

Master 311

Chapter 311

"Max, how about we hit the town tonight to celebrate, eh? Alivia's coming back soon, and since you've had your fill of Brielle,

maybe it's time to put a ring on Alivia? She's been waiting for you for years."

Engagement? The thought had never seriously crossed Max's mind.

"If she's getting engaged, it sure as heck won't be to me."

Andrew had been mid-sip of his water when Max dropped this bombshell. Andrew nearly choked on it. Everyone in Beaconsfield

knew Alivia was holding out for Max, but now the man himself was saying she shouldn't wait for him.

"Max, you're not pulling my leg, are you? Don't tell me you're oblivious to Alivia's crush on you."

"I've made it clear before, I'm not into her."

His tone was so firm it sent a chill through Andrew's spine. If Alivia wasn't in Max's sights, who was?

The women who had circled Max in recent years, those under thirty at least, were pretty much Brielle and Alivia. Any other guy in

Beaconsfield would be a fool to pass up Alivia for Brielle.

Unless they were blind.

Andrew cracked a wry smile, his thoughts drifting back to the image of Max beneath the blaze of a high-rise inferno. His gaze

was dark and inscrutable. "The Dorsey family and the Barnes clan are all looking forward to this merger of a marriage. If you turn

it down, you could be messing with family relations big time."

He couldn't believe Max hadn't considered this.

With a nonchalant lift of his eyebrows, Max replied. "I've made my stance crystal clear to Alivia herself. She's no fool."

But how clear-headed could a woman in love truly be? Max had never really fallen for Alivia, so he couldn't fathom the depth of

her infatuation.

As an outsider to their romance, Andrew kept his opinions to himself, yet he couldn't help but think he could smooth their path

somewhat. At least compared to Brielle, Andrew considered Alivia a friend.

He whipped out his phone and shot Alivia a text. [Max says he won't propose.]

Andrew had always been blunt with others, especially when it came to anything involving Max.

As expected, Alivia's reply came swiftly. Her devotion to the subject was clear. [Wait till I'm back in town. He'll change his mind.]

Alivia wanted to probe further into the situation with Brielle, like whether there was anything truly going on between her and Max.

But Alivia had already put herself out there enough.

Digging for more through Max's friends would just seem desperate.

It was best to ask her brother. If her brother said there was nothing to it, then it had to be true.

Max was destined to marry Alivia.

Andrew shared these details to Alivia, just to keep Max from getting stuck with Brielle, but he also knew his boundaries. It wasn't

his place to spill Max's secrets to Alivia. Besides, she would be back soon enough, and then others could fill her in.

Meanwhile, Alivia was in the company of Emily..

Emily's resentment had been simmering ever since the Hatfield family had cut her loose and sent her abroad with a ten-year

ban from Beaconsfield. It was because of Brielle, and the bitterness was palpable.

So when Alivia asked Emily about Max, she didn't hold back, embellishing the tale. "Ms. Alivia, you don't head back soon, I bet

Brielle will have Mr. Dorsey wrapped around her little finger. You haven't dealt with her directly, so you have no idea how crafty

she can be."

"She managed to get me kicked out of Beaconsfield. Max lets her have her way. I think he's completely under her spell. Never

thought I'd see the day when Max fell head over heels."

Exiled and heartbroken, Emily's infatuation with Max had turned to loathing now that she was in a foreign land. But this also

meant that no one was around to censor the words she said to Alivia.

Emily wanted to fan the flames of hatred toward Brielle. She might've lost to Brielle, but Alivia would never lose to that nobody,

that... bastard!

Alivia would be Emily's instrument of revenge.

Yet Alivia found these tales laughable. Max, bewitched by someone? Impossible. He was a born businessman, destined to

dominate any industry he took to, like his early days on Wall Street.

He was immune to the charms of women, especially someone like Brielle, who didn't even have a family name to claim.

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Emily continued to stir the pot.

"Ms. Alivia, you're busting your hump overseas for Max's career, while Max is back home and playing house with some trophy

girlfriend. Are you really okay with that? Did Max ever promise to put a ring on it? With no promises, you're still holding on after

all these years. I can't tell whether that's devotion or just plain foolishness."

But if mere words could sway Alivia, she wouldn't have gotten to where she was today. She had climbed her way up the

academic ladder to the research institute, unlike the shallow Emily. So, even though anger simmered inside her, Alivia still

believed in doing what was expected of her.

She cracked a smile. "Emily, I've known Max for years, and I know exactly what kind of man he is. You don't need to say these

things to get under my skin. Don't you understand why you've ended up in this mess?"

She leaned in close to Emily, her gaze dripping with disdain. "It's because you see Max as just another guy. That's what's fueling

your jealousy."

Emily's face turned a shade of sour grapes, not expecting Alivia to be so unmoved.

