

Master 401

Chapter 401

After leaving Brielle, Dustin whipped out his phone and shot a text to Max. [Hey Max, had a blast at the casino with little B.

Planted a kiss on the back of her soft hand, and she blushed something fierce. Adorable.]

Max saw the message, as the business with the Dorsey family had already wrapped up. His face instantly turned to ice,

compounded by the sight of two messages from Andrew. The air in the car went subzero.

Patrick was sitting in the front and shivered involuntarily, wondering who had crossed Max this time.

A minute later, Max dialed Brielle's number. She was just about to step through the innermost door when her phone rang. She hit

the answer button.

"Where are you?" Max's tone was icy, and his anger was barely contained.

Brielle was puzzled at who might have upset him and answered truthfully. "At the casino. I wanted to snoop around about

Daniel's situation."

"You and Dustin having fun?"

Even through the digital divide, Brielle could taste the acidity in his question. Her heart fluttered, and she couldn't help but smile.

"How did you know?"

He hadn't reached out all evening and was probably tied up with something. Was he keeping tabs on her?

"Dustin was showing off to me." Max's voice was flat. It was obvious, even to someone as emotionally oblivious as him, that

Dustin was bragging in the most obnoxious way.

Brielle was amused and rushed to reassure him. "It was just a game of cards."

"I'm coming to pick you up."

There was no arguing with Max's tone. Brielle simply agreed, "Okay, that's fine."

After hanging up, Brielle rubbed her temples, thinking how childish Dustin was. She stood before a massive floor-to-ceiling

window. Inside was a den of vice and vigor, outside the sultry night of Beaconsfield.

Even though she came to investigate Daniel's case, she knew she had no chance to take him away, especially when even

Patrick couldn't do it.

She wondered if Daniel was being held against his will. And she was curious—who was the puppet master behind the

underground casino with such clout?

With these questions, she saw the door open and a gazebo appear on the farthest balcony. There stood a man, his back to her

as if he'd been waiting for some time. "Ms. Brielle, care to join me for a bit of moon-gazing?"

As she approached, she saw a cup of tea in his hand, a selection of delicate desserts laid out before him, and an empty cup. His

posture was erect, but he wore a mask that hid his true.

face.

Brielle sat down slowly and cautiously.

The man's elegant fingers poured her a cup of tea.

"Thank you." She replied casually, then took a sip. The tea was fragrant and clearly high-quality.

The man chuckled, appraising her, "Not afraid of poison, then?"

"If you wanted me dead, you wouldn't resort to such roundabout methods. Assam tea of such caliber—quite the expense."

Such tea was auction-worthy. She had never tasted it but had once had the fortune to smell it at a business negotiation.

Brielle's memory was exceptional, far beyond the average. The world was full of academically gifted individuals, but to be a top

scholar, one needed more than just to be book-smart. Interviews with such individuals often revealed a well-rounded

development, intellectually and otherwise. Intelligence wasn't something that could be drastically altered by sheer effort. This gap

between effort and true intellect could be disheartening, yet it was an undeniable truth.

Sitting there, Brielle sat up straight and spoke plainly.

"I want to know about the young master of Kingston Enterprises. Can you tell me about him?"

The man raised an eyebrow and, after a moment, chuckled lightly. "Daniel?"

"Yes."

"He's fine, though he lost quite the gamble."

"How much?"

"A life."

Chapter 402

Brielle was well aware that the young heir to Kingston Enterprises was no saint, but she hadn't anticipated him being this

reckless. No wonder he had been detained.

"If someone came to claim him, would you release him?" she asked.

"Of course not," came the reply with a sly edge. "But for you, Ms. Brielle, I might just consider it."

As long as he wasn't released, William wouldn't stand a chance. Therefore, Daniel staying put was actually to her advantage.

The man had already picked up his glass and was idly toying with it. "Men like Dustin and Max hold you in high regard, Ms.

Brielle. I'm quite curious about you."

"Do you fancy Max, Ms. Brielle?" The tone was casual, as if two old friends were catching up.

"Of course."

"And do you love him?"

Love? Brielle had never really entertained the concept, or rather, she had never truly encountered it. She acknowledged her

fondness for Max, secure in the knowledge it wasn't unrequited. If she hadn't sensed Max's affection for her, she would have

guarded her feelings closely.

Affection was like basking in the warmth of a cozy fireplace – you didn't ask others what warmth was; you simply felt it. If you

couldn't feel it, or if you found yourself seeking confirmation from a third party, then it was absent. That was why when she saw

girls online asking strangers if their boyfriends still liked them, she knew that those asking usually had their answer already.

But love was different – complex and yet pure. Affection was commonplace: true love was rare. It was an oasis in a long–

parched desert, a fleeting joy upon first sight – both eternally scheming and dirtied with thought.

