

Master 301

Chapter 301

Ryan snorted dismissively, decisively abandoning any lingering suspicions he had about Brielle. “In the days since you vanished,

the Haywood clan became toast. Max made his move against them. At the last Hatfield charity ball, Lillian had the audacity to

slip something into Max’s drink. I can’t fathom where she got the guts.”

Max taking action against the Haywood family was publicly justified by Lillian’s bold move against him. Everyone knew the

consequences of riling up Max, especially by employing such sordid tactics.

As Ryan relayed the events, Spencer’s pupils dilated sharply, sensing he was missing a critical piece of the puzzle.

The charity ball hosted by the Hatfield family, Lillian’s tryst with Connor, and that morning. Spencer had witnessed Max with

Brielle in the elevator. Brielle, who had no business being there, was inexplicably present. Even if they had a professional

relationship, upon reflection, it seemed peculiar.

“Spencer, glad you’re okay. I’ll keep digging into this. You need to watch your back and not give anyone another opportunity to

hurt you.”

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But Spencer wasn’t really listening. His mind short-circuiting, unable to keep up. A ridiculous thought surfaced, which he

desperately tried to dismiss.

Impossible. How could it be?

Meanwhile, Brielle and her entourage had driven a few hundred meters away from the villa. A distant explosion sent them all

turning to look back.

The villa’s location was shrouded in dust and debris; someone had blown it up. Brielle’s eyes narrowed sharply, her lips clenched

tightly. The attack wasn’t targeted at Ryan but at them. Had they left just seconds later, they would have been reduced to rubble

alongside the villa. Thankfully, Ryan's intervention had bought them precious time.

Brielle was shaken and couldn't help but glance at Patrick. Patrick's usually composed face showed a fleeting trace of surprise

before settling into a frown. "Ms. Brielle, I'll look into this. Please secure a safe place for Mark. I'll have a new benefactor take

over the orphanage. The deeper your ties with those kids, the more they become your Achilles heel. You might save one. but you

can't save them all. It's best to cut these ties."

Patrick's gaze lingered on the rising smoke. His thoughts drifted to Max's current condition. and he felt a headache coming on.

"Ms. Brielle, don't say I didn't warn you. The moment your decided to get involved with Mr. Dorsey, you stepped into the

Beaconsfield ring. Your relationship will come out sooner or later, and it'll be fraught with danger. You might not even be able to

protect yourself."

Brielle lowered her lashes, acknowledging the harsh truth in his words. Julian should have been living out his twilight years in a

hospice, but because of her, he died with his eyes wide open.

To this day, she hadn't even seen his body.

Brielle was unable to reach anyone from the Haywood family, and as an outsider with no legal rights, she couldn't even arrange

Julian's affairs. It was all her fault.

Brielle closed her eyes in anguish, gathered her composure, and reopened them with an icy resolve. "I understand. Thank you,

Patrick."

Patrick nodded but chose not to burden her with Max's current plight.

The car stopped in a secluded area, and without a moment's hesitation, Brielle hurriedly arranged all necessary documents for

Mark. When Mark awoke, he was already en route to another city. Beside him lay a letter from Brielle, promising to take care of

the children, and a card with a password on its back.

Ten million the nest egg Brielle had left for his retirement.

Mark sighed as he looked at the card, and Brielle stood rooted to the spot, her heart heavy with the decision she'd made.

Mark had lived his whole life in Beaconsfield, and even if it wasn't the main city, he was accustomed to every flower and blade of grass around the orphanage. Now, at his age, he was being uprooted to start anew elsewhere.

Brielle was pressed for time and couldn't think of a better solution than to leave him money and a letter. She couldn't even face him

when he was awake, so while he was still unconscious, she had him sent away.

As Brielle turned to leave, her phone pinged. [Bri, I'm old, and it doesn't matter where I live. Take good care of

and live well.]

Her ears fell as she read the last two words, remembering Julian's last words to live well.

He was gone forever, and another was sent far away. She was now the quintessential sinner. A silent executioner.

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Feeling like a ton of bricks had settled in her chest, Brielle leaned on her cane and climbed back into her car.

After parking in the downtown core, she hobbled into a nearby diner. Her mind was still a foggy mess. She had skipped meals all

day, and now her stomach was punishing her, gnawing painfully from the inside. If she didn't eat soon, she'd likely pass out from

low blood sugar before even making it home.

She propped her cane beside her and ordered some comfort food – a cheeseburger with a side of fries.

This little joint was a stone's throw away from Dorsey International, drawing a crowd of white-collar workers from the

surrounding offices. In the world of finance, the hot topic was always the latest news. So, it was only a few minutes after sitting

down that she caught wind of the Haywood family's troubles.

