

## Master 441

### Chapter 441

The pain of an impending appendectomy was looming, but Brielle was already in agony. convinced that she was with child. Her

refusal to take the prescribed birth control pills at the sanatorium was a testament to her fear of harming the unborn child.

Too bad, this woman would never bear a child.

Spencer, nearby, had caught on to Alivia's plan. It was sinister and yet perfect. If they could make Brielle believe that she had

lost the child, how could she ever face Max the same way again?

At that moment, Spencer found Alivia terrifyingly ingenious. He turned to look at her, only to find her face still wearing a mask of

gentleness. "I'm just talking nonsense. Maybe we should drop it," she said.

Relief washed over Spencer, but the seed of a devastating idea had been planted. "We'll do as you suggested," he said, already

plotting. "But on whom shall we pin the blame for the loss of the child?"

Who could they make Brielle hate enough to maximize her suffering and drive a wedge between her and Max?

Alivia lowered her gaze, knowing it couldn't be Max himself. Their relationship was at a critical point, and any heart-to-heart

could unravel the devious plan.

But to pin the blame on Martha suggested she had forced Brielle to miscarry in secret, without Max's knowledge—that could work.

Brielle would be cornered and unable to take her grievance to Max without risking the delicate balance between him and the

Dorsey family.

Alivia's lips curled into a sly smile. "Why not blame Auntie Martha? Brielle just visited her yesterday."

A brilliant opportunity.

Spencer lit up with malicious glee. "Yes, that's the ticket!"

Meanwhile, Brielle was oblivious to their scheming. Her pain was persistent and seemingly endless until a shot of medication

brought her relief.

With the plan in motion, Alivia decided to leave. Her presence was no longer necessary. Spencer, however, couldn't leave

Brielle's side, now realizing her pallor was due to an inflamed appendix. He paced outside anxiously, then noticed a new

message on Brielle's phone from Max.

His hand trembled at the thought of Max's wrath if he knew Spencer was the one replying. [Still asleep? Open up,] the message

read.

Startled, Spencer shot up from his seat. Hadn't Sydney been tasked with deterring Max? How had he still sought out Brielle and

was now outside her door?

Spencer hastily typed a reply to buy some time. [Out to dinner, feeling a bit queasy.]

Upon reading this, Max naturally retrieved his keys and entered her room with an air of familiarity.

The room was tidy. The soup and side dishes from breakfast were still on the table. Having been up all night, Max was

exhausted and settled onto the couch, resting with eyes closed. He regretted leaving Brielle alone the night before. Some things,

he realized, could only be resolved face-to-face, and sometimes, a hug was more potent than any words could ever be.

Surrounded by Brielle's scent, he found a sense of tranquility.

On the other end, the appendix surgery was a minor procedure and was soon completed.

"How long before she wakes?" he asked.

"About half an hour, Mr. Dorsey. Will you stay with her?"

Spencer couldn't risk it. Brielle's suspicion would read his every expression.

"Once she's awake, tell her exactly what I told you."

The doctors, accustomed to such scenarios, nodded indifferently. "Of course, Mr. Dorsey."

Spencer left with a heavy heart. His mind toyed with the idea of taking advantage of Brielle's vulnerability, but she was too weak

post-surgery. It would only breed resentment, not affection.

He preferred her fiery resistance, her defiance. It was that spark in her eyes that could set him ablaze.

Eventually, she would be awake in his arms.

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Brielle awoke to a feeling of utter exhaustion, her body devoid of strength. She could hear voices outside her room, murmuring in

hushed tones.

"The poor girl lost the baby. They forced some meds on her and did the D&C."

"Wasn't she out of it when she arrived? Why did they even need anesthesia?"

"They performed an appendectomy. If she had gotten here any later, that appendix would've done her in."

"It's a shame. So young, and now it's going to be tough for her to get pregnant again."

"High society is a minefield of drama, isn't it? We can't disobey Ms. Martha's orders. If anyone's to blame, it's just her rotten

luck."

Lying there, staring at the stark white ceiling tiles, Brielle felt the pain not just in her body but spreading across her heart. She

blinked her stinging eyes, trying to lift a finger to touch her surgical scars, but she was too drained, completely spent.

Why was being with Max so exhausting? What was so wrong about loving someone that an innocent life had to pay the price?

Biting her lip, she looked at the ceiling, tears silently trailing down her face.