Emily stood up in a huff, no longer bothering to keep up appearances. "Alivia, don't get it twisted and think Max is all yours. Just

wait and see. When you get back, you'll see how much the tables have turned."

Alivia remained unshaken, confident in the knowledge that she had sent Noah to deal with Brielle. If Noah succeeded, what

chance did Brielle stand with Max?

A woman of Brielle's lowly stature could never catch Max's eye. Alivia didn't even have to lift a finger; by using others, she could

ensure Brielle wouldn't get far. She wasn't about to make an embarrassing exit like Emily.

After Emily left, Alivia sent a text to her brother. [Hey Kenzo, what's Max up to these days?]

Kenzo, lounging on the couch, saw the phone vibrate but ignored it. Ten minutes later, he picked it up and replied with a single

word. [Working.]

That wasn't the answer Alivia was

looking for. [Kenzo, you know that's not what I meant.]

Kenzo chuckled, his fingers tapping out a response. [Max isn't planning on settling down with anyone.]

Alivia breathed a sigh of relief. That was Max for you. And she didn't need his love, just his loyalty.

After sending the message, Kenzo stared at his phone, lost in thought. There was no reply—it seemed he had reassured his

sister.

Kenzo's place was a haven of tranquility, with hardly a servant in sight. In the spacious living room, he sat with perfect posture on

the sofa, thumbing through a book.

He recalled Andrew's nosy comments during a phone call about Max growing tired of Brielle. Was it true? Perhaps only Andrew

believed what Max had said.

Kenzo smirked, his mindset unchanged from the past. He enjoyed watching these clever souls hurt and chase after each other,

only to eventually drift apart.

However, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was off at Dorsey International lately. Max probably sensed it, too.

Meanwhile, Max sat on an oaken chair, opposite a man with snow-white hair practicing his calligraphy.

This was Michael.

Neither spoke, but Max was far from nervous.

Michael finished a piece of calligraphy and set down his pen methodically. "Bradley's business.

got snatched up by William last night. He came to me, and since the bid didn't seem like a bi

deal I let him go for it. I didn't realize it was a project you'd already vetoed."

He was explaining to Max, and that was precisely why Max had come tonight. Only in the afternoon, when Max saw Bradley's

people around, did he realize Bradley had signed a new deal without his consent. They'd gone over his head, straight to the

patriarch—what was this about?

"Father, I'd prefer you not to intervene in the company's affairs."

Michael rubbed his temples, aware that Max could be quite stubborn. A man with absolute control over Dorsey International

would not tolerate his authority being trampled on. It was a rule of survival in the business world.

"Max, I didn't expect William would want a project you'd already dropped. There was nothing. wrong with it, and Bradley chose

this company after careful consideration. Why kick them to the curb right before signing the contract? What will others say about

Dorsey International—that we're not true to our word?"

Max, of course, wouldn't admit that he'd done it because the wife of Bradley's CEO had wronged Brielle. Brielle's leg had

suffered a second fracture, all because of Catherine's doing.

"What does it matter if the world thinks we're not true to our word? It doesn't affect Dorsey International's standing."

In the face of absolute strength, rumors were nothing but passing clouds.

Michael stared at Max, having never doubted his son's competence, or perhaps his coldness. but it was only now that he

realized how much he'd aged.

He waved the matter aside. "Alright, then tell me why you canceled the partnership.

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Max's fingertips faintly stirred as he lifted his gaze. "Bradley's gonna screw up sooner or later." Michael arched an eyebrow, his

tone casual. "I recall Bradley's doing quite well for himself. He wouldn't have outplayed all those rivals if he wasn't.

"It's just a matter of time." Whenever Max wished for trouble, it would brew.

Michael choked on those words, feeling an even greater headache coming on. Sometimes, talking to his youngest son was

infuriating enough to drive a man to his grave.

William and Ryan were all respectful and deferential, but with Max, it was always Michael who ended up eating humble pie.

"Since William is so keen on this project, let him have at it. It's just a medium-sized venture, after all. He's done his fair share for

Dorsey International over the years; can't deny him this small request."

Michael thought back to last night when William suddenly showed up at the family mansion. dutifully sharing supper with him. It

was only afterward that William brought up Bradley, carefully omitting the fact that the project was one that Max had discarded.

What was William up to?

Max stood, understanding that Michael was playing the peacemaker, hinting that denying this favor would be a slight against his

elders. "This won't set a precedent."

Michael lifted a hand, pressing at his brow once more. "Yeah, let your brother have his way with it."

After leaving the family mansion and getting into his car, Max's expression darkened. William was aware of his ties with Brielle,

but just lacking any solid evidence for now.

William saw Max abandon the partnership with Bradley, and it probably spurred him to do some digging, which led him to Brielle.

But it was all speculation.