Having once ventured into a real desert during her college years, Brielle understood that oases were indeed scarce, but the

endless sand was the norm. So she remained silent.

Pleased by her reticence, the man said, “Mr. Dorsey should be arriving soon. I’ll have someone escort you out.”

Brielle nodded politely, unsure of his intentions but eager to leave.

A waiter soon approached and led her towards the exit. As she walked away, she glanced back. at the man still seated in the

gazebo. His fingers caressed his glass, and a slight smile played at the edges of his concealed lips.

Brielle frowned but didn’t dwell on it.

Once outside, Tiffanie was waiting anxiously at the exit. Upon seeing Brielle emerge, she quickly circled her, checking for any

harm. “Thank God, I was terrified you’d been chopped up or something.”

She let out a sigh of relief. “Maxle would have killed me If anything happened to you.”

As she finished speaking. Max’s car pulled up.

Tittanie, feeling a tad guilty for having brought Brielle to the casino in the first place, avoided. Max’s gaze and quickly ushered

Brielle into the car, “See you next time! Have fun.”

“Bang!”

The car door closed, and Tiffanie sauntered off to her own convertible.

Brielle swallowed, sensing the chill in the car’s atmosphere. “I can explain,” she said in a gentle voice, not minding playing the

peacemaker.

Max’s gaze fell on the back of her hand.

Brielle had thought nothing of Dustin’s European manners. A polite kiss on the hand was customary, after all. But under Max’s

scrutiny, she felt that patch of skin burn. Her fingers curled involuntarily, and before she could react, Max was wiping her hand

meticulously with a disinfectant wipe, as if handling a precious artifact.

Brielle knew he was upset, but his careful actions conveyed respect and care.

Affection was like moon-gazing. You didn't just see the moon. It illuminated you even before. you looked up.

And so, she was willing to let her guard down around Max, even relinquishing control of her body to him. She couldn't help

feeling shy in his presence, her transparency leaving no need to hide her emotions.

Yet she was certain – she didn't love Max. Or rather, the moment hadn't come for her to feel that she loved Max.

Chapter 403

Max wiped his hands on the napkin, his gaze lifting to meet hers. "So, the bigwig from that underground poker den didn't give

you any trouble?"

Brielle didn't need to elaborate. She could tell Max had a pretty good idea of the hand she'd played that night.

200

"Nah, I did run into him, though. Is he from around Beaconsfield? Do you two know each other?" Max shook his head, his

fingertips casually tracing the edge of his own glass. The gesture held no disrespect; rather, it was oddly captivating. "The casino

doesn't intersect with Dorsey International's business. We're not acquainted, just aware of each other's circles."

Hearing this, Brielle had a hunch that the man she had just met was more familiar with Max than he let on. Otherwise, he

wouldn't have asked those questions.

Upon reaching the Premier Palace, Brielle didn't play coy about going home. It wasn't her first time here, after all. She followed

Max with the ease of familiarity, her curiosity getting the best of her. "Where were you tonight?"

"The Dorsey family. Ryan went and spilled the beans about William's stunt to Father."

Brielle's lips twitched into a wry smile. She'd expected Ryan to make a move, but not this swiftly.

She waited for Max to continue as they approached his bedroom, but once the door shut behind them, the room plunged into

darkness. Guided only by the faint streetlights outside, Brielle could barely make out Max's silhouette. His fingers traced a path

from her neck down her arm, coming to rest on her wrist. The spot where she should have worn the rosary he'd given her

was bare.

Brielle held her breath, feeling her heart leap into her throat with each of Max's deliberate touches. It was as if he was clueless

about the art of flirtation, yet every move he made was irresistibly stirring. She was about to tiptoe up for a kiss when she heard

him say, "Father. demoted William and instructed me to call Ryan back to Dorsey International to take over some of his duties."

This was a clear cut to William's influence, but was this really the time to talk business?

Brielle's cheeks flushed, realizing she'd been too eager. She coughed softly, lowering her tiptoed stance.

"In doing so, my own position is secured. William's definitely harboring resentment towards Ryan. Their little tug-of-war might

just keep him from scheming against me for a while."

The recent ordeal with Sarah had left Brielle feeling vulnerable. If she couldn't confront William head-on, then she'd have to play

the long game, letting others restrain him.

"And with Daniel detained by the casino, William has lost his grip on the young heir. His plans.

to pressure Kingston Enterprises into a contract concession have backfired – not only has he alienated them, but he's also

brought Ryan back to Dorsey International. Talk about a botched. job."

Brielle was quite pleased with the chaos she'd orchestrated. Ryan was more manageable than William. If she could bring Ryan

back to Dorsey International, she could just as easily send him packing again.

"Max, I—" Before she could finish, Max's phone buzzed to life, shattering the intimate atmosphere. It was Dustin calling.

