

Master 231

Chapter 231

The doctor said nothing, feeling compelled to stay put.

Guards always kept vigil in the hallway, and the Rowland family arrived swiftly, with Tessa's dad, Austin, being the first to show.

Austin had secured his standing in the Rowland family thanks to his daughter, Tessa. Hearing of her plight, he had rushed over

from out of town. "How are you feeling now, darling?" Austin inquired as he approached Tessa's bedside.

Tessa coughed a few times, gesturing for the doctor to update her father. Reluctantly, the doctor complied. "Tessa's condition is

quite serious. Had we not acted quickly, I'm afraid... Moving forward, she should avoid crowded places."

Austin's fists clenched in anger. "I heard it was Spencer's ex-fiancée who caused this mess?"

Tessa had always played it smart around her family, never stirring trouble unless someone else foolishly provoked her.

Austin had barely finished speaking when Sophia burst into the room. "It was indeed Brielle. I was scared to death, Tessa."

Austin rose to his feet, his eyes glinting coldly. "Where is that Brielle now?"

Sophia took Tessa's hand, her concern evident. "The Rowlands have taken her in custody. They're waiting for you to recover so

you can confront her personally."

Another coughing fit seized Tessa, her cheeks turning a bright red. "Let the bodyguards handle her for now.

A wry

smile crossed Sophia's face as she sighed. "Tessa, even now, Brielle is smearing your name, claiming she's seen you checking

into hotels with men more than once. If that kind of talk reaches Andrew, what will he think?"

Panic gripped Tessa, her fury at Brielle reaching new heights. Austin, too, was livid. Everyone knew Tessa had lived a sheltered

life for years. Where would she find the time for such escapades? Brielle was blatantly lying.

Worried about his daughter's well-being, Austin quickly reassured her. "Darling, I'll get you out of here to recuperate at home. As

for Brielle, leave her to me. She won't leave the Rowland compound alive."

Tessa shared the sentiment. Brielle had crossed a line and would pay the price. "Dad, please make the arrangements. I can't

stand the smell of disinfectant here."

Austin hastened to consult the doctor about a possible discharge. The doctor internally rolled his eyes. Tessa was fine to leave.

Eventually, Tessa was taken back to her room within the Rowland family estate. The staff was on edge, scrutinizing every drop of

water she drank, fearing another incident.

Resting in her bed, Tessa inquired about Brielle's situation, Sophia handed her a warm cup of water. "She's still tied up

downstairs. What do you plan to do with her? Brielle is quite attractive, and we have plenty of bodyguards. Maybe we could offer

them a little 'bonus and let them have their way with her."

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Since Sophia's ordeal at William's place, she'd wanted Brielle to experience the same hell. Knowing Tessa's true nature, Sophia

suggested this with confidence.

Tessa hesitated, worried about Andrew's opinion of her, but Sophia deftly manipulated Tessa's emotions. "You know, there's

something I've been hesitant to mention. I was at the Haywood family's party, where I stirred up some trouble because I learned

something – Andrew slept with Aubree. Lillian told me herself. That night, I wanted to stand up for you..."

Tessa had heard this before but didn't believe it. Andrew had always treated her well, and at the Tequila Sunset party, he had

sent Aubree off with Mr. Lynch himself. "That's impossible. Lillian must be lying. If Andrew cared for Aubree, he wouldn't have let

her entertain other men. Don't talk like this again."

Tessa's tone was firm, but inside, a seed of doubt had been sown. The saying goes, "There's no smoke without fire."

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The words stung like a slap to the face. Was everyone in on it? Was she the only one left in the dark?

"Tessa, I just said they slept together, not that Andrew cares about Aubree. It was just a fling."

Tessa's chest heaved violently, and then she heard Sophia continue to stir the pot. "Brielle and Aubree are thick as thieves, and

let's just say Brielle's personal life is a bit of a train wreck. Aubree's not far behind, which is probably why she made a move on

Andrew. It's the early bird that catches the worm."

"Enough!" Tessa's voice cracked as she threw a pillow across the room, her face flushed with rage.

"Send those bodyguards

after Brielle! I want her ruined! And then let Aubree know, bait her into coming to the rescue. If she does, the bodyguards get a

bonus. I'll personally let Andrew know. I want to see whose side he takes those women, or mine."

Sophia barely contained her glee, nodding submissively. Once she left Tessa's room, she made her way to where Brielle was

being held.

Brielle's wrists were chafed red from the iron cuffs suspending her hands above her head. Seeing Sophia enter, Brielle smirked,

"What, couldn't resist coming to lecture me yourself?"