Such speculation, if brought before Michael, would embarrass himself. So, William shifted tactics, reclaiming the project. This

way, he could put Max in his place.

Not just that, but it could also sow discord between Max and Michael, and furthermore, strain Max's relationship with Brielle,

stirring up trouble.

Killing two birds with one stone.

Max pieced together the intricate puzzle, closing his eyes. William was meticulous, clever enough this time not to blab to

Michael, but retreating as a way to advance.

By bringing this matter to Michael directly, Max would inevitably raise Michael's suspicions..

Sooner or later, it would lead back to Brielle.

Patrick, driving up front, noticed Max looking exhausted and couldn't help asking. "Sir, are you worried about Ms. Brielle's safety?"

If she caught Michael's eye, no one could guess what Michael's would do, Given Michael's ruthless tactics against Everett,

Brielle wouldn't stand a chance.

It wasn't just concern; Brielle had already caught William's attention. It seemed necessary to take other measures. At the very

least, Max couldn't allow her to get dragged into this.

Facing Max's silence, Patrick knew he must've been pondering some issue. Patrick kept quiet.

As the sky darkened, a tense undercurrent flowed through Beaconsfield. Those with a keen sense sensed the change, but

outsiders remained oblivious.

Brielle, only half in the loop, knew getting close to Max meant trouble. But having reached out to him, she'd braced herself for

whatever might come.

Julian had passed away, and she'd sent the orphanage director packing. Brielle had no family in Beaconsfield, just a few

scattered friends. Yet she hadn't expected Max to push her away.

She stayed in her apartment for two days, refusing to wallow in a heartache that had begun even before love could take root. On

the third day, she decided to get out. Her leg had nearly healed. She could walk without a cane, but for caution's sake, she

brought it along.

Near Pearl Estate was a charming forest park, a perfect place for some soul-searching. As she stepped out of her complex, she

spotted a luxury car pulling up. Out stepped a woman—Catherine.

Catherine's eyes turned scornful at the sight of Brielle. "Well, look who it is. Ms. Haywood." Her tone dripped with sarcasm,

grating on the nerves.

Brielle stood at the curb, hailing a taxi, with no mind to engage her. Brielle leaned her cane against a tree trunk, and waited.

Catherine, noticing Brielle's indifference, twisted her nose in annoyance. Then her gaze landed on two kids passing by, likely

beggars aiming to scrounge up some cash from the well-to-do residents.

Catherine whipped out several bills, gesturing toward Brielle. "Snatch her cane, and this money's yours."

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Two ragamuffin kids, dressed in clothes that had seen better days, were torn by the offer made to them. The lure of money was

overwhelming, and one of them snatched the cash with lightning speed, darted over to Brielle, and bowed down to swipe her

cane before running off without a trace.

Brielle was caught off guard and could only watch as the two kids disappeared around the corner. She turned to Catherine, who

wore a smug grin and raised her eyebrows in triumph.

Instead of anger, Brielle felt only a sense of embarrassment for Catherine, who was tarnishing the reputation of Kingston

Enterprises.

In the luxury car, sitting next to Catherine, was her husband, Bradley. Bradley sighed at his wife's pettiness. "Why bother with a

woman who has nothing to her name?"

Catherine continued to revel in Brielle's awkward plight. "Honey, you don't understand. Brielle even set her sights on Max. She

was ogling him at the office, and I bet Max was annoyed. Who knows if she'll be able to keep her supervisor position."

Bradley was not one to overlook an insult, and his frown deepened at the thought of Brielle's impertinence. "She's clearly from

the wrong side of the tracks, and doesn't even know who her parents are. Arguing with her is beneath you," he chided.

Catherine snorted, "I don't care about that. The little minx was anything but polite to me. It's only fair she gets taken down a peg."

Bradley knew Catherine well. After years together, he was aware of her spiteful nature and anticipated that Brielle was in for

more trouble. Not that he particularly cared—Brielle was as insignificant to them as an ant on the sidewalk.

Casting one last look at the helpless Brielle, Catherine felt a rush of satisfaction. "Let's leave this nonsense behind and go

inside," she said dismissively.

Bradley nodded and stepped out of the car, not giving Brielle another glance.

Brielle watched them go, recollecting her encounter with the couple the previous day at Dorsey International, which hinted at a

brewing partnership between Kingston Enterprises and Dorsey International.

She pulled out her phone to check in with a colleague. "Is the Kingston Enterprises contract in its final stages?"

"Ms. Haywood, that contract isn't our department's responsibility. I heard it's with Mr. Noah for approval now. There should be no

issues."

Noah? Brielle frowned, feeling a sense of aversion. "Can you send a copy of the original contract to my email?"

Her colleague didn't object.

As Brielle ended the call and was about to head home, another car pulled up beside her—it was Spencer. And he didn't look

pleased to see her.