Max didn't answer; he simply hung up.

But seconds later, a new message popped up on his screen. [Little Brie didn't resist my arm around her tonight. Does that mean I

can whisk her away on a vacation next time? *smug*]

Some people just couldn't help but be sleazy.

Chapter 404

Max tasted the bitter sting of jealousy for the first time, as if a glass of lemonade had spilled over, sour and unrelenting. He

glanced down at Brielle, feeling the chill around him grow colder by the second.

Brielle shivered slightly, puzzled at the sudden shift in his mood.

"Did you let Dustin wrap his arms around you?" he asked, the jealousy in his heart seeping into his words.

Brielle was taken aback. Had Dustin hugged her? She couldn't recall for sure, but she remembered feeling unusually at ease

around him. She knew Dustin was a charmer, but from the first time they met, his gaze upon her had been nothing but genuine.

Now that she thought about it. Dustin had indeed embraced her. A flicker of guilt crossed her face.

That flicker was enough to intensify the jealousy swirling in Max's chest. He took a deep breath. pulled her into an embrace, and

then slowly guided her towards the plush bed by the floor-to-ceiling window.

Brielle resisted a little. "I'd like to take a shower."

Max pecked her on the lips, sensing her reluctance, and let her go.

She got up and retrieved a silky nightgown from the bedroom wardrobe before retreating to the bathroom. As soon as the sound

of running water filled the bathroom, Max heard a knock at the door—it was Wesley, the butler.

"Sir." Wesley said, bowing respectfully, "there are a few details to discuss regarding Ms. Martha's transfer."

Max frowned. Martha had been insistent on returning to her home country, so he had been in the process of coordinating with

facilities back home, but he wasn't comfortable with just any facility, hence the meticulous selection process. Martha had suffered

her incident back home. and Max could not afford to take any chances.

After showering in another room, he headed to his study. The computer was on, with several people waiting on the other end for

an online meeting. Dorsey International had a diverse portfolio, but it hadn't ventured into healthcare. If anyone in Beaconsfield

had clout in the medical field, it was the Rowland family.

The Rowland family's main business was healthcare, with stakes in several of the country's most renowned hospitals. Without

hesitation, Max had reached out to the Rowlands and secured a spot in one of their best nursing homes.

The Rowlands, aware that Martha would be in their care, were on high alert, leaving no stone unturned to ensure her comfort.

Just as Max finalized these arrangements, the study door opened. Brielle entered, her hair loose and wearing a silken nightgown

that highlighted her delicate skin. She had a perfect

complexion, and the steam from the shower had flushed her skin, making her look even more enticing.

Max's eyes darkened at the sight. He shut down his computer, walked over to her, and pressed her down onto the soft leather

sofa in the study.

Brielle blushed, sinking into the sofa's cushioning embrace.

Max's kisses were gentle, cascading over her skin like water. Her skin flushed even more, yet he kept her pinned beneath him,

carefully observing every nuance of her expression. He wanted more than just to see her belly exposed; he wanted this

hedgehog to unfurl completely, to reveal every inch of herself to him.

For Brielle, the physical sensation overwhelmed any embarrassment she might have felt. She suspected Max was still angry,

and his actions now were a deliberate display of that anger.

Their skin touched, their warmth mingled, and she felt too exhausted to protest. Yet, whenever she tried to speak, he would steal

away her breath, leaving her gasping for air.

A jealous man could indeed be frightening. In the end, Brielle surrendered, limp as if boneless. Deep down, she knew Max

wasn't just upset about Dustin. It was also because she wasn't wearing the string of beads he had given her—a gift he must have

pondered over deeply before presenting it to her.

But Brielle didn't want to wear it. To her, Max was like a rare diamond, which she wanted to keep hidden, away from prying eyes.

The moment others noticed the diamond's brilliance, more would covet it, and she didn't feel strong enough to protect it. If she

lost the diamond due to a moment of careless pride, the regret would haunt her for life..

She was also grateful to Max. He acted rather than questioned, showing a ferocity that was absent from his usual detachment.

She loved his restraint and his calm, but she also loved him. now, colored with passion.

Chapter 405

It was 3 a.m. when everything came to an end, and she was too exhausted to lift a finger.

Max scooped her up and headed towards the master bedroom. He was only wearing a robe. In her groggy state. Brielle couldn't

help but worry about being caught by someone. But as it turned out, they went unnoticed, and once she was laid on the bed in

the bedroom, she fell into a deep sleep from sheer fatigue.

Max fetched a towel from the bathroom and gently wiped down her skin inch by inch. So when Brielle woke up the next day, she

felt clean and refreshed all over.

Lazily snuggled in bed, she didn't want to move, and noticed it was still snowing outside.