The news had been buzzing about it for days, but for these folks, the angle was different. With the Haywood family in disarray,

who would swoop in to claim their slice of the market? How would the stock market react? Speculations on which stocks would

soar and which would plummet fueled the lively debates.

Amidst this chatter, Brielle felt like an outsider. It had been half a month since she'd set foot in Dorsey International, having been

on rest since her leg injury. But right now, the last thing on her mind was work instead, she pondered how the Haywood family

would handle the funeral arrangements.

After finishing her meal, she grabbed her cane and began the walk back to her car. Just then, a luxury car – one that screamed

millions pulled up beside her. Out stepped Catherine, the woman she had met the other day.

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Catherine's eyes held a flicker of disdain as they landed on Brielle and shifted to the cane. "How's the leg? Still not healed? Don't

tell me you're going to be a cripple," she sneered.

Brielle paused, turning to see Catherine clutching her designer purse worth a small fortune.

Catherine had felt a sting of guilt after intercepting a call meant for her husband days ago. Indeed, she had seen the Haywood

family's misfortune unfold stock prices were tumbling. contracts were being canceled, and debts soared into the billions.

Meanwhile, Kingston Enterprises had received a termination letter from Dorsey International in the same timeframe, leaving

Catherine restless and worried. The rumor mill suggested it was all because Catherine had crossed Brielle. Could Kingston

Enterprises face the same fate as the Haywood family? But then, last night, news came in from Dorsey International – the

partnership would continue.

With a weight lifted off her shoulders, Catherine felt ridiculous for ever being scared of Brielle, a divorcee. The memory of kicking

Brielle's cast that day and now seeing her with a cane all

helped dissipate the gloom a bit..

“Brielle, with your leg like that and the Dorsey family ditching you, you’ll struggle to find a man if you end up a cripple,” Catherine taunted.

Brielle tightened her grip on her cane, noticing Catherine approaching with the same malice as before. Catherine’s kick had

resulted in a second fracture for Brielle last time.

Seeing Catherine coming for her again, a sharp glint passed through Brielle’s eyes. As Catherine drew closer, Brielle offered a

thin smile. “Even if I were to lose a leg. I don’t think I’d be at a disadvantage.”

Catherine didn’t grasp the meaning behind those words. She strutted forward, and her foot was poised to strike, but Brielle’s

cane was quicker, jabbing Catherine in the stomach.

Catherine stumbled backward from the poke, landing squarely on her rear. The bustling street was full of onlookers, and they all

turned to see the commotion.

Red-faced with anger, Catherine noticed another figure stepping out of her car – her husband, Bradley, the CEO of Kingston

Enterprises.

Bradley looked grim and adjusted his tie. “What’s the meaning of this? We’re here to sign a renewed contract with Dorsey

International. There’s no need to provoke others,” he said sternly.

Clenching her fist, Catherine glared at Brielle, the woman who had embarrassed her. “Honey. this is Brielle, Spencer’s ex-fiancée.”

Before she could finish, Brielle interjected, “You could have done without the prefix. I’m the Director at Dorsey International, and

that title isn’t something to be ashamed of.”

Catherine’s nostrils flared, and she raised her hand to slap Brielle.

Brielle, tired of Catherine’s lack of lessons learned, extended her cane again, this time aiming for Catherine’s leg.

Bradley narrowed his eyes and sneered, "Make another move, and consider the consequences." Dorsey International's decision

to resume its partnership with Kingston Enterprises suggested that the gossip Connor had heard was false. Max hadn't canceled

the deal with Kingston Enterprises because of Brielle. It might have been a weighing of pros and cons, and now that

misunderstandings were cleared, both companies were set to collaborate happily.

As for Brielle? She wasn't worth a second glance.

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Brielle, unfazed by the expectation of her pausing at the words thrown at her, intensified her swing at Catherine's leg. Catherine

wobbled, nearly tumbling to the ground.

Bradley, having never been so publicly disrespected, especially by someone younger, felt his temperature drop. Catherine's

whimpering call prompted him to step forward and helped her to her feet.

"Ms. Brielle, as the Director of Dorsey International, you should be aware that we are one of your clients. Do you have any idea

of the repercussions of offending a client? If we bring this matter to Mr. Dorsey, I wonder whether your position as Director will

remain secure."

Brielle couldn't help but smirk. "Be my guest. I doubt you'd be foolish enough to back out of the deal voluntarily. After all, clawing

your way to this opportunity must've taken considerable effort. Mr. Bradley, instead of lecturing me, perhaps you should keep a

tighter leash on your better half. Otherwise, the next time she stirs up trouble, you might just lose this hard-earned opportunity."

Catherine, incensed by Brielle's belittlement, was about to retaliate when she was stopped by Bradley's stern admonition. "That's

enough. Why flex your muscles here?"

Catherine, not wanting to back down but noticing the bruise forming on her leg, felt aggrieved. "Brielle, just you wait. When I go

in to discuss the partnership, I'll make sure to report you to the senior management of Dorsey International."