It seemed she really should have checked the horoscope before stepping out today.

She backed away cautiously, only to see Spencer get out of the car. Sensing bad luck, she quickened her pace.

Spencer, noting her limping leg, raised an eyebrow and stopped a step away. "Let me guess. my kidnapping had something to

do with you, right? Brielle, when I was released. I heard the sound of a cane on the floor. I didn't make the connection then, but

seeing your leg now, it all

makes sense."

His gaze sharpened as he looked at her. "I disappear for just a few days, and suddenly the Haywood family is in ruins. Lillian's

fate is unknown, and her parents are under police investigation, with Cameron looking like a lost soul. Brielle, you've outdone

yourself."

Spencer leaned in, his stare unsettlingly calm. "I'd love to know how you managed all this. I heard Max was behind the Haywood

downfall. On the surface, it looks like just business rivalry. but something tells me it's not that simple."

His tone was chilling. "How did you hurt your leg?"

Brielle hadn't anticipated that Spencer would turn so astute from a single kidnapping experience. He was able to point suspicions

at her based solely on sound.

However, they could only remain suspicions, as without her confession, Spencer had no case.

"A car hit me. Is there a problem?" Her voice was indifferent, but she saw Spencer stand up, his face darkening. "If the

information I gathered is right, it was Lillian who bribed the driver to hit you, wasn't it?"

Brielle's frown deepened, unsure of his implication.

Suddenly, Spencer grasped her chin firmly. "The moment Lillian caused your injury, Max targeted the Haywood family. You

managed to hide me away, and my father, with all his power, was unable to find me. Is Max the one backing you up?"

Spencer was not as naive as he seemed, connecting the dots with keen insight.

Brielle smirked, "If I had the charm to influence Mr. Dorsey, I would have had you taken care of."
"Brielle!"

The pressure on her chin intensified, and Brielle winced in pain.

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Spencer's chest heaved with the force of his fury. His eyes seared into Brielle as if they could shoot flames.

"I'm not kidding around, and don't you think you can keep fooling me. Sure, my relationship with Lillian was a mistake, but what

about your flings with other guys? How was that any better? We're both in the mud here. You better not have anything going on

with Max, or I swear, even as a ghost, I won't let you off the hook. We'll see about that."

Spencer released his grip, and his eyes were filled with venom. "When you were playing around. with other guys, I might have let

that slide, but if you're secretly seeing Max while putting me down, I can never forgive you.

Brielle found him utterly ridiculous. How did he manage to place himself in the victim's seat so quickly? She stood there, calm

and unmoved, and with a blank expression, she let out a cold retort. "Are you done? If so, you can leave."

Spencer's face turned a deep shade of red, but as he had said, everything was just speculation. He needed evidence. If he did

find proof, he would be willing to lose everything just to get back at Brielle.

How could he allow anyone to trample on his dignity like that?

Once his car had driven off, Brielle let out a sigh. Spencer was insufferable. Spencer had stewed for days before confronting her

because he was probably busy hunting for evidence. but after coming up empty-handed, he had erupted in frustrated anger.

Dealing with Spencer was becoming a headache for Brielle, but it wasn't the first time he had behaved so irrationally. He was like

a petulant child who believed that crying and throwing a fit would get him what he wanted. In reality, such behavior only ruined

whatever good was left in the beginning. It was almost laughable.

Back at home, Brielle decided to temporarily forget about Spencer's antics and focus on researching Kingston Enterprises. She

couldn't let it go. It was meant to be a distraction, but she had stumbled upon some intriguing leads.

Her lips curled into a slight smile. She had planned to visit Dorsey International the next day. but any delay might mean

Kingston's deal would go through. So, after a brief rest, she headed out with the documents in hand.

The elevator took her straight to the top floor, and as the conference room doors swung open, there was Max, emerging amidst a

cluster of executives.

Brielle saw him, and her body tensed involuntarily.

The HR Director and the Finance Director exchanged a glance, sensing an opportunity to curry favor with Max, and they hurried

to speak up. "Mr. Dorsey, Ms. Haywood is over there."

The HR Director had thought that sharing this information would lead Max to stop and chat

with Brielle, but Max merely gave Brielle a cursory glance, nodded slightly, and headed for his office.

What was going on? Max's demeanor toward Ms. Haywood was usually warmer. Had their relationship changed?

Their minds raced, and in an instant, they surmised that Max must have ended things. Men, after all, grew tired of the same

flavor, and there were already rumors that Ms. Alivia was Max's true love. Now that Ms. Alivia was set to return, it made sense

for the President to refocus his attention.

They had thought Ms. Haywood would be different, yet in Max's world, she was just another passerby. With this 'fact' in mind,

they scrapped the idea of using Brielle to get close to Max. It seemed wiser to align themselves with the future Mrs. Dorsey.

