

Master 451

Chapter 451

Brielle dragged herself to the office that day, mustering just enough energy to feign normalcy.

Losing a child had taken a toll on her spirit. She had barely eaten anything in days. Her appendix scar was healing but still

caused her pain with every move. The doctor had suggested she rest a few more days, yet Brielle insisted on leaving.

Only upon her departure did she realize she had been at a high-end clinic, impressed that Sydney had managed to find such a

place.

Without suspicion, she went to her apartment at Pearl Estate, changed into fresh clothes, and headed straight for the office.

For most of these past days, she had been alone. The silence was too