Brielle raised an eyebrow, and her response was the same. "As you wish."

Shaking with anger but aware of the many eyes on them, Catherine clenched her teeth, not wanting to cause a scene. "Fine, but

don't come crying to me later!"

Bradley cast Brielle a lingering glance before heading towards the Dorsey Tower. From another vehicle, several top brass from

Kingston Enterprises eyed Brielle before departing.

Brielle stood alone and sighed. Had she just made enemies with Kingston Enterprises?

Inside Dorsey Tower, Bradley was escorted directly to the contract signing floor by a company representative, leaving Catherine

to wait outside.

Before entering the meeting room, Bradley didn't forget to caution her. "Don't stir up any more. trouble. With the Haywood

family's fall, everyone's walking on eggshells. Nobody knows what Max is really thinking. Settle your score with that girl later;

let's secure the contract first."

Though Catherine was seething, she knew she had to play along for now. During Bradley's absence, Catherine ran into Patrick.

Patrick, recognizing her, addressed her politely, "Ms. Catherine."

Catherine's demeanor instantly turned respectful, and she greeted him, "Patrick, I really owe you one for this contract."

Patrick was caught off guard. Hadn't the president already rejected the partnership with Kingston Enterprises? Why was

Catherine still talking about a contract?

Patrick frowned, trying to conceal his confusion with a smile.

"What exactly is the nature of the contract between Kingston Enterprises and Dorsey International?"

Trying to appear gracious, Catherine explained, “We were blindsided by Dorsey International’s termination notice. I didn’t sleep a

wink that night, only to receive a message last evening urging us to come today with the contract in hand.”

Patrick silently parsed the key points of this conversation. If the contract was being renegotiated, it certainly wasn’t Max’s doing.

Once Max decided to cancel, he wouldn’t backtrack. Even if he truly intended to let go of Ms. Brielle, he wouldn’t allow someone

who had bullied her to be so brazen. It seemed someone else was pulling the strings for the contract with Kingston Enterprises.

Patrick couldn’t be sure who it was.

“I see. Then, here’s to a successful signing for Bradley.”

“Absolutely. It’s a win–win for both companies after all.”

Catherine, considering Patrick’s position, pondered for a moment. “By the way, do you know Brielle?”

Patrick was taken aback. He had specifically looked into the truth behind Brielle’s second injury and was aware of the tension

between her and Catherine. Now, faced with her question, he replied, “I do know her. We’re colleagues, after all. Ms. Haywood

occasionally comes up for meetings. I’ve seen her a few times, but we’re not close.”

A spark of hope glinted in Catherine’s eyes. If even Max’s assistant claimed not to be close to Brielle, how could Max himself

have any significant involvement with her? She couldn’t fathom where Connor had heard such an unreliable rumor.

Frustrated by her own fears, Catherine grew more irritated. “When I arrived earlier, Ms. Haywood’s attitude was... well, let’s not

dwell on it. Fortunately, we’re still able to collaborate. After all, Ms. Haywood is an employee of Dorsey International, and I

Shouldn’t say more.”

A classic case of feigning retreat to advance. Patrick, a seasoned player in the game, knew exactly what she was implying but

chose to ignore it.

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“There’s a coffee station down the hall. I’ll have someone brew a fresh pot and bring it over. Please, have a seat.”

Catherine had thought that after the words she’d exchanged with Patrick, at the very least, he’d owe her some sort of

explanation out of sheer professional courtesy on account of Kingston Enterprises. But Patrick had artfully dodged the issue, and

he did so by bringing up such a mundane matter. If she were to press on, she’d seem uncouth.

“No trouble, Patrick. I can grab a cup myself,” she replied, her tone veiling her irritation.

She turned to head towards the coffee station but stopped in her tracks when she saw the elevator doors slide open, and Brielle

step out, leaning heavily on her crutch.

Didn’t Brielle just leave to catch a cab? Why the sudden return? The sight knotted Catherine’s brow further. Encountering Brielle

again felt like a bad omen.

By chance, the room where the contract was to be signed, and Brielle’s office was on the same floor. Brielle hadn’t expected to

see Catherine there, and seeing her now twisted Brielle’s features in displeasure.

Brielle had only returned because a colleague had called her about some crucial documents in her office. She had the keys and

needed to pass them documents on to someone in her department.

Pretending not to notice Catherine, Brielle aimed for her office door. Catherine, however, was not about to let her slip away

unnoticed. “Well, if it isn’t Ms. Haywood,” she called out

mockingly.

Brielle, irked but masking it with a smile, responded, “Surely you haven’t forgotten our run-in just moments ago?”