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Brielle caught Max's reaction out of the corner of her eye, but she didn't let it faze her. After all, the cat was out of the bag. She

had bigger fish to fry at the moment.

Her gaze shifted to Noah, and she strode over with determination. "Mr. Noah, I need to speak with you. Is now a good time?" she

inquired, her tone casual yet firm.

At that moment, Max had just reached the door of his office. Hearing Brielle's request, his hand paused mid-motion. He was

supposed to head in and shut the door, shutting out everything else, but a wrinkle formed between his brows. Hadn't he told

Brielle the other day that Noah was already taken? And now, here she was, on her day off, seeking a private conversation with

Noah. Was she really angling for a lunch date with the guy? The thought alone darkened his mood considerably.

The others in the office, eavesdropping on the exchange, were equally surprised. During the elevator mishap a few days prior,

most of the senior staff were present when Noah was notably attentive to Brielle and even invited her to dinner. Now, even as

Brielle was still recovering, she was making a point to look for Noah at the office. Were the two of them an item now?

Curious and confused glances were exchanged around the room.

Undeterred by the surrounding stares, Brielle kept her focus on Noah. A gleam of triumph flickered in Noah's eyes, tinged with a

touch of irony. He had wondered how long Brielle would hold out. It seemed just a few caring words from him had been enough

to make her cave.

"Easy prey," he mused. It looked like he'd be reporting back to Alivia sooner than expected.

His lips curled into a semblance of a sincere smile. "Sure, the restaurant I mentioned the other day still has a table free tonight.

I'll make a reservation right now."

Brielle frowned, sensing his misunderstanding, but didn't bother to correct him. "No need for a restaurant. Your office will do," she

stated plainly.

His office? Was she announcing in front of everyone that she wanted to go to his office? It seemed Brielle was ready to go

public.

Noah couldn't hide his elation; the faster this was dealt with, the better. "Alright, this way. please. After our talk, we can still hit the

restaurant for dinner. What kind of food do you like.

Brielle?"

As the two walked away, the rest of the upper management remained rooted to the spot.

Max, should have been inside his office by now, but there he was, frozen at the doorway as if struck by a spell. He noticed a few

glances in his direction but didn't react; his gaze followed Brielle and Noah toward the latter's office.

What on earth did Brielle want to talk about? Max's brow furrowed in thought. One might mistake it for concern over the

meeting's proceedings.

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Only Patrick, his right-hand man, knew the real reason for his boss' preoccupation. Max was probably green with jealousy.

Patrick subtly nudged him. "Mr. Dorsey, perhaps we should head inside.

Max pushed open the door to his office without a word; his face was a mask of indifference. Patrick followed him in.

Once seated, Max pretended to busy himself with some documents on his desk. Patrick, standing before him, noticed the papers

were upside down but chose to remain silent.

Max's concentration was elsewhere. His thoughts were on Brielle. After a while, he looked up at Patrick. "What's the name of the

restaurant Noah mentioned?"

Max had no clue about the place; he rarely dined out and usually stuck to meals at the Dorsey family estate.

Patrick, ever the proficient assistant, quickly found the restaurant's name. "It's a couples" restaurant, sir," he informed.

Max, who was holding a pen, nearly snapped it at the news. He managed to maintain his composure, though a chill seemed to

emanate from him.

Patrick grimaced slightly before he added, "Their most popular package is a couples' special. I hear it has great reviews and a

lovely view of the night skyline."

With each word, the atmosphere in the office grew colder. Sensing the mood, Patrick wisely clamped his mouth shut.

Meanwhile, in Noah's office, the door had barely clicked shut before Noah's hands began to wander toward Brielle's shoulder. He

was eager to close the deal and report back to Alivia.

For Alivia's sake, he was ready to go all in.

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"Mr. Noah, I assure you, I won't start anything if you don't. I've trained in taekwondo, and though my leg isn't fully recovered, I

won't get messed up in the office." Brielle's tone was nonchalant as she made her way to the couch and took a seat.

Noah's face tensed up, completely baffled about what she was getting at. Hadn't she already agreed to go along with his plans?

Was she playing hard to get?

He took a moment to collect himself before sinking into his office chair. "Alright, I'll behave. We have all the time in the world to

discuss things. So, what's on your mind?"

Was it the future? Dreams? Or something else?

Truth be told, Brielle was quite the looker. If it weren't for his feelings for Alivia, Noah would've considered keeping her close just

for her beauty alone. But with Alivia's brilliance setting the standard, Brielle just seemed bland in comparison.

"I heard Kingston Enterprises contract made its way to you, Mr. Noah?"

The last thing Noah expected was for Brielle to bring up business. His expression darkened a bit, but remembering that their

interactions were improving, he nodded.