Having deliberately spoken within earshot, the two doctors exchanged a knowing glance. Their task was complete. Back in their

office, they couldn't help but sigh. "When will we stop being a part of these dirty deeds?"

"We know too much. Do you think we can just walk away clean? It's unfortunate for the girl, but if it weren't for the

appendectomy, she'd have realized soon enough that she hadn't had a D&C. But now, with this surgery, she'll need to rest.

Considering she thought she was pregnant, she'll assume it was a miscarriage. Isn't that exactly what Mr. Dorsey wanted?"

"The high society's dirty laundry could fill a whole laundromat."

The conversation ended as both seemed to recall unpleasant memories, their faces turning grim.

Meanwhile, Brielle, on the hospital bed, kept her eyes tightly shut. Her mind was a blank void. Her body ached, and she just

wanted to sleep it all away.

Her phone kept ringing, incessantly buzzing, but she lacked the strength to answer it until a nurse came in, holding up her

phone.

Struggling to open her eyes, Brielle could just make out the flashing name on the screen. It was Max. But she didn't want to see

anyone right now.

"Ms. Brielle, do you want me to hang up for you?"

Brielle's lips were cracked and parched from not having sipped water since the night before.

Her voice was hoarse as she whispered, "Please, send him a message for me. Tell him I've gone to stay with Aubree for a few

days."

"And, could you open my contacts and find Aubree's name? Send her a text saying if Max asks about me, tell him I'm with her."

The nurse, seeing her politeness and how she struggled to maintain composure in her weakened state, felt a wave of guilt, but

once you were part of this clinic, you couldn't share its secrets with the outside world. So she did as Brielle asked, and after

putting the phone down, she inquired if Brielle wanted something to eat.

"Who brought me here?" Brielle remembered Sydney being at her home before everything went black.

"Just a lady."

It must have been Sydney, then..

Brielle closed her eyes slowly; she had no appetite. "Just give me a glucose IV. I don't want to eat anything." She just needed

that to sustain her energy.

The nurse nodded, setting up the IV before drawing the curtains around the bed for privacy.

This was a clinic accustomed to dealing with the dirty secrets of the elite, often frequented by celebrities with unwanted

pregnancies and other private matters. The privacy and luxury provided ensured Brielle could rest without concerns.

After receiving Brielle's message, Max massaged his temples, questioning whether his harsh tone had hurt her the day before.

One of the perks of dating Max was that he never blamed the woman. In many ways, he and Brielle were alike—confident in all

but matters of the heart, where they both fumbled, fearing they might hurt the other.

Yesterday, he was angry and left quickly to avoid lashing out at Brielle. He had hoped a cool-off would do them both good. He

hadn't expected her to have an even bigger temper.

Rubbing his forehead, Max dialed Andrew's number to find out where he was.

"Tequila Sunset, having a drink. You in?"

Max decided to join him.

Andrew lounged back in the VIP booth, nudging Kenzo beside him. "Max is on his way."

Kenzo, swirling a glass of red wine, smiled slightly. "The Dorsey family's been a mess lately. Bet he's got a lot on his mind."

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Although the media circus remained blissfully unaware, those within the inner circle had their ears filled with whispers and

rumors about the Dorsey clan. Max, the heir apparent to Dorsey International, was a busy man, especially with his brothers,

each more conniving than the last.

Andrew shorted with disdain, I'd have had enough of it. If I were in his shoes, I would've kicked out the whole lot of them—

William, Ryan, every last one—right out of the Dorsey family."

The Clements family didn't have the same sibling rivalry, which was probably why they took in Aubree in the first place. As for

Andrew, his role as the heir had been carved out for him from birth, unlike the Dorseys' gladiatorial fight for the throne.

Kenzo set his glass down with a clink, corners of his mouth lifting in a smirk, reminding Andrew. "Just don't get on Max's bad side

by talking smack about Brielle when he shows up."

"How am I the one causing him grief? Isn't he the one who can't decide who to be with because of your sister?" Andrew retorted.

Was Max being indecisive, though? That hardly seemed to fit Max.

Max arrived promptly and, without reaching for a drink, settled into a quiet observation of the room's screen.

Andrew raised an eyebrow. The Dorsey drama must've really been getting to him.

Max leaned back, eyes closing slowly, his Adam's apple bobbing in the dim light, making his striking features even more

pronounced.