Catherine’s face stiffened, and her earlier resolve to heed Bradley’s advice was forgotten. She wanted to close the distance

between her and Brielle but hesitated. She remembered the crutch in Brielle’s hand and did not want to be humiliated like before.

So she held back.

“Ms. Haywood, we’re here to sign a contract with Dorsey International. By all accounts, we’re guests of your company. Shouldn’t

you, as a representative of Dorsey International, fetch me a coffee?” Catherine stated, looking expectantly at Patrick. “Don’t you

agree, Patrick?”

Patrick grimaced. He wouldn’t dare ask Brielle to pour coffee. Rushing to smooth things over, he offered, “Ms. Haywood isn’t in

the position to do so, but if you need it, I’ll get it for you.”

Catherine felt out of her depth. Although Patrick seemed merely an assistant, his longstanding rapport with Max suggested

otherwise. Many of Max’s decisions passed through Patrick influence not unlike that of a royal confidant. Who would dare cross

him?

As Catherine stewed in her indignation, a cold, detached voice cut through the tension. “The executive meeting is about to

commence.”

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Patrick froze, turning to see Max standing in the exclusive elevator, hand on the open button, and his gaze icy as it swept the

scene.

Patrick instinctively looked to Brielle, who stood rooted to the spot, eyes locked on Max.

Max’s gaze brushed over Brielle without a pause, as if nothing could stir the depths of his eyes, cold and fathomless.

Brielle recalled a time when she and Spencer had crossed paths with Max. She recognized that same impassive scrutiny.

With the elevator doors about to close, Brielle hurriedly handed the keys to Patrick. “Please, pass these on for me.”

Before Patrick could respond, Brielle made her way to the exclusive elevator. It was a struggle with her crutch, but she attempted

to step inside. The doors were nearly shut when she reached out, and her fingers fell short.

Then, from within, a long, slender hand reached out, halting the closing doors.

Max stood there, his presence chilling the air around them.

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Brielle nearly got frostbite from the icy draft that Max unleashed. Yet, there were things she felt compelled to probe on her own.

She needed solid answers, instead of tossing and turning in the dead of night, parsing the meaning behind each of his words

Max seemed to wear a mask. Impeccable on the surface, but the ripples in his eyes began to spread with Brielle's approach.

Brielle was already striking, and with her injury, there was a shimmering vulnerability in her eyes that made her look pitiable. A

stifling sensation crossed Max's heart. He frowned slightly. but his words were devoid of emotion. "Why are you here at the office

if your leg isn't healed?"

It sounded like nothing more than a superior's concern for a subordinate.

Brielle mustered her strength to hide her emotions, even managing to pull off a smile. "Mr. Dorsey, you've been a big help, and I

haven't had the chance to thank you yet.

Her heart twinged as if someone was kneading its softest part.

She had reverted to calling him Mr. Dorsey. It was a measure of her sense of propriety.

"It was nothing."

Max felt a sting in his heart upon seeing her equally cold demeanor. This was the outcome he wanted.

Brielle had already entered and kept a considerable distance between them. The elevator doors closed.

Catherine stood outside, and her heartbeat nearly stopped as she saw Brielle chase after Max. She worried there might be

something between them. But seeing Max's coldness towards Brielle, she felt a surge of relief. It appeared that Brielle was just

being presumptuous.

She laughed at her prior anxiety. Clearly, Max only saw Brielle as an ordinary employee, not offering her the slightest warmth.

Where on earth did Connor get his information? She'd have to have a word with him next time.

The elevator began its descent, indicating that Max had no intention of attending the meeting.

Brielle leaned against the elevator wall, catching Max's indifference in the reflection. She lowered her gaze.

The silence was sharper than a knife. Since it was so, she didn't need to rush to be the butt of someone else's joke. She

watched the numbers on the elevator panel, not uttering a word.

Max, though appearing detached, was surreptitiously observing her from the corner of his eye. He said it was a minor effort, but

did she really plan on showing no gratitude? After all, he had hid Spencer for days and had dealt with the Haywood family.

She was truly heartless. Even a stray dog knew to wag its tail when you threw it a bone. But

with Brielle, she wouldn't even offer him a glance. Fine, he definitely wouldn't be the one to break the silence.

A few seconds later.

"Does your leg still hurt?"

Brielle paused, realizing he was addressing her. Just as she was about to respond, the elevator jolted violently. Already unstable

on her crutches, she lurched towards him.

The lights inside flickered before going out entirely, and the elevator ground to a halt. The doors remained shut.

Brielle realized she was in Max's arms. The force of the jolt had thrown her against him. She wasn't heavy, but she still worried if

Max's hands were hurt. "Are your hands alright?"

Max's hands were momentarily numb, and his brow furrowed, but the darkness concealed their expressions from each other.

"Yeah."

Brielle sighed in relief and slowly disengaged from his embrace. Her crutch had fallen, and she bent down to search for it.