"Yes, that project has been handed off to Mr. Ryan. Mr. Dorsey had a sudden change of heart about working with Kingston

Enterprises, and then the contract was pulled back. It's under review here before it goes to Mr. Dorsey."

William held a firm position at Dorsey International, stable as ever over the years. Compared to Ryan, who was ousted a while

ago, William was now second in command only to Max. Some of the staff even whispered about the changes within Dorsey

International, with William opposing Max.

However, only the higher-ups knew that no one could shake Max's position. Just like how easily he had Ryan pack his bags and

leave. Now, Ryan was desperate to return, but it all seemed futile.

Brielle had only intended to discuss the contract but found herself tangled in information she hadn't known. Had Max pulled the

contract with Kingston Enterprises? When did that happen? She remembered the bidding war ending not too long ago, so the

contract withdrawal had to be recent. Was it before or after Catherine's kick?

Despite her better judgment, she couldn't help but feel a peculiar sweetness swirling in her thoughts. Even if Max had decided to

distance himself now, during their time together, Max indeed lived up to his promise to look out for her. When someone treated

you well, you had to acknowledge it. So even if their relationship ended abruptly, she harbored no resentment towards Max. It

was just a matter of status, nothing more.

"Mr. Noah, what's your take on the project?"

Noah hadn't scrutinized the contract too closely since it was William's responsibility. It was

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just a formality in his office, awaiting his signature before it would be passed to William.

"It should be fine. After all, Kingston Enterprises fought its way through tough competition, naturally outperforming others in many

areas."

Brielle pulled out the file she had been holding.

"Kingston Enterprises has strong overall capabilities, but I've uncovered something troubling. The CEO, Bradley, has a son who's

been overly indulged by his parents. Two years ago, the boy was involved in a fatal accident, which never hit the news. However,

there are murmurs about it resurfacing. Moreover, he's deep into vices like drinking and gambling—reportedly blowing through a

billion in a month and accumulating sizable debts. His subsidiary is even behind on paying its workers. If this gets out, it'll

undoubtedly affect Kingston Enterprises, and by extension, Dorsey International won't escape unscathed. Switching partners

mid-project is no small feat."

Brielle's competence was unquestionable, and the vulnerabilities of Kingston Enterprises she outlined were real concerns. But

the project wasn't Noah's to manage, "I'll mention your concerns to Mr. Ryan, but whether he'll take them on board is another

matter."

Brielle lowered her gaze. Before coming here, she was unaware that Max had rejected the contract, so she didn't see anything

amiss with William's proposal to partner with Kingston Enterprises. Now, pondering deeper, she sensed there was more at play.

If Max had acted for her sake, then William's move might've been a ploy to force Max's hand. against Kingston Enterprises. What

William didn't anticipate was that Max and Brielle's relationship had already ended.

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Brielle's lips quirked into a half-smile as she leaned back in her chair. The pros and cons of the situation she faced were clearly

laid out in her mind. As for William's choice, well, that was his

After all, the project wasn't exactly small potatoes. If William couldn't handle this little venture without screwing up, it was his own

reputation at Dorsey International that would take the hit.

Rising to her feet with a measured nod, Brielle made her position clear. "That's all I've got to lay on the table, Mr. Noah. You go

ahead and weigh that as you see fit."

Noah was fuming, feeling like Brielle was lording it over him, but keeping his ultimate goal in sight, he tried to smooth his tone.

“Now that we’ve got the nuts and bolts out of the way, let’s chew the fat about something else. Brielle, what’s your take on me as a person?”

Noah wasn’t one for beating around the bush. He was supposed to get Brielle, bed her, and snap a few incriminating snapshots

for Alivia. Then, his status in Alivia’s heart would definitely improve.

Watching him nearly tripping over his own eagerness, Brielle couldn’t help but find it amusing. Noah wasn’t without talent, having

Inherited his position from his father. He rarely engaged in underhanded tactics, which made Brielle wonder whether to call him

naïve or just plain dumb.

“Mr. Noah, let’s not rush things. I’ve had a bit of a rough patch recently. Do you mind lending me an ear and maybe some

advice?” she asked, softening her voice.

Noah nodded. “What’s the issue?”

“Well, Spencer and I were engaged, right? But he’s been fooling around with Lillian, which is a slap in the face to me. There’s

this gorgeous friend of mine in Beaconsfield, and I was thinking of having her seduce Spencer, catch him red-handed, and make

sure the whole town gets a load of it. What do you think?”

“Wouldn’t that be like throwing your friend to the wolves? If Spencer’s a playboy, he won’t treat your friend any better. How can

you call yourself a friend if you drag her into your mess? Why involve a third party in your beef?”