Max must have gone to the office by now. She lay there for another ten minutes before slowly getting up. Right after freshening

up, there was a knock on the door. It was the butler, Wesley.

"Ms. Brielle, breakfast is ready." he announced.

Feeling weak all over, Brielle mustered just enough energy to head downstairs for breakfast.

Wesley had thoughtfully set up her laptop for her. After eating, Brielle settled on the couch with her laptop to take care of some

business matters. She first touched base with Mason, discussing the ten-billion-dollar fund situation.

There was silence on Mason's end for a few seconds before he asked, somewhat uncertainly. [Could you repeat that? How much?]

Even through the screen, Brielle could imagine his expression. [Ten billion.]

Mason was silent for a full minute before sending a message. [Brielle, you're a legend!]

Brielle chuckled, feeling a great sense of satisfaction.

After cheerfully replying to Mason, she opened the company's official forum. Sarah's name was still in the headlines, but Brielle's

was not. She checked the outside public opinion; everyone was waiting for the police results.

Brielle had already stepped out of this mess, but another piece of news caught her eye on the website. It was about Max and

Alivia's upcoming engagement.

She frowned and couldn't help but scroll through the feed, discovering that the speculation was due to Max's black bracelet

going missing.

She couldn't help but ask anonymously, "Why does a missing bracelet signal an impending wedding?"

The buzzing forum went quiet for a few minutes before replies started pouring in.

"Because Alivia's rosary is missing too."

"Yeah, I just saw a photo of Alivia abroad, and the thing on her wrist is indeed gone."

"Did they make some kind of pact?"

Seeing this, Brielle continued scrolling and Indeed found a recent photo of Alivia, sans bracelet. Both of them had worn identical

pieces before, and now both were missing, which naturally fueled speculation.

If it weren't for Max's rosary ending up with her, Brielle would have thought the same.

Brielle closed the forum; she wasn't angry but felt like she'd been hit with a mallet.

Alivia could involve herself in Dorsey International's affairs. The Barnes family was on good terms with the Dorsey clan. Alivia's

brother and Max were longtime friends, and she had been admitted to a top-tier research Institute. Alivia and Max were

childhood friends.

If Max's life were a movie, Alivia would be the tailor-made leading lady. She had looks, family background, and capability – she

had it all.

Brielle dropped her gaze, thinking not only of these but also of Alivia's tactics.

Alivia was quietly stirring up trouble from abroad. She was clearly up to no good. She had already made her move; Noah was but

a pawn.

Taking a deep breath, Brielle didn't look any further but felt a sense of impending crisis.

That afternoon, she still went to the office. Shortly after arriving at her desk, a colleague came in and informed her of a meeting

on the top floor in twenty minutes.

Brielle nodded, picked up her documents, and headed to the private elevator. But what she didn't expect was to find Spencer

inside.

By now, her feelings toward Spencer were not just of disdain but of outright disgust.

Max had been rather rough the night before, leaving not an inch of her skin untouched, so she had worn a white scarf today.

However, to a veteran like Spencer, it wouldn't be hard to guess why she was wearing a scarf.

Just as Brielle thought to step back, Spencer's hand shot out and yanked her inside. "Let go!" Her tone was cold, and then her

scarf was pulled away, revealing a patchwork of marks.

Spencer's pupils shrank violently, his grip on her shoulders almost uncontrollable. "Brielle, how low can you go? Do you actually

enjoy being his plaything?!"

Chapter 406

Brielle took a deep breath. Her leg swung up in a swift arc aimed squarely at his groin.

Spencer was clouded by anger and failed to dodge; his face turned ashen with pain.

Brielle found him repugnant. Her disdain was so intense that merely sharing the same air felt suffocating. "Spencer, whether I

like someone or not is my business. We're not even strangers at this point. What gives you the right to pass judgment on my

life?"

Spencer, wincing with pain, shot back a furlous glare. "Don't play dumb with me. I know that guy is Max. You've been rolling in

the hay with him, and you really think he's into you? Alivia will be back in town soon, and you won't even see what hit you.

Brielle, once he tires of you, he'll kick you to the curb."

Hearing the certainty in Spencer's voice, Brielle knew he must have found some damning evidence.

Spencer sneered, "You only threw yourself at him to get back at me, didn't you? Does he know why? A woman who'd give

herself away so easily just to spite her ex-fiancé is hardly worthy of affection. Brielle, you should really know your place."

Spencer wished he could hurl every insult at Brielle. The marks on her neck were so fresh. They must have been from last night.

How dare she?

Just thinking about them tangled up all night made his stomach churn with nausea.

The elevator had reached the top floor. Tired of the exchange, Brielle was about to exit when Spencer added, "Brielle, you'll

regret this."

Brielle paused, fed up with Spencer's nonsense. She stepped back towards him, closing the distance between them.