Neither Andrew nor Kenzo disturbed him, and just as they were about to take a sip of their drinks, Max suddenly asked, "What

do you guys think is the best way to win a woman's heart?"

"Cough cough!"

"Choke!"

Both men sputtered, with Andrew nearly crying from the shock. His glass was shaking so much that the drink spilled. They must

have heard wrong. Was Max asking for dating advice? But no, there it was. Max had indeed asked the question.

Andrew set his glass down, face serious. "Max, we men don't chase after women's affections."

Max glanced at him, his response dripping with sarcasm, "And wouldn't you have the nerve to say that?"

Andrew's face flushed, a rare sight.

Kenzo chuckled, then sighed, "I think it's good, actually. Max used to be too cold and unapproachable. Asking these questions

now shows he's more down-to-earth."

Andrew turned to Kenzo in disbelief. "Down-to-earth? The guy who, at sixteen, had Wall Street tycoons falling at his feet,

bankrupting companies left and right?"

Kenzo just smiled, keeping silent.

Max pursed his lips. "In Brielle's eyes, I'm just Max, not a symbol of Wall Street, not a free a the center of power. She sees me as

just a man."

Andrew scoffed. "That kind of just a man doesn't come around often. I bet she's just after your money."

Max laughed coldly. "Then why doesn't she go after someone else's money?"

Andrew fell silent, unable to find a retort. Why, indeed, didn't Brielle chase after there's wealth?

Dustin, a top-tier blueblood from North America, had made no secret of his affection for her. His pedigree was certainly no less

than that of the Dorseys. If she were after money, ticked by Dustin for a few months could've given her more than she could ever

dream of. Why bother with a charade with Max?

Unless it was Max himself she was drawn to.

Brielle was too genuine for lies, too straightforward for guile. Perhaps it was affection alone that could tether her, and maybe all

the riches in the world couldn't hold a candle to a sweet nothing from Mac

When she liked you, she liked you penniless. If she didn't, mountains of gold would mean nothing to her.

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Andrew couldn't fathom how someone like Max, who he thought was oblivious to matters of the heart, could possess such

insight. It was true—Max wasn't well-versed in emotions, but he had eyes that saw clearer than most.

Society had always been harsh on women, especially within the elite echelons, where it seemed a woman's role was to fawn

over men.

Within such circles, infidelity in married men was so commonplace it barely raised eyebrows. Elders would advise the women to

be patient, assuring them that the wandering husbands would return home once the novelty wore off. A wife who couldn't accept

such behavior was labeled as lacking understanding.

Flip the script, however, and a woman who strayed was considered unforgivable, a stain on male pride. Her husband wouldn't

hesitate to kick her to the curb and find another.

For Max, when it came to Brielle, there were no such calculations of what should be or questions of dignity. The array of

emotions Brielle stirred in him was novel, yet not unwelcome. She made him feel enriched in ways he hadn't known, but also

more wanting.

Max was high above everyone else, but he never demanded Brielle to stand on tiptoes to reach him.

After a long silence, Andrew couldn't contain himself. "Max, what you feel for Brielle—is it affection, or love?"

The difference was monumental.

Andrew would go to the ends of the earth for Tessa because he loved her. But Max and Brielle had only known each other for a

short time.

Max was stumped by the question, "It's affection," he said after a brief hesitation.

Love was a word too heavy to utter lightly. To Max, it was more burdensome than the world, a promise of devotion to life and

death.

Relieved by Max's response, Andrew thought it was good that for men, affection was a shallow thing. Something so easily

drowned in a few extra beers or cast aside after meeting a few new faces.

Andrew's lips curled into a small smile. It seemed Max regarded Brielle simply as a canary. And there was no shame in trying to

win the favor of a canary.

"Getting Brielle to like you is easy." Andrew said. "She grew up in an orphanage, starved of attention and love. Women fall in love

through their ears—they just want to hear sweet nothings. Compliment her often, spend time with her, and keep the gifts coming."

Max only glanced at Andrew's advice, recognizing his friend's tactics with Tessa.

But Brielle was not Tessa.

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Kenzo joined the conversation. "Max, your mother just returned to the States, and she's quite chummy with my sister. If Brielle

has feelings for you, she'll be influenced by that. How about this—in a week, some of our friends are heading to a vacation lodge

for a barbecue. It will be a blast, and since Brielle's new to Beaconsfield, she could use some friends her age. It could. bring you

two closer."