Her hand touched the cold fabric of Max's trouser leg. She quickly withdrew, stumbling over her words. "Sorry." She turned in a

different direction and continued feeling around for her crutch.

An emergency light in the elevator flicked on as Max pulled out his phone, noticing her crouched on the floor. The injured leg was

awkwardly bent.

He felt a surge of irritation. Couldn't she use her mouth to ask for help? Couldn't she just ask him for assistance?

The light flickered on,

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and Brielle spotted her cane lying just within reach, propped against the elevator's handrail. She leaned in to grab it.

Max couldn't help but let out a chuckle mixed with a hint of exasperation. "Ms. Haywood, you're quite the trooper," he said, his

voice tinged with sarcasm.

Brielle tensed, fully aware he was mocking her, and her temper flared. "Nothing compared to you, Mr. Dorsey. You're busy as a

bee, as always," she retorted. It was a clear jab at him for his habit of not answering calls.

Anyone else would think twice before speaking to Max in such a manner, but Max didn't get angry. Instead, he felt an odd sense

of helplessness, even a bit of bewilderment, about how to respond to her.

Amidst his silence, Brielle finally got hold of her cane and stood there in the corner, stiff as a board. After a long while, she

feigned composure and asked, "I know it might be redundant to ask, but are you planning to call it quits, Mr. Dorsey?"

For Brielle, mustering the courage to ask such a question was monumental. Max's actions had made his intentions clear; he

wanted to set boundaries between them. She had always found herself too timid and too reserved in the face of attraction. Her

past was far from glamorous, riddled with rejections and romantic tumbles, not to mention a family life in shambles. Yet she had

never shied away from any of it; she embraced it all, including the faint stirrings of her heart for Max.

It was her one source of pride.

Max didn't answer right away. The closed elevator was quiet. The seconds were ticking by, and their heartbeats were almost

audible in the silence. Just as Brielle thought he wouldn't respond, she heard a decisive, "Yeah."

Although she had anticipated this answer, she had clung to a gambler's hope for a different outcome until the very end. That

nascent flicker of attraction was snuffed out with Max's single word.

Max said nothing more, avoided looking at her as if he was holding back something, and forced his gaze elsewhere.

Brielle exhaled a laugh. "Well then, I wish you all the best in getting what you want, Mr. Dorsey." Max's Adam's apple bobbed; his

hand discreetly brushed over his chest.

It hurt a bit, but it was bearable. When breaking an addiction, one had to be resolute from the start. Any hesitation was harmful to

both parties.

Brielle closed her eyes, awaiting rescue, and no longer willing to invest her emotions in a lost cause. She should have

remembered that Max had made it clear from the beginning—he didn't

believe in love. It was all a dopamine-induced delusion.

She gripped her cane tightly, realizing that even if Max harbored a small affection for her, his formidable brain would immediately

take action to correct any emotional derailment, much like smokers contemplating quitting or drinkers pondering sobriety.

After all, dopamine wasn't exclusive to one kind of pleasure. And the only thing that could combat dopamine was dopamine itself.

Brielle chuckled to herself for a few seconds, having come to terms with it all.

Voices from outside indicated that someone had noticed the elevator malfunction. She breathed a sigh of relief, eager to leave

this confined space.

"Mr. Dorsey, Ms. Brielle, are you in there?" called out Patrick's voice, along with the sound of technicians and executives.

Brielle quickly responded, "I'm here. How long until the elevator is fixed?"

"Ten minutes, we're making it a priority," came the reply.

Brielle relaxed, choosing not to engage further.

Outside the elevator, Noah was standing with the executives. He had rushed over upon hearing that Brielle was at the company

today. He had promised Alivia to win Brielle over within a week. and yet, ironically, time had passed, and he had only met her

once.

He had called Alivia the night before to probe for more time, and she had given him a month. Noah felt embarrassed and was

eager to impress, now that he knew Brielle was trapped.

To him, Brielle and Max being stuck together was purely coincidental—he couldn't fathom any deeper connection between them.

Noah took a step forward; his tone was gentle. "Brielle, don't be afraid. The technicians are working as fast as they can."

Hearing this pretentious tone, Brielle couldn't help but cringe. Noah, with his unwarranted flower delivery and now this charade,

what was he playing at?

"Mr. Noah, rest assured, I'm not scared," she replied, almost defiantly.

Inexplicably, she glanced at Max.

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The chill in the man's aura seemed to grow colder, like the frost on a winter's morning.

Outside the elevator, Noah was blissfully unaware of the icy tension building inside. Hearing. Brielle's response, he mistakenly

thought his concern had not gone unnoticed, and he doubled. down on his effort. "Hey, I heard you hurt your leg. I know this top—

notch doc. Want me to take you over after work?"