Sophia's lips curled into a sneer. "It's not me you need to worry about. Tessa wants to take you down. See those bodyguards

outside? She's promised them a feast for dealing with you – wants them to play you to death. I'm just here to give you a heads

up. If you manage to come out from under them alive, make sure you know who to blame."

A shiver ran down Brielle's spine, but she faced Sophia calmly, "I'm curious about what happened to you after your kidnapping

ordeal."

Sophia's face contorted with rage and she slapped Brielle across the face. The sound echoed in the room as Brielle's head

snapped to the side, a metallic taste filling her mouth.

Licking the blood from her lips, she chuckled, "Must have been similar to what I'm about to face. Let me guess, the Dorsey's dirty

work, William?”

Sophia’s eyes flickered with fear.

Despite her hands being bound, Brielle’s words were sharp blades. “William’s people had their ways with you, and you’re too

cowardly to retaliate, so you pin it all on me. Pathetic.”

“Shut up! Shut up!” Sophia grabbed a fistful of Brielle’s hair, pausing only when Brielle’s next words froze her in place. “Why

would William abduct you?”

Brielle had bluffed about William to provoke a reaction, but Sophia’s outburst confirmed her suspicions. At that time, William must

have known about her and Max, so the subsequent events made sense. It was only now that Brielle pieced it together.

Why would William abduct Sophia unless she had something he wanted? And what did William desire most? It’s leverage over

Max.

Max had been untouchable within the pyramid of power, with their relationship being his only weakness.

Did Sophia possess evidence of her affair with Max? In other words, Sophia knew about her and Max.

Brielle’s smile was blindingly sarcastic, and Sophia couldn’t stand it any longer. She wanted to rip out Brielle’s hair in her fury.

“You bitch! Didn’t I tell you to shut up?”

Pain seemed irrelevant to Brielle. Her physical discomfort was nothing compared to the torment her words inflicted on Sophia,

who was shaking as if her bones were being crushed.

Brielle stared defiantly into Sophia’s eyes. “You know about Max and me. If I survive this, you’ll be my first target. So, Sophia,

you better think carefully about how you can save me from this mess.”

Brielle spoke coolly, her lips a tight line. “If I don’t suffer here, you won’t suffer later. Or would you rather trade your life for my

disgrace? Sophia, you’ve lived in Tessa’s shadow all your life. Are you really content being her lapdog? William destroyed you

and turned you into his puppet. Don’t you want to fight back? I can help you.”

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The words were like a siren's song, her face an icy mask.

Sophia let go of Brielle's hand, her fingertips trembling uncontrollably. "How could William ever be wrong? His treatment of me is

justified. All he needs is for me to take you down. As long as I take you down..."

"And after you've dealt with me, what then? What's your prize, Sophia? For heaven's sake, you're a Rowland, aren't you? Has

your resolve really crumbled that easily? After just a couple of days of his mind games, have you caught a case of Stockholm

Syndrome? Wake up, girl. You're just refusing to face the truth."

Those words struck Sophia like a sledgehammer, mercilessly crushing her. Sophia's pupils dilated slowly, her body felt drained of

strength, and she wanted nothing more than to collapse

on the floor.

Brielle's words were as sharp as a knife, cutting deep without mercy. "I've heard a story before." Brielle continued, her voice cold.

"About a woman who was abused as a little girl. She lied to herself, claiming she liked it, and ended up selling her body. But at

twenty-five, she killed herself. She couldn't keep up the lie anymore."

Sophia clung to a nearby chair, her body trembling as she slid down to the floor. Dammit, Brielle, why did she have to be so cruel

with her words?

But Sophia had to admit, Brielle was right. She was lying to herself. She couldn't confront William, so she hypnotized herself into

believing that all her troubles were because of Brielle. If she could just get revenge on Brielle, everything would be okay.

Brielle had ripped open the darkest secret of her soul, exposing it to the light. Sophia wanted to laugh, and she did, a laugh

tinged with madness.

Brielle watched her without a word, slowly closing her eyes. Truth be told, she had no idea if Sophia would actually help her. She

was just buying time.

Wasn't Mason in touch with Tiffanie? Knowing she had offended the Rowlands, he would surely find a way to help, wouldn't he?

Although Mason seemed quite cunning at the party, Brielle had a feeling he wouldn't abandon her.

And then there was Andrew. He must know what the Rowlands were up to, given his ties to them. If Andrew knew, it was only a

matter of time before Max would find out.

"Sophia, have you made up your mind?" Brielle asked, her voice steady.

A look of manic hatred flashed in Sophia's eyes, but it quickly settled into a cold calm. "Brielle. what do you think you are to Max?

Did he ever explain his dealings with the Barnes family to you? Are you so sure that after being humiliated by the bodyguards,

Max will still take your back? That he'll stand up for you, a woman scorned, against his brother's girl and offend the Rowlands?