"Regret what? Regret sleeping with such a catch? You're right, Spencer. I do enjoy being with him. What about it?"

A look of surprise crossed Spencer's face, and for a moment, he was at a loss for words. In his mind, even if Brielle were the

lowest of the low, she wouldn't stoop to such vulgar speech. Yet not only had she spoken those words, but she did so with a

chilling detachment.

His Adam's apple bobbed involuntarily, finding her sudden change from icy to desirous strangely alluring. The stark contrast

excited him in a shameful way. He couldn't help but wonder what Brielle was like in bed. Was her voice as enticing as her

defiance?

His eyes betrayed too much, and Brielle frowned in disgust. "Keep your filthy thoughts to yourself. I told you before, I'd rather hire

an escort than be with you."

Her words were a brutal stomp on Spencer's ego. The physical pain had subsided, and now Spencer straightened up, his laugh

cold. "You'll come crawling back to me in tears one day.

Just wait."

Brielle shuddered with revulsion, eager to leave the elevator. Spencer followed, his face a pallid mask of fury.

As Brielle approached the conference room, she saw Ryan.

Having fought hard to return to Dorsey International, Ryan was now the picture of success, greeting the executives one by one.

Seeing Brielle, his smile widened. "Brielle, perfect timing. I have you to thank for this turn of events."

Ryan, the old fox, was deftly shifting the attention. It was as if he was saying to everyone, "Curious how I came back? It was all

Brielle's doing. She was the mastermind behind my return."

Brielle kept a composed face, though inwardly, she rolled her eyes at his ingratitude. "Mr. Ryan, you jest."

i everyone

She chose not to elaborate. In times like these, the less said, the better. After knew she had recently suffered from cyberbullying.

She wouldn't have had the time to meddle in Ryan's affairs. Ryan was simply seeking a scapegoat, and they were not fools.

As the atmosphere grew tense, William arrived. Despite a significant fall from grace, William maintained his trademark smile,

though his eyes lingered on Brielle for a moment. Brielle pretended not to notice and followed the other executives into the

conference room.

Ryan and William remained behind. William's expression darkened, while Ryan's smile persisted.

"William, I look forward to

learning from you again."

A portion of William's business had been allocated to Ryan, who had also intended to push the troublesome Kingston

Enterprises contract onto Ryan. The young heir of Kingston Enterprises had plenty of skeletons in his closet, which, if exposed,

would affect the business deal. But Ryan, having grown wiser during his absence, flatly refused. Thus, William was stuck with a

project he knew was doomed.

Damn that Brielle. A chill passed through William's eyes, but when he spotted Spencer, an ideal took root.

Chapter 407

Ryan had been keeping an eye on Spencer, but the man seemed to be miles away in his own head.

Giving him a nudge, Ryan

said. "Keep your head in the game up here, and Brielle's job will be yours before you know it."

Spencer didn't respond. He just nodded. He wasn't part of the upper echelon at Dorsey International anymore; he had no

business attending meetings. Seeing Brielle so smug and successful only twisted the knife deeper for him.

Everything Brielle has now, she took from him- the prestige, the social standing, and even the man she's associated with. Isn't it

only because she knew him, a member of the Dorsey family. that she found herself in the arms of Max? Just thinking about it

made his blood boil.

As soon as Ryan left, William clapped Spencer on the shoulder. "Chin up, Spencer. At the end of the day, this is all on Brielle."

Spencer remained silent, but his hand, hanging by his side, clenched into a fist, throbbing with pain.

William noted the look on Spencer's face and allowed a crooked smile to form. "Taking complete control of someone is easy,

especially someone like Brielle. Crush her career. alienate her friends, break her spirit, and she'll see your worth when she's lost

everything. You can't be soft with women, Spencer. Brielle has too much right now, and you're just an option to her. But when

she hits rock bottom, she'll realize how precious you are."

William was a master at manipulating emotions. Seeing the longing in Spencer's eyes, William gave his advice from the

perspective of an elder, but every word was laced with the temptation to lead Spencer astray.

Spencer, however, was blind to this. He felt every word was gospel truth. Brielle was too arrogant. Only by breaking her, piece by

piece, would she give him a second glance.

Spencer lost all restraint as he remembered his sleepless nights while she reveled with Max. Why should he suffer alone? If

misery were the game, then they would all play.

Sensing Spencer's resolve, William patted his shoulder meaningfully and then entered the boardroom.

The meeting lasted two hours, and Max was absent. Brielle knew Max was a busy man and didn't bother to track his every

move.

When it ended, she grabbed her documents and was about to leave when she heard William call out. "Brielle."

She frowned slightly but still managed a smile as she turned. "Mr. William, what can I do for you?"

William approached her slowly. "I heard about your triumph at the casino last night.