Others from the company's upper echelon were also outside the elevator, but Noah didn't bother to hide his intentions. His

pursuit of Brielle was public knowledge, and so would be the eventual breakup. After all, the only one who would face

embarrassment was Brielle.

Noah planned to make the breakup a spectacle, hoping to gain some points with Alivia. With that thought, he felt quite pleased

with himself.

Brielle, on the other hand, found Noah irksomely verbose. She couldn't remember finding him this annoying before. She frowned,

aware that many eyes were upon them.

Surely, with Max trapped as well, the executives had all come to show their concern. Was Noah putting on a show for the whole

crowd?

Using the light from her phone, she noticed a slight furrow in Max's brow, suggesting he was also growing tired of Noah's

persistence.

"Brielle, that doctor is really good." Noah was now feeling relentless and noticed the murmuring of the executives around him.

All except for the HR Director and the Finance Director, who seemed at a loss for words.

Both were aware of Brielle's relationship with the CEO. Was Noah brazenly hitting on the boss' mistress? They looked at Noah

with a mix of pity and disbelief, but he was preoccupied with winning Brielle over and took no notice.

"There's this great steakhouse not far from the clinic, with a view overlooking all of Beaconsfield from the window seats.

Interested, Brielle?"

Brielle felt a headache coming on but kept her cool. "Thanks for the offer, Mr. Noah, but it's not necessary."

As she finished speaking, the elevator doors opened. Seeing Max, Noah reluctantly greeted him with respect, "Mr. Dorsey."

Max's expression was frosty: his gaze was like a sheet of ice. For a moment, Noah felt as though that look could shatter him.

Brielle ignored the tension between the two men. She felt a wave of dizziness from the sudden descent and took a moment to

regain her composure before speaking politely. "Mr. Dorsey, I'll be back at work as soon as my leg heals. I should head out now."

Max's lips pressed into a thin line, managing only a curt, "Hmm."

Watching Brielle leave, Noah hastily followed, "Brielle, you're injured. Let me drive you home. It'd be bad if the wound got

infected." He shadowed Brielle closely, reaching out to support her. Nearby, Max looked on, his countenance darkening. Patrick

instinctively stepped back to avoid. the chill in the air.

Max found the creature orbiting Brielle intolerably irksome, but what reason could he have to intervene?

His fingers twitched at his side, and he eventually instructed Patrick. "Take Ms. Haywood home."

He used the formal "Ms. Haywood," which seemed perfectly reasonable to the other executives – just a boss caring for his employee.

Patrick was tasked by Max, nodded, and approached Brielle.

Brielle, noticing Noah's persistence, finally stopped. "Mr. Noah, I thought I made myself clear last time."

She had been blunt when Noah bizarrely delivered flowers to her department. Why was he intensifying his efforts now?

Noah smiled, a calculating look in his eyes that didn't sit well with Brielle. She trusted her instincts: Noah didn't like her. In fact,

he loathed her. So why pursue her? Was someone pulling his strings?

"Brielle, I'm serious about you. If you don't like flowers, I can give you something else."

Brielle's stomach churned at the thought of those three fingers. "No, thank you."

Noah was certainly not the sender of that anonymous package.

Leaning on her crutch, she moved to leave, eager to escape Max's piercing gaze. She needed time to clear her head and to sort

through her thoughts.

She had imagined a million ways things with Max might end, but never in such a dismal fashion.

What was this? It was as if the universe was reminding her not to get too greedy.

Chapter 308

However, as luck would have it, when you're down on your luck, even sipping water can choke you. She had only taken a few

steps when her cane got stuck in a pothole that had appeared on the sidewalk. She yanked on it, but her strength was

insufficient, and the tip of the cane was firmly lodged.

This little mishap was the straw that broke the camel's back. Her eyes instantly welled up, her heart felt suffocated, and she

hastily pulled out her cell phone, intending to call Aubree. She needed someone to pick her up and save her from further

embarrassment.

Before she could dial, footsteps sounded from behind her. She stiffened. Was it Noah or...

Then Patrick's voice chimed in, "Ms. Brielle, let me drive you home."

Brielle felt a faint sense of expectation rise within her, which she found rather silly. "No, I'll call Aubree," she replied.

But before she could finish, Noah stepped up to her. "Brielle, don't be polite to me. You look a bit pale. Just get in my car," he

insisted.

Turning to Patrick, Noah continued, "Patrick, it's no trouble at all. I'll take Brielle home. And by the way, she's likely to be my

future girlfriend."

Women loved it when a man publicly claimed them. It fed their modest vanity. Brielle was just an ordinary woman and surely

couldn't resist his persistent advances.

Hearing Noah's words, Brielle's lips twitched slightly. "Mr. Noah, have you lost your mind?" After holding back time and again,

why couldn't Noah read the room?

"Anyone might be your girlfriend, but it won't be me." Her tone was indifferent; she was too weary to engage further with Noah.