Brielle arched an eyebrow, smiling slightly. “Isn’t what Alivia’s asking you to do, essentially throwing you to the wolves? If I were

as bad as you all think, how would you feel about approaching me? I’m not sure what Alivia’s angle is, but if you’re her pal, she

shouldn’t be pushing you around like this, right?”

Brielle’s savvy lay in framing the conversation around her own experience, effectively resonating with Noah. Unbeknownst to

him, what Alivia had asked him to do was no different. from Brielle’s own scenario.

Noah's face darkened, only then realizing that Brielle was hinting at his own situation. He was quick to disassociate. "Chasing

after you is my own decision; it's got nothing to do with Alivia. Don't paint her in a bad light."

"So, you agree that this kind of behavior is pretty low. Whether or not she put you up to this, Mr. Noah, you know the truth. I've

said my piece. Good day."

Brielle stood, not lingering for another word.

Meanwhile, Noah sat clenching the arms of his office chair. His expression was as dark as the bottom of a burnt pan.

He had rose-tinted glasses on when it came to Alivia and a strong distaste for Brielle, so he couldn't see it the way Brielle did—

that Alivia was throwing him under the bus. He took it as a sign of Alivia's trust because they were friends. Besides, it was

because of that trust that Alivial had entrusted him with this task.

And though he knew deep down that he and Alivia were a non-starter, he wouldn't let anyone else stand in the way of her

happiness. To an outsider, Noah's behavior might've been described with a popular internet lingo – he was a total simp.

Stung by Brielle's frank words, he felt a twinge of discomfort but thought the potential closeness with Alivia made it bearable.

Brielle was crafty, deliberately stirring up trouble between him and Alivia.

As Brielle stepped out of the office, she caught sight of Patrick waiting at a distance. She didn't assume he was there for her and

headed for the private elevator.

But then Patrick spoke up. "Ms. Brielle, Mr. Dorsey wants a word with you."

Chapter 319

Brielle's steps halted and she was utterly confused by what Patrick was trying to say. Her brows knitted together in a frown.

Patrick made a welcoming gesture with his hand. Having received so much help from Patrick. Brielle felt she couldn't put him in a

tight spot and reluctantly nodded.

Entering Max's office, she saw him seated behind his desk, leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed as if asleep. His scent

was always subtle, yet Brielle couldn't help but recall the steamy nights they'd spent tangled in the sheets. Only then did his gaze

burn hot, as if searing. into her soul.

"Mr. Dorsey." She called out, noting Max slowly open his eyes.

A flicker of puzzlement, then a spark of recognition crossed his face at the sight of her.

"What did you need to see me about, Mr. Dorsey?"

Max hadn't summoned her, but he guessed Patrick might've been overstepping.

As they exchanged glances, Brielle pieced it together, feeling a wash of embarrassment. "If there's nothing else, then I'll just--"

Before she could finish. Max cut in, "I have a business trip tomorrow. I'm heading to Oakwood Town."

Brielle froze, unsure why her boss would need to inform her of his travel plans. After a brief silence, she managed to say, "Oh,

well, safe travels, Mr. Dorsey?"

Realizing her response, she added, "But, a trip like that surely doesn't require you to personally grace the place, does it? Even if

it's to scout for materials or to oversee a new construction, that's usually a task for the business department to liaise with the

local government."

"Hmm, I've heard the Radiant Light Church there is quite famous."

So, he was going to visit a church? For what?

It probably had nothing to do with her anyway.

Her eyes dropped, and she was about to excuse herself when he suddenly asked. "Would you like to join me?" After beating

around the bush, he finally laid out the invitation.

The office fell silent as Brielle pondered whether this trip was a ruse or a genuine offer. potentially her last chance to spend time

with Max.

She smiled as she looked up with composed grace. "Sure, I'll go home and start packing."

Max grunted in approval; his satisfaction was apparent as he probably deduced that she would no longer be dining with Noah at some couples' restaurant.

Once outside Max's office, Brielle felt like she was floating on air. What was Max's angle?

Stepping into the elevator, she couldn't resist touching her cheek, feeling its warmth. This was the first time he'd proposed they

go on a trip together, a rare opportunity. She might as well treat it as a fitting end to their relationship rather than a farcical

conclusion.

She caught a glimpse of her hopeful reflection in the elevator mirror, and felt a pang of self-reproach. Was the fledgling hope

she'd just snuffed out beginning to stir again?

Back at her apartment, she eagerly began to pack, but paused when she spotted the vial. The last time, Ryan had threatened

her into poisoning Max, using Mark as leverage. Now that Mark was safe, Ryan's plans had stalled.

But if Ryan could threaten her once, he could do it again.

She frowned, feeling it was best out of sight, and tucked it into the back of a drawer.