Congratulations."

Brielle knew she couldn't keep it a secret; the high society was a small world, and by now, her name was surely making the

rounds.

"You've surprised me." William's voice was soft, almost intimate, as he leaned in. "Being with Max without any real commitment,

don't you feel undervalued? You know, my son is about Max's age. If you were with him--"

She cut him off mid-sentence. "Mr. William, is this about the ten billion? I'd think you're not that hard up for cash."

This stung William, his usually calm and collected facade cracking as he pressed his lips together, staring coldly at Brielle.

Brielle met his gaze unflinchingly, lifting the documents in her hand slightly. "Sorry, I've got work to do in my department."

The other executives hadn't left yet and had witnessed the tense exchange. The HR Director inwardly admired Brielle's fortitude.

She had managed to strip the cunning William down to his true colors.

William's face remained frozen for a full minute, rooted to the spot. By the time he snapped out of it, Brielle was already gone.

Fuming inside, he wanted nothing more than to tear the insufferable woman apart. But with all eyes on him, he had to maintain

his composure, so he smiled at the other executives as if nothing had happened.

They all felt the awkwardness of the moment, pretended it hadn't happened, and quickly dispersed. –

What irked William the most was Ryan passing by with a deliberate sneer. Ryan was impulsive and vicious, but these childish

acts made William lose it.

Taking a deep breath to compose himself after everyone had left, William kicked over a nearby chair in a fit of rage. "Bitch!"

Chapter 408

Brielle leaned against the cold marble column near the elevator, her gaze following Ryan and Spencer as they approached.

Before they could spot her, she deftly slipped behind the pillar, out of view.

Ryan, true to Brielle's expectations, was at loggerheads with William. When Ryan was part of the Dorsey International team, he

hung on to every word William said. Even if he begrudged it inwardly, he was professional on the surface. There was a time

when Ryan thought he and William were teaming up against Max. After Max had him ousted, Ryan had sought out William,

hoping for some brotherly intervention to get him reinstated. William, however, deflected with excuses at every turn.

After a few such encounters, Ryan realized they were never really a team, just two soldiers fighting their own separate battles..

Now that Ryan had stepped over William to make his comeback, he wasn't about to start showing any deference as he used to.

Ryan seemed to be in high spirits, a smile playing on his lips as he waited for the elevator. He playfully clapped Spencer on the

back. "Spencer, you didn't let me down this time, buddy. Clever move aligning with Noah," Ryan said, barely containing his glee.

"You should have seen. William's face just now. Oh, it was priceless!"

Spencer didn't seem to share his father's enthusiasm. His mind was elsewhere as he asked, "Dad, is it true that Uncle Max's

mom is considering moving back stateside?"

Ryan's expression stiffened, his mood souring. "Why do you care about her? That crazy old bat, always causing a scene at the

drop of a hat."

Ryan's face twisted with distaste as he massaged his temples. "Don't worry about things that don't concern you. Focus on how

you're going to convince Max to give you a promotion. You can't just keep doing the small-time deals under Noah's shadow. It's

beneath a Dorsey family member."

Spencer took a deep breath. A promotion from Max? That was wishful thinking—Max would probably be happy to see him gone.

But it didn't matter. With Max's mom coming back, Alivia's status would skyrocket, and Brielle would have to face the harsh

reality that she meant nothing

to Max.

With a sneer, Spencer followed Ryan into the elevator.

Once they were gone, Brielle stepped out from behind the pillar. Tiffanie had already informed her about Max's mother's potential

move back home, and Alivia's likely return. Max hadn't attended today's meeting—was he busy with this?

Brielle tried to focus on her work in her department but found it difficult to concentrate on the tasks at hand. As the day neared its

end, her phone rang. It was Tiffanie.

“Brielle, have you seen the news?” Tiffanie asked.

1/2

12:57 L

Charder 40p

“What news?”

Tiffanie sounded exasperated. “About Alivia coming back home, of course. The media is all over it. She’s being hailed as a

prodigy, the youngest head of a research Institute,”

Brielle flicked on her computer and, sure enough, Alivia was the headline, Alivia may not have been a stunner at first glance, but

she had a gentle beauty and soft-spoken manner.

Prominent universities back home were even sharing the news of her return—a level of clout that seemed reserved for Alivia

among her peers.

Tiffanie was still talking. “Do you have any idea what being the head of a research Institute branch means back home? That’s a

position with massive resources at your fingertips. I bet. Dustin’s visit was tied to this.”

“Isn’t Infinity Brilliance a leader in the diamond Industry? What’s that got to do with a research institute?”

Tiffanie realized Brielle was clueless and patiently explained. “Dustin may be a playboy, but his family is old money in North

America. Diamonds are their main gig, sure, but they have deep ties to international politics—royalty even. He turned down a title

from the Queen, for goodness’ sake. Plus, research Institutes abroad often link up with capital and need funding—big funding.