Instead, she tried to pull the cane free again.

Realizing she couldn't do it alone, she turned to ask Patrick for help. To any onlooker, she simply seemed to have stopped in her

tracks; no one had noticed her cane trapped in the hole.

"Patr-" Before she could finish, a hand reached out from beside her and effortlessly liberated the cane.

The scent of natural cedarwood emanated from him, fresh and clear as ever.

Without even looking, Brielle knew it was Max. Only he had noticed her predicament. This realization brought tears to her eyes

again, but she pushed her emotions down. "Thank you, Mr. Dorsey."

Nobody expected Max to step up to Brielle's side, let alone perform such a gentlemanly act.

Noah, noticing Max's behavior, felt a pang of annoyance as if he had been bested. He hadn't noticed Brielle's cane was stuck.

He had lost Alivia, and now was he about to lose Brielle as well?

The thought made him exceedingly uncomfortable. He almost reached for Brielle, intending to usher her into his car, but before

his hand got halfway. Max spoke up. "The executive meeting starts in ten minutes. What are you all doing standing around?"

Max didn't need to be present for the executive meeting, which was why he had left early.

Reminded by his words, everyone snapped back to reality. The other executives quickly fawned.

"Mr. Dorsey, glad you're alright. We'll head up then."

"Mr. Dorsey, sorry you had to go through that."

Max ignored them, and his gaze was fixed on Noah, as if to say, what are you still doing here?

Noah, for all his bravado, couldn't defy Max and skip the meeting. He turned to Brielle. "Brielle, Patrick will take you home. Once

your leg's better, I'll take you out for dinner."

Brielle's lips tightened in what passed for a response.

Once everyone had left, Brielle didn't linger either. She turned to leave, but Max grasped her wrist.

"Mr. Dorsey, what is this about?"

her

Patrick, ever perceptive, discreetly retreated. Thus, in the vast expanse of the underground parking lot, only the two of them

remained.

Max didn't speak. Instead, he took her cane and scooped her up in his arms. He seemed intent on personally escorting her

home.

Brielle felt stifled. The break-up had been his idea. The harsh words had been his, so why did he seem utterly unaffected?

But let's face it, a woman's strength just doesn't stack up against a man's. She struggled for a bit, then gave in, allowing herself

to be gently placed in the passenger seat.

Max even did the chivalrous thing and buckled her in, just like in the old days. The gesture brought them so close they could

hear each other's breathing.

Brielle was the first to look away, fixing her gaze on the road ahead. "I need to get back to Pearl Estate."

"Alright."

Max settled into the driver's seat and was about to hit the gas when his phone dinged with a new message. It was from Andrew.

[I'm at Premier Palace, why aren't you here?]

Max frowned and ignored it, gliding the car smoothly out of the underground parking.

The air was thick with silence between them. Brielle, unable to stand the suffocating quiet and unsure of Max's intentions, rolled

down her window.

The rush of fresh air seemed to lighten the mood.

As they were approaching Pearl Estate, Max finally spoke up. "Noah's go

So, his pursuit of Brielle definitely wasn't genuine.

a crush."

Brielle was sharp; she caught the hint. But she was surprised he'd even care about Noah's affairs. She frowned, "On who?

Alivia?"

She thought the name would stir something in Max. After all, if Noah really fancied Alivia, wouldn't that make him and Max rivals

in love?

However, Max didn't even bat an eyelash, as if the name meant nothing more than any other.

"Yeah."

He wanted to add that Noah must've been up to something and was playing games. Max knew Brielle wouldn't fall for it, yet he

couldn't help feeling uneasy.

What if she fell in love with him?

Her words reached his ears, light and breezy. "So Mr. Noah's got a thing for Alivia, and is this all to get back at her by messing

with me?"

Knowing where Max's heart lay, she reverted to the old Brielle. There was no need to play small in front of him, as they were

never meant to be. She ripped away the pretense, exposing her true feelings.

Out of the corner of her eye, she watched for his reaction. As expected, his brow furrowed at her words. "Alivia and I go way

back, same with her brother – a lifelong friend. She wouldn't stoop to using such tactics."

Brielle chuckled softly, turning to gaze out the window. Right, when someone disappointed you, they wouldn't do it just once?

They were childhood sweethearts, inseparable since they were kids. And her? She was nothing. Not even a passerby in his life,

at best a fleeting breeze at Mr. Dorsey's fingertips, gone with a wave of his hand.

After that, Brielle fell silent and stayed silent all the

Until the car stopped at Pearl Estate.

Max intended to get out and open the door for her, but Brielle, leaning on her cane, got out herself. She walked past him, a few

steps away, before tossing over her shoulder, "Thanks, Mr. Dorsey."