Such gatherings were common among the young and affluent set, a chance to build connections that could lead to strategic

marriages. But Max had never shown interest before.

Kenzo lifted his glass with a smirk. "Don't worry, I'll vet the invitees. No loose lips."

Max finally loosened up. He didn't mind his relationship with Brielle being exposed; he would do his best to protect her from

harm. However, the purpose of Brielle hiding the rosary was very clear. She temporarily did not want their relationship to be

public.

He respected her wishes.

"Sure, I'll ask her."

Max dropped the subject. When Andrew taunted Brielle's status not matching up to Max's. suggesting she was no more than a

pretty caged bird, Max didn't bite.

"What's it to them?"

"Brielle could play her cards right and benefit from the connection," Andrew pointed out.

"And that would make her happy?"

Max caring about her happiness took Andrew aback.

Finding the conversation futile, Andrew quietly sipped his drink while Max quickly left the bar—a place he seldom frequented

anyway.

Back in his car, Max was at a loss. He gripped the steering wheel, wondering what he used to do before Brielle entered his life.

Max racked his brain, only to realize that the bulk of his time was spent chained to his desk, working overtime. The only respite

from his disciplined yet dull routine was the occasional beer with Andrew and a few other colleagues.

Pulling out his phone once more, he stared at the screen. True to form, Brielle hadn't sent any messages.

After driving for a bit, Max couldn't shake off his concern. He pulled over, hesitated, and then sent a text. [What are you up to?]

Worried that she was still upset with him, he pondered for a while before scrolling through the emoji options in WhatsApp and

sending a rose for the first time.

Sending a rose was a safe bet, right?

Max wasn't one for emojis, and he rarely chatted on WhatsApp. Apart from replying promptly to Brielle, he would typically ignore

messages from others unless they were of utmost importance.

Brielle, however, wasn't checking her phone. Upon waking, she just lay there, blankly staring at the ceiling. When hunger struck,

she would just ask the doctor for a glucose shot.

Her heart felt hollow, leaving her entire being cold and numb. She felt a bone-deep chill paired with an aching pain. Her phone

chimed, but it was as if she didn't hear it. She lay quietly, ready to drift back to sleep.

Max waited and waited for a reply and started to think that maybe she didn't like roses after all. He opened the emoji menu

again, searching earnestly until he found a fireworks emoji. They had watched fireworks together once, and she had loved it.

Max sent one fireworks emoji, then decided it wasn't enough and sent five more in a row. After sending them, he just sat quietly

in the driver's seat, waiting for a response.

But there was nothing, and his phone was eerily silent. He started to question whether there was an issue with his phone.

The messages were sent successfully, so it wasn't a service problem.

Max rubbed his temples, reluctant to admit that Brielle might've been intentionally ignoring him.

For the first time, he felt what it was like to be given the cold shoulder. But there was another possibility—that something had

happened to Brielle.

His heart skipped a beat at the thought. Just as he was about to call Patrick to ask him to check Brielle's location, she replied to

his message.

[Exhausted. Need some rest. Is it okay if I take a few days off?]

Max's frown deepened, and he immediately called her. He braced himself for the worst, tearing that something had happened to

Brielle and someone else was using her phone, but Brielle's weary voice came through.

"Max."

He didn't know it was his concern, but her voice sounded tearful, and it weighed heavily on his heart.

"What did you do to get

so tired?"

Brielle lay in bed, pale as a ghost, gripping the bedsheets so tightly that the veins on the back of her hand stood out. Each word

he spoke stabbed at her heart like a knife.

She recalled something Sydney had said and decided to use it. "I watched a TV show. The main characters lost their child. It's

been tough."

"You've been with Aubree watching TV shows?"

"Yeah, it was so engaging. I'm fine, really. Just got a little too invested for a moment,"

Max wasn't sure how to comfort her. One moment, he found Brielle's empathy endearing, and the next moment, absurd.

His approach to comfort was always straightforward, "Which TV show? I'll talk to the scriptwriter and see if we can get the couple

another child in the plot."

Brielle's tears flowed even harder. "It's gone... how can they have another? The show said it was hard for the woman to get

pregnant again."

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She bit her lip, and tears welled up in a storm, but the words she forced out were crystal clear.

Through the screen, Max couldn't sense her emotions. But Max wasn't a fool; he realized Brielle probably just needed to vent.

"Then cry," he said. "Let it out, and I'll feel better."