You really think too highly of yourself."

Sophia was no longer the same person she used to be. Regardless of whom she decided to retaliate against, the experiences

she had gone through were real. In her eyes, they all deserved death—William and Brielle alike. They should all go straight to

hell.

The chance to push Brielle into the abyss was right in front of her, and she wasn't about to miss it.

A sinister smile curled her lips. "Think you can talk me into helping you with your clever words? Dream on. You'll get a taste of

what those men are like."

With those words, Sophia walked out the door, leaving Brielle to the hungry gazes of the several bodyguards stationed outside. It

was as if their eyes were hands, stripping her bare.

Brielle furrowed her brows, sweat slowly tracing its way down her forehead. It wasn't fear that gripped her. If she truly faced what

was to come, she wouldn't give up on herself like Sophia had. She would make the Rowlands pay.

For now, she was relieved. The bodyguards hadn't come barging in yet.

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She glanced at the handcuffs that bound her wrists and struggled fiercely for a moment. The skin beneath the cuffs was no

longer merely reddened; now it was streaked with blood, yet she seemed impervious to the pain.

Outside the door, the murmurs of the bodyguards continued, while Brielle's sweat fell in heavy droplets to the floor. Suspended

like this, her body was in extreme discomfort, her mind taut with tension. If she screamed and shouted now, it would only play

into their hands.

She bit her lip, keeping silent, while internally she counted the minutes.

Ten minutes later, someone pushed the door open—it was Sophia. A stark contrast to her earlier hysteria, Sophia had regained

her composure, like a pot of boiling water pushed to its brink.

Brielle looked up, met her gaze, and cracked a smile. "I knew you'd come back."

Sophia crossed her arms over her chest, the resentment in her eyes as evident as ever, but she knew her emotions couldn't

touch Brielle in the slightest.

Brielle was a formidable woman. That was Sophia's current conclusion.

"Brielle, what did you think about what I said earlier?"

Brielle blinked away the sting in her eyes, ignoring the other aches in her body. "I didn't think much of it, but I know that if you

could bite your tongue with Tessa for so long, you're not a pushover. You value your life, so now that you know I'll go after you

once I'm out, you wouldn't just sit by and watch. Either you leave me here forever, or you help me, right?"

Sophia realized she had underestimated Brielle. With such a sharp mind, no wonder she topped the exams and excelled at

Beaconsfield College.

Sophia was a pragmatic person. Just as she realized she couldn't compete with Tessa, she became Tessa's little henchman,

running errands for her. Now that she found herself unable to contend with Brielle, she naturally wouldn't go looking for trouble.

"Sophia, I know you'd love to see me dead, but William will come after you because you're weak. Tessa bosses you around for

the same reason. Your weakness led to your tragedy, not my existence. Unlike you, if those guards left me with just a breath left

in me, I'd use that last breath to get back at those who wronged me, not hypnotize myself into shifting the blame."

Sophia sneered, "You're nothing without Max."

Brielle lowered her head and after a long pause, her smile slowly returned. "You asked me what I think I am to Max. I know I'm

nothing, but given his nature, he wouldn't let me be humiliated

by the Rowland family. He'll come for me; it's just a matter of sooner or later."

Sophia frowned, then nodded in understanding. "You said you'd help me. How?"

"The Rowland family will never value a side branch like you. Even if Tessa falls, they won't care.

about you. Your best bet is to strike out on your own. I've come across a company with great potential and I'd like to invite you to

be a partner. Interested?"

Money was never an issue for Beaconsfield's rich kids. It was everything else that was at luxury. Brielle was smart. She quickly

realized that if she couldn't invest in Mason's company under the name of Dorsey International, why not join as a partner?

Book could write a business legend in a short time; Mason's company could be the next unicorn she'd personally endorsed.

Sophia stood still, as if a revelation had struck her. But she had her doubts. "What if Max abandons you one day? What then?"

Sophia was different from the other women; she had never fallen for anyone. She looked down on those Beaconsfield heirs. She

was full of ambition and adept at masquerades.

Brielle chose her, not for anything else but because Sophia had survived the cunning William. Even if she played the part of a

naive heiress, she knew the score.

"I don't care if he abandons me. Max protects me now, and later, I'll protect myself. I've never imagined a future with him."

Her lucidity dispelled the last of Sophia's hesitations. She didn't stop loathing Brielle. She hated her still, but she realized that

since she couldn't change the sordid past, she might as well fight for a hopeful future.

"I just told the guards at the door that Tessa has new instructions and to wait. But I can't be sure Tessa won't come to torment

you herself. You better pray Max gets here before that happens."