Max's mouth tasted like he'd bitten into a sour lemon. He meant to follow her but then heard. Brielle continue. "No need to walk

me in." She was clearly shooing him off.

Watching her retreating figure, Max felt a twinge of frustration. He swore he'd never felt this choked up in his life, except with

Brielle.

Max had never really pondered what it meant to like someone, to feel love.

To Max, love was being happy around someone due to your brain flooding with dopamine. But as time passed, the dopamine

would fade, and if someone new came along, it would spike again.

That was why so many in Beaconsfield were always hopping from one romance to the next, never settling down.

At eighteen, Max understood that people just couldn't resist the pull of dopamine, especially for something as evolutionarily

critical as sex. So, in his mind, this thing called love didn't really exist.

He might as well head back to Premier Palace. Brielle didn't seem to care much about him anyway. As he was thinking this, his

steps, however, veered towards the estate's gate.

Chapter 310

If Patrick were here, he'd probably secretly mutter that Max wore that mock disgust so well, even when he was secretly pleased.

Brielle, leaning on a cane, moved at a leisurely pace, which gave her ample time to notice the newcomer striding through the

gates.

What was he doing tagging along?

Pearl Estate boasted a refined neighborhood ambiance that even the lobby's polished floors could reflect. Their shadows grew

closer on the gleaming surface.

"Mr. Dorsey?" she called out politely, catching sight of Max now standing before her.

"There's a matter concerning Bradley that I need to discuss with you." He was all business as if his hurried approach had nothing

to do with personal interest.

Brielle was momentarily baffled by this tactic, and when she gathered her wits, she found the whole thing ludicrous. "Mr. Dorsey.

I'm on the injured list."

"Your brain isn't what's hurt."

Brielle was no stranger to Max's biting wit, and his remark now sent a wave of heat coursing through her. It seemed to stoke the

fever she'd been battling all night.

"Then go ahead, Mr. Dorsey. Dock my pay."

She barely finished speaking when the elevator arrived. Without a second glance, she stepped inside and crisply pressed the close button.

Max caught just a snippet of her words. "After all, that card you gave me should be enough to keep me cozy for the rest of my days, Mr. Dorsey."

Left standing there, Max hadn't quite processed Brielle's parting shot. By the time he snapped back to reality, the elevator had already departed. She had left him behind.

The realization didn't embarrass him; after all, there was nothing Brielle could do that he couldn't rationalize.

He didn't follow her up but instead walked back to his car. Once seated inside, he pulled out his phone and saw a new message from Andrew, pressing for an update.

Ignoring it, he tapped on Brielle's contact instead. What could he say?

Rubbing his temple, he chuckled at his own sequence of reactions. What was he doing? Perhaps it was time to cool off and get a grip on his emotions.

After sitting in the car for ten minutes, he finally drove back to Premier Palace.

Andrew was lounging on the couch at Premier Palace, idly flipping his phone in his hand. Spotting Wesley still bustling about, he drawled, "When's the last time Brielle popped in?"

Wesley, unsure why Mr. Clements was inquiring about Ms. Brielle, responded conservatively. "Ms. Brielle seldom visits."

Andrew scoffed. Seldom? Now that he knew Max had taken an interest in her, he figured Max would want her glued to his side

around the clock.

Women were such a hassle.

Half an hour later, Max's car pulled up outside Premier Palace. He strolled into the lobby to find a flamboyant-looking man sitting

there.

Andrew paused his phone tossing at the sight of Max. "Where are you coming from?"

Max didn't bother to answer; instead, he gave Andrew a once-over and settled on another couch.

"Did you know Brielle's calls are getting rerouted to Kenzo? She also asked Aubree to ring me up; everyone's been looking for

you." A smirk played across Andrew's face, a hint of schadenfreude in his voice. "Max, don't tell me you're finally tired and

thinking of ditching her."

Wesley approached with two cups of coffee, ready to interject, but a look from Max told him to hold his tongue.

Max wrapped his fingers around the cup; his brows lifted slightly, "What if I am?"

Andrew nearly choked on his coffee, taken aback by what he thought must've been a hallucination.

Was Max actually suggesting he was tired of Brielle?

Andrew's eyes widened before he let out a light chuckle. "Figures, the Dorsey family doesn't produce lovesick fools. That's more

like it. You had me worried for a bit there. I can't for the life of me see what's so appealing about Brielle. She's so utterly average,

save for a decent face."

The comment struck a nerve with Max, causing him discomfort. "Still better than Tessa."

Andrew felt a jolt at the mention of Tessa, realizing Max was still defending Brielle. He softened his tone. "Yeah, yeah. So what's

this about being sick of her?"

Even in front of Max, Andrew reined in his temper. "As you can see, the Dorsey family doesn't entertain weaknesses."

A dark glint passed through Andrew's eyes. Was this not about eradicating a potential vulnerability once and for all?