And guess who’s the major shareholder in most of them? Infinity Brilliance. So, when you hear about an institute expansion, you

can bet Dustin’s financing it. Why else would he be here now?”

Brielle knew—Infinity Brilliance was a powerhouse, but she hadn’t realized Dustin’s influence ran so deep.

Tiffanie, not hearing a response, thought Brielle was disheartened. “Hey, don’t worry. Max is into you right now, and that’s what

matters. Forget Alivia. She doesn't mean a thing to him. But I just wanted to give you a heads up—Alivia isn't as great as

everyone says. If you cross paths, just be careful, okay?"

Chapter 409

Tiffanie had her reasons for being so wary of Alivia, especially since she'd seen firsthand how Alivia tormented any woman who

showed interest in Max.

Alivia was born with a silver spoon in her mouth, and her path as the darling of high society was set from the moment she drew

her first breath. She was nothing like Tessa. The Rowland family hadn't given Tessa much attention until recently, so she

cherished her newfound influence all the more.

As for Alivia, she believed the world revolved around her, and Max was tailor-made to fit into her orbit. Still, her brand of

arrogance was unlike most; at least to elders and peers, she lived up to the label "exceptional."

Had Tiffanie not witnessed Alivia, in a fit of spite, crush the hand of a young, promising pianist with her stiletto heel, she might

have been fooled into thinking Alivia was mild-mannered.

The pianist was touted as the next big thing, a veritable prodigy, but after that incident, her career was over, and she

disappeared from the public eye. Everyone whispered about an accident, but Tiffanie knew it was sabotage.

Alivia was cold-hearted and a master of disguise, and Brielle was no match for her.

Despite Tiffanie's warnings, it was too late. Alivia had already removed her rosary, a clear sign. she knew about the missing one

from Max's wrist. It was evident she'd come back to square things up with Brielle.

"Tiffanie, thank you," Brielle said, her voice tinged with gratitude.

The corners of Tiffanie's mouth turned up in a small smile. "Don't mention it. Just remember, I've always got your back."

Brielle's thoughts drifted to Mason, and she couldn't help but probe. "How are things between you and Mason?"

There was

a brief silence before Tiffanie let out a forced laugh. "You don't seriously think we're an item, do you?"

Brielle frowned, puzzled by her response. Weren't they together?

"I admit, I'm drawn to his looks, but the idea of being tied down to one guy for life? Please, I'll probably move on once the thrill

fades. Dustin's a catch, though I bet he's out of my league."

Whether Tiffanie spoke the truth or jest, Brielle couldn't tell Tiffanie was never one to hide her affections; her crushes were as

blatant as billboards. Now she spoke of non-commitment. leaving Brielle at a loss for words.

Tiffanie could sense Brielle's confusion and sighed. "I tried, you know. But I can't do

monogamy. I can't learn to love in the way most people do. I need something more... universal. Not the 'you're the only one for

me' kind of love."

Universal love meant the ability to care for someone while equally capable of caring for others, just with a bit more passion for

one person. But love, unlike friendship or family affection, was exclusive.

Brielle couldn't blame her. In their circle, who had truly experienced love? None of them. The capacity to love was either innate

or forever out of reach.

Tiffanie was genuine, but her genuineness didn't equate to faithfulness. In fact, it could be profoundly hurtful.

Her relationship with Mason was a "fauxmance." filled with activities befitting a couple—dining out, watching movies—yet

emotionally hollow from Tiffanie's perspective. Her desire for a

relationship was a yearning for intimacy, but her verbal denials signaled a deep-seated fear of

1. it.

So, when she claimed they weren't dating, she found a balance between longing and trepidation.

But this was not love; it was an imitation of it—a superficial intimacy crafted by Tiffanie to stave off loneliness and shield herself

from potential heartache.

Realizing this, Brielle felt a wave of sadness and sympathy wash over her. After hanging up, she sat lost in thought until it was

time to leave work. As she was about to head home, a text from Max buzzed on her phone. [My mother is returning stateside

soon. I have to handle her discharge paperwork. Take care of yourself.]

Brielle's heart warmed as she replied with a simple acknowledgment. She thought that'd be the end of their exchange for now,

but as she reached her car, another text from Max came in. [Keep your distance from Dustin.]

A chuckle escaped her lips. She was curious about what Dustin had said to Max to provoke such caution. [Understood.] She

sent her reply and approached the Dorsey Tower entrance.

“Crash!”

A potted plant, half a meter tall, shattered behind her, scattering soil and shards across the pavement. Had she been a moment

slower, it would have concussed her.