No sooner had he spoken than Brielle's muffled sobs came through, like a wounded animal licking its wounds. "Yeah, how could

the baby just be gone?"

Max had never been one to watch soap operas, and hearing Brielle's sobbing now, he was convinced such things shouldn't

exist.

Once the sobs had a way out, they were hard to stop. Brielle really wanted to cry her heart out. but she feared it might make Max

suspicious, so she suppressed most of the emotion.

Joy needed to be shared, and so did sorrow.

After crying for ten minutes, her eyes were sore, and tearing she couldn't hold it in any longer, she said, "Max, I'm gonna keep

watching, okay? Can you give me the day off?"

"Don't stay up too late," Max cautioned. He wanted to say more, but Brielle had already hung

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Just then, Kenzo sent a message saying that the guest list for the upcoming barbecue was set. with no blabbermouths included.

Max thought about Kenzo's line of work and felt irritated. [Can't you scriptwriters take some responsibility for your audience?]

[???] Kenzo sent back three question marks, wondering if one of his dramas had caused an issue. He even checked the trending

topics on social media, thinking his script might have caused an uproar big enough to reach Max.

But all was calm.

This was the first time Kenzo had been on the receiving end of Max's ire, and he had no ideal why..

After sending the message, Max pulled up Aubree's contact. [Next time, bring Brielle to something less melodramatic.]

When Aubree saw the message, she thought she'd read it wrong.

Was Max messaging her first? Really?

She scrolled through the chat, reading it several times just to be sure.

She had probably been added as a contact only because of Brielle, and now, out of the blue, he was reaching out to her. But she

had already been warned by Brielle not to let slip a word to Max, probably because the two had a falling out.

[Right, Mr. Dorsey, you got it.]

After replying. Aubree dialed Brielle's number, but there was no answer. She tried again.

Meanwhile. Brielle was curled up in bed, sobbing into her pillow with her body twitching from the effort. Her eyes

were swollen, and she looked a mess.

Ignoring the persistent ring of her phone, she only stopped crying when exhaustion took over, blinking away the pain in her eyes.

Her voice was completely gone, leaving her unable to answer Aubree's call. So she texted back. [I'm sleeping now. I need some rest these days.]

Aubree didn't respond, probably believing her.

When the doctor came in and saw Brielle's swollen eyes, she felt a pang of sympathy. "Ms. Brielle, you should stop crying. You

might tear your wounds open. You need to rest and recuperate."

Brielle didn't have the energy to respond. Her head lay listless on the pillow.

The doctor, a woman in her forties, was reminded of her own daughter when she saw Brielle and sighed. "It's not impossible to

conceive: It's just going to be hard."

Brielle remained silent, as still as a statue.

The doctor injected her with glucose, patiently advising, "You can't keep on with glucose injections forever. Start eating solid food

so you can heal faster. Ms. Brielle, you are young. Some things are better accepted and moved on from."

After all, society was brutally realistic, and human nature was complex.

Having worked in the clinic for so long, the doctor had seen it all. From the wealthy to the poor, the underlying nature of people

was intricate. People strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage of the world, boasting, belittling, and meddling in each other's

affairs.

In the doctor's eyes, Brielle was lucky not to have actually conceived, for given the nature of the two men involved, the outcome

for the child—and Brielle—would likely have been grim.

Yet Brielle herself was unaware, and the pain of loss was the same whether she had been pregnant or not.

The doctor drew the curtain and left the room.

Brielle closed her eyes to continue resting. She rested for four days.

During that time, Sydney found those days to be the most unbearable. Ever since she had tampered with Brielle's soup, she

hadn't seen her again. She even began to suspect Spencer might have actually killed Brielle—what else could explain her

prolonged absence?

She went out of her way to confront Spencer on the top floor, but he just ushered her into the men's restroom, saying nothing,

and thrust into her.

Sydney knew he didn't respect her and never really saw her as a woman. To him, she was nothing more than a tool, a mere

connection to Brielle,

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Lately, Sydney had been growing increasingly irritated with her boyfriend to the point where she'd contemplated breaking up with

him several times. And every time she saw him busting his hump to save up for a modest suburban home, she couldn't help but

feel the irony. After all, she was sitting on a cool twenty million, a little secret she'd kept well hidden from him.

The reason Sydney hadn't called it quits was complex. They'd met each other's families, their hometowns were next to each

other, and they'd known each other for years. But perhaps the most compelling reason was that her boyfriend's family had paid

for her college tuition.