After finishing packing, she received a call from Aubree. Aubree sounded thrilled, "Bri, it's your birthday tomorrow! Got any

wishes? I just scored big from Andrew, and how about I buy you a villa? Forget working at Dorsey International. We don't need

that grief. Trust me, once I hit it big, you'll have half of everything I own—except men, of course. But if you want a man, that's

negotiable; I just worry you might turn your nose up at Andrew."

Brielle smiled, knowing Aubree must have indeed struck gold. With the Clements family's vast empire and their status as the

country's leading diamond merchants, money was no object.

Only then did Brielle remember that tomorrow was her birthday. Was she gonna spending her birthday with Max at a church?

Her smile grew as her tone softened. "Actually, I'm going to the Radiant Light Church with Max tomorrow."

Chapter 320

Aubree thought she'd misheard, and was frozen for a few seconds before slowly saying, "Are you sure?"

Brielle, oblivious to her friend's tone, nodded affirmatively. "Yeah, just heard it at the office, and now I've packed up at home.

Sorry, Aubree, it looks like I can't celebrate my birthday with you, after all."

Aubree, holding a glass of wine, pondered for a moment and gently set it down. "No biggie. Tell me, what do you want for your

birthday? If not a mansion, how about an emerald? Andrew mentioned that Infinity Brilliance discovered this incredibly rare

emerald, roughly valued at seven million. Infinity Brilliance is looking for a buyer, and I bet Andrew is thinking of getting it for

Tessa. How about I get it for you with Andrew's money?"

Seven million? Aubree had always been generous, but she'd never splurged quite like this.

"Aubree, you don't have to. It's way too much."

There was silence on the other end before Aubree muttered, "If you're going to the Radiant Light Church, could you could you

pray for me or something? Just, you know, to keep me and Andrew together forever, and to never part. Even just to annoy him

would be fine."

Brielle could only guess at the pain behind Aubree's words, but she agreed, nonetheless.

By six in the evening, Brielle's doorbell rang. It was the doorman. "Ms. Brielle, this was left for you."

Brielle was taken aback. Her mind flashed back to the last unsettling delivery of three severed fingers, her brow furrowed.

First, she received flowers, then fingers, what could it be this time?

"Ms. Brielle, you must accept it. The person who sent it said it's something you need."

Brielle knew this mysterious sender meant her no harm, despite the macabre gesture of fingers.

"Alright, thank you."

Once the doorman left, she opened the box. Inside was a black ceramic urn and a note.

The note read:

-The Haywood family discarded Julian's remains. These are his ashes, Brielle. You must need them, right?

Were these Julian's ashes?

The Haywoods had taken Julian's body, and she, not being a direct relative, had no legal claim over it. She had hoped for a

shred of decency from them, for a proper send-off, but it seemed the Haywoods could always stoop lower than she expected.

Tears welled up in Brielle's eyes. Besides the urn and the note, there was nothing else in the

box. The Haywoods had cold-heartedly disposed of Julian, just to strike at her. She had thought they took the body to leave her

in anguish, not realizing they were capable of such. heartlessness.

Brielle lowered her gaze, holding the urn close, and feeling truly grateful to the mysterious

person.

Tomorrow, she'd take it to the Radiant Light Church, to cleanse away the Haywood's bad vibes, hoping Julian would be reborn

into a loving family.

She placed the urn in a prominent spot in the living room. Her lips curved into a faint smile, anticipating the next day.

As the clock struck twelve, she awoke briefly. Whispering 'Happy Birthday' to herself, she drifted back to sleep.

At six in the morning, she was up again, carefully packed the urn in bubble wrap, and placed it in a suitcase.

Brielle packed light, with just two outfits and some spare change for the church's donation box. She felt an unusual restlessness,

and was checking the time every few minutes, eager to know when Patrick would come to pick her up.

Around nine, her phone rang. It was Patrick. "Ms. Brielle, I'm sorry, Mr. Dorsey had an emergency and can't make it."

Brielle paused, wondering why Max hadn't told her himself. "Why the sudden change of plans?" Patrick hesitated before replying,

"Some urgent business came up."

Brielle had a hunch it was something he couldn't discuss with her. "Alright, I understand."

"Ms. Brielle, I can come to pick you up if you'd like to go. I'd be happy to drive you there."

“No need, I’ve decided not to go. My leg’s still healing, and I prefer to rest at home.”

Actually, her leg was fine, but she chose to go alone.

After hanging up, she didn’t hesitate to grab her suitcase and drive off, beginning her journey to the town, which she wouldn’t

reach until tomorrow. She filled the trunk with water and snacks, and hit the road, deliberately keeping her mind clear of Max.

By six in the evening, she stopped by a riverside, bathed in sunset hues, to rest and saw a news alert on her phone.

Dorsey International’s CEO spotted at the airport, possibly to greet his fiancée? Wedding bells were imminent for the two

powerhouses.