Her expression turned icy as she noticed William exiting the building, flanked by executives. He greeted her with his usual

warmth. “Seems like we’ve got a mighty wind here in Beaconsfield this month, Ms. Haywood. Are you alright?”

“Is it the wind of Beaconsfield that’s strong, or is it your ambitions, Mr. William?”

Brielle met his gaze with a defiant smile, unflinching in the face of danger.

2/2

Chapter 410

The air was thick with tension.

William's face turned icy, his expression souring by the second. The few executives surrounding him sensed the tension ramping

up between him and Brielle and, feigning deafness, made a hasty retreat.

Brielle stood her ground, watching William approach with a steely gaze. Ever since the debacle with Sarah that William had

engineered, there was no pretense of civility between them.

“Brielle,” he began with a sneer. “You flirt with Max on the one hand, while you help Ryan, your ex-father-in-law, claw his way

back into Dorsey International. Does Max know about your undying torch for Spencer? This time, Spencer really should be

thanking you.”

“Mr. William, you needn’t worry about my affairs. Perhaps you should concern yourself with your own issues. The police are

investigating Sarah’s case, and I’m sure the puppet master behind the scenes is starting to sweat, aren’t they?”

William’s eyes darkened, a mix of amusement and malice dancing within them. How could the police possibly trace anything

back to him? He’d been playing the game in Beaconsfield for years, with plenty of pawns willing to fall on their swords for him.

Brielle was just too naive if she thought the world was black and white.

“Brielle, you’re a ridiculous,” he taunted. “Just wait until Michael hears about your little escapades with Max. Both of you will be in

deep trouble, especially Max. He’ll lose all trust from Michael.”

And then, there would be no place for Max in the Dorsey family.

“Mr. William, who’s the real fool here? Max’s vision encompasses mountains and seas, but your sight is forever confined under

the Dorsey family’s roof. You use gentility as a tool to probe hearts and your privileged cunning to curry favor with Michael. I now

see why Max never bothered to mention you. Someone who can’t see beyond the Dorsey family’s shadow simply doesn’t qualify

as his adversary.”

Her words hit him like a physical blow.

William’s face contorted with rage. No one had ever humiliated him like this!

His jaw clenched so tight he thought his teeth might crack, his carefully maintained facade crumbling away. He could barely

breathe, his fury shaking with each exhale. Catching a glimpse of pity in Brielle's eyes only added to his humiliation.

Brielle, that damned bietch!

He had lived as the Dorsey family's eldest for years, only to be outdone by someone two decades his junior. It was a cruel joke.

Max was a prodigy alright, but what right did he have to be the chosen successor?

William's countenance grew colder, bordering on murderous. He felt an almost uncontrollable urge to strangle Brielle on the spot.

To him, Brielle was nothing but an ant, easily crushed. underfoot. Yet she dared to provoke him in his own minefield.

His lips pressed into a thin line. It was only by a sliver of remaining sanity that he didn't lash out then and there. The storm in his

eyes was brewing, and he finally forced himself to turn and walk to the waiting car.

After he drove off, Brielle remained rooted to the spot. She wasn't intended to provoke William, but she couldn't just sit idly by

with her life on the line.

Her palms were sweaty, and she knew that had it been a second later, she would be dead. The flower pot dropping from such a

height was no accident; it was clear she wasn't meant to survive.

Avoiding William wasn't an option; he already saw her as a thorn in his side and was eager to remove her.

Once William was in the car, his internal turmoil continued. His grip tightened as he watched Brielle from a distance.

Brielle felt as if a venomous snake was watching her, and only when the car was hundreds of meters away did that oppressive

gaze vanish. Clutching her upset stomach, she frowned slightly. Was the confrontation causing her stomach issues to flare up?

She made her way to a nearby pharmacy by Pearl Estate, barely managing to request some antacids, but the pharmacist,

noticing her pallor, asked the routine question.

“Do you have period cramps? Do you usually take painkillers for it?”

Brielle froze, her fingers tightening over her abdomen. Her period, it had been a while...

Panic set in, and the pharmacist, mistaking her reaction for confirmation, reached for a box of ibuprofen. “If the pain’s that bad,

take this,” he suggested.

But Brielle’s eyes were fixed on the pregnancy tests behind him, her breath catching. She and Max hadn’t been careful, and now

she was to blame for forgetting something so critical.

“I’ll take one of those,” she pointed, her voice betraying her unease.

The pharmacist gave her a knowing look. “Young lady, remember to use protection next time. It’s irresponsible not to, and if you

are pregnant, what then if the man doesn’t step up? Just yesterday, I had a young guy, barely twenty, asking for abortion pills.”

Feeling a heatwave envelop her body, Brielle grabbed the pregnancy test and hurried back to Pearl Estate. Once home, with the

test in hand and the computer on the coffee table still displaying the news of Alivia’s return to the country, she felt utterly

drained.