Sydney's own background was nothing to write home about. She was from a family scraping by, and her boyfriend's relatives

had supported her entire education. They had covered all her tuition and living expenses. Her relationship with her boyfriend was

more a debt of gratitude than a passionate romance.

Their physical relationship had become as routine as toast and coffee for breakfast—comfortable but lacking zest.

But Spencer was a different story. Being rich, handsome, and a wild card, Spencer knew how to turn any situation into an

adventure. Take the penthouse bathroom they were in now—Sydney could hear the comings and goings of people beyond the

walls. Spencer just clamped a hand over her mouth. His control—his almost humiliating dominance—was addictive.

She had a thing for men who took charge, and Spencer fit the bill.

After having his way, Spencer began to clean up. Sydney was used to his cold indifference, so she proactively asked, "Mr.

Dorsey, you didn't really off Ms. Haywood, did you? I never signed on for murder."

Spencer glanced at her, and that look froze her in place. She'd seen him vulnerable in front of Brielle, but with her, he was

untouchable, and she felt like a handmaid awaiting a royal favor.

Swallowing hard, Sydney listened as he spoke. "Ever heard of walls having ears? You don't need to worry about Brielle. That's

none of your business, and you're not in a position to bring her up. Just keep an eye on her for me like I asked. You'll get paid,

but don't expect anything. more. You're just a trifle to me, nothing compared to even a fingertip of hers."

Feeling humiliated, Sydney's face went pale. No woman could stand such an insult. What on earth was so special about Brielle?

She was already pregnant and still on Spencer's radar.

Sydney trembled with rage but dared not defy him, meekly nodding her agreement.

As Spencer headed for the door, he cast a backward glance. "If word about Brielle gets out, you won't live to see another sunrise."

Sydney flinched, avoiding his gaze.

Once it was quiet outside, she slumped onto the toilet, sweating with fury. Was she not pretty enough? Was her figure not

sizzling enough? Why didn't Spencer give her a second look?

Whenever she went out to dinner with her boyfriend, she could feel the gazes of other men on her, but with Spencer, it was like

hitting a brick wall.

Her thoughts were interrupted by her phone ringing—it was her boyfriend. Instantly annoyed, she begrudgingly pressed the

answer button. "What's up? I'm swamped at work. Can we talk later?"

"Syd, did you forget? It's my birthday today. Let's go out for dinner. I've booked a place."

Whatever place he could afford hardly seemed up to par. Sydney rolled her eyes; her massive bank balance made her feel like

he was beneath her.

But with their families so intertwined, dumping him would tarnish her reputation. The hometown gossip mill would have a field

day, and even her parents would face backlash. In their community, reputation was everything.

She'd have to find another way to ditch him and, while she was at it, work on getting Spencer to fall for her.

"I've got to work late tonight. We'll talk about your birthday some other time. And you, what about your work? Aren't you

supposed to be saving for that house? I saw a nice one the other day."

"I know, but you only get one birthday a year. I was thinking—

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Sydney cut him off mid-sentence. "What, and nobody else does? Can you stop being so sentimental? I've got to go."

Hanging up, she sneered inwardly. The thought of going back to him, possibly to have sex with her boyfriend, filled her with restlessness and annoyance.

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She composed herself and slipped out of the men's restroom quietly.

Reaching the top floor lobby, she caught sight of Spencer, the man she had just hooked up with. After their heated moment, he

was impeccably dressed and engaged in conversation with the company's executives.

A wave of pride washed over Sydney. Had she known she'd be left feeling this satisfied, she would've been more cooperative

when things initially got heated. A smirk played on her lips. Just as she was about to head down the corridor toward the elevator,

the private lift doors slid open, and Max stepped out.

Startled, Sydney dropped her gaze and attempted to make a discreet exit, but Max spoke up. "Are you Brielle's assistant?"

Her body stiffened, a flush of excitement coloring her face. Was the CEO actually speaking to her directly?

Just a few days ago, Spencer had instructed her to delay Max, to keep him from leaving the office. Despite her efforts, Max

hadn't so much as glanced her way. Back then, she felt like the unattainable was just that—unattainable. But now, Max was

initiating conversation.

Up close, his features were even more striking, and Sydney had to pinch herself to stay composed. "Yes, Mr. Dorsey, Ms.

