turned towards the water dispenser. "Would you mind getting me a glass of water?"

Normally, the attending physician wouldn't cater to such requests—that was the nurses' job. But Tessa's commanding attitude

was so natural, even demanding that the attending doctor wait here until the Rowland family arrived.

"Ms. Tessa, I have other patients needing surgery," the doctor protested.

Tessa frowned. "Are they more important than me? When the Rowlands arrive, you'll need to explain my condition, won't you?"