Haywood promoted me as her assistant just a few days

ago."

"Follow me," he

said curtly, leading the way to his office.

Sydney's cheeks glowed with excitement, and she felt the weight of everyone's gazes on her as if she had become the star of

the executive floor.

Walking beside someone so dazzling seemed to also cast a glow on her.

Internally gloating, Sydney hurried to keep up. As she approached the CEO's office, she felt Spencer's eyes on her.

Her smugness deepened. After their previous encounters, Spencer had hardly acknowledged her, but now he was watching her

every move. Could it be that he was having trouble letting go?

As she was about to enter the CEO's office, she wondered what Max would say. Perhaps his intentions mirrored Spencer's—

maybe he desired her too.

The thought sent a thrilling heat through her. She fancied the notion that the Dorsey men might've been vying for her attention,

and were jealous over her.

Taking a deep breath to steady herself, she stepped into the office.

Max was already seated. His presence was so commanding that it seemed to slow time and space itself. The sunlight filtered in,

illuminating his desk and accentuating his untouchable

aura, For a moment, Sydney wanted to surrender, even be conquered.

But Max's gaze didn't linger on her. She was nothing more than an extra piece in the room to him.

"What would you have me do, Mr. Dorsey?" she asked, her voice quivering with a hint of seduction.

Max, impervious to the advances of women, didn't pick up on her intent.

The rejection stung Sydney. Being ignored when trying to seduce someone was humiliating.

He slid a file across the desk to her. "Brielle should be back soon. Give her this document."

Sydney blinked. Handing over a document seemed below the CEO's pay grade. Her cheeks flushed with excitement, Perhaps

this was just an excuse to talk to her more. Her voice shook. "Of course, of course. I'll make sure Ms. Haywood gets it."

But Max's next question knocked her from cloud nine straight to the depths of despair. "Has. Brielle been upset these past few

days?"

Max had been in touch with Brielle but hadn't seen her. He realized that no TV show could upset her to this extent. Brielle was

usually so composed. The only explanation was that she was still angry with him.

Standing before his desk, Sydney's smugness evaporated at his words. The sparkle in her eyes was extinguished as if doused

with cold water.

He had called her in not for her sake or even for the document but because of Brielle.

Because of that bitch Brielle!

Sydney's grip tightened on the file, nearly crumpling it. She wanted to scream, to lash out. Why did everyone only see her

because of Brielle? When had she become nothing more than Brielle's shadow? Why?

## Chapter 449

Max didn't catch her reply, his gaze lifting to meet hers for a brief moment. Sydney felt pinned in place by that look, her heart

racing with fear that her thoughts might betray her. She quickly dropped her gaze. "Ms. Haywood isn't in the best of spirits."

She really wanted to say that Brielle's health wasn't great either, but Spencer had been clear – not a single detail about that day

was to be shared with Max.

It took a while before Max broke the silence, choosing his words carefully. "When she gets back, casually ask her whether she

prefers movies or shopping."

He'd been trying to get Brielle to go out with him for days, but she always had an excuse. He didn't know Brielle well enough yet,

and with her being upset, she'd dodge the question even if he asked her directly. It was better to have her assistant suss it out so

he could catch her off guard with a pleasant surprise next time. Plus, the outdoor BBQ that Boat Ink mentioned was coming up

soon.

Sydney's face twisted at his words. The unreachable deity of her heart was now asking her about the likes and dislikes of an

ordinary woman—how ludicrous.

She took a deep breath, her hands clenched tight. So, all the jealousy over her had been a farce. Both men were only showing

her attention because of Brielle.

With Spencer, Sydney could understand; they had a history as fiancés.

But Max? What was his reason?

Sydney couldn't figure it out. It must've been Brielle's face then. As much as she hated to admit it, Brielle had a striking face—

aloof and distant when silent. Her usual style was clean and efficient, the kind of look that men probably fantasized about in bed.

No wonder Brielle had so many men concerned for her, even Mr. Noah...

Realizing this, Sydney was more than unhappy—she felt resentful.

"Sure, I'll ask Ms. Haywood once she's back." Sydney could taste the bitterness in her voice as she spoke. She couldn't help but

steal a glance at Max, noticing how the frosty man softened at the mention of Brielle. He liked Brielle, liked her enough to want to

know her preferences.

Sydney felt the sting of pain. No woman liked to be compared, especially not when it came to allure.

"Yeah, you can go now." Max reverted to his usual indifference as he spoke to her.

Sydney, though resentful, didn't dare to overstep in front of Max. She left the office as if in a daze, stepping into the elevator just

as another person squeezed in.

"Did Uncle Max ask you about Brielle? What did you tell him?" Spencer's tone there was an edge of caution, as if afraid she

would slip up.

e was mild, yet

Sydney had been holding back her emotions, but hearing Brielle's name again made her

explode. "Brielle! Brielle! All you people ever think about is Brielle! Am I invisible to you?!" After her outburst, she seemed to

regain some composure, her face turning pale.

Spencer snorted coldly. “Why would you even compare yourself to her? Don’t you have any sense of reality?”

Sydney’s shame turned her from pale to red.

When the elevator reached her floor and the doors opened with a ‘ding,’ she saw Brielle standing not far from the entrance.

Sydney and Spencer both froze, especially Spencer, whose reaction was intense. He immediately forgot Sydney’s presence and

strode toward Brielle with purpose.

## Chapter 450

It had only been a few days, but she seemed leaner, her eyes were brighter, and her demeanor had taken on an icy edge.

There she stood, casually yet firmly supervising her employees as they summarized content from a rival company. She

demanded absolute precision with every figure and every word.

“This company’s analysis is slightly off. We don’t need to pursue an acquisition here. Scrap this report.”

“But, Ms. Haywood,” one of the team members protested, ‘we’ve all been putting in overtime lately, and we think this company

could be a dark horse in the future.”

The colleague looked up to Brielle with a mix of admiration and concern. She had only just returned to the department and was

already diving into work. Could her health withstand the strain?

Brielle’s expression remained neutral as she glanced at the others. They were all ears, keen to hear her take on the company’s

prospects.

With a light chuckle, Brielle addressed them, “You’ve all worked hard while I was away. This company started with smartphones,

and as I always say, for a product-based company, user experience is king. Every acquisition we’ve made has been of

companies whose products meet, even exceed, consumer expectations. I’m not dismissing your efforts—this company does have

potential, and their initial products were a hit. But lately, the CEO's vision seems to have veered off-course, delving into what

they call 'cutting-edge tech.'"

The team listened intently, hanging on every word.

"Cutting-edge tech and meeting consumer expectations are two different ball games. We're talking about value for money

versus technological marvels. They demand different investments, resource allocation, and talent pools. And let's not forget that

the sense of purpose and pride that drives employees varies with each path. If a CEO's compass starts to wobble, it usually

leads to internal conflict and inefficiency. So, let's put the acquisition on hold and see what their next move is. For a smartphone

aimed at women, making photos look more glamorous is the way to go, not chasing after tech for tech's sake."

No sooner had she finished than Brielle felt a strong pull to the side. Looking up, her expression darkened upon seeing Spencer.

"Let go."

Feeling the heat of her glare and a twinge of hurt, Spencer reluctantly released her wrist and gave her a once-over. She was

supposed to be mourning the loss of a child and was only days out from an appendectomy. Why was she back at work already?

"Brielle, how are you? Why weren't you here these past few days? Did something happen? You look pale, and you've lost

weight." Spencer tried to seem genuinely concerned, hoping to atone for his internal guilt.

Brielle, however, was not in the mood for his antics.

The colleagues, who had been ready to applaud Brielle's speech, now turned their attention to Spencer, pretending to be

engrossed in their own work to spare Brielle any embarrassment.

As Brielle turned to head back to her office, Spencer grasped her wrist again.

"Spencer, are you out of your mind?"

For some reason, being chastised by her didn't faze Spencer. It felt like the Brielle he knew.

Brielle's gaze shifted past him, spotting Sydney near the elevator. It was unusual to see them together. Her frown deepened—had

Spencer been giving Sydney a hard time?

Sydney was her assistant, and Brielle was naturally inclined to take her side. "Sydney, come to my office. We need to talk."

Sydney, who had been standing there in shock at the sight of Spencer mooning over Brielle. couldn't help but find the situation

amusing. Why should she be anyone's shadow?

Hearing her name, Sydney approached, albeit reluctantly. "Ms. Haywood, you're back."

Brielle nodded, taking a moment before expressing her gratitude. "Thanks for taking me to the clinic the other day."

Clinic?

Confusion flickered across Sydney's face, but noticing Spencer's gaze, she simply nodded. "No need to thank me. It's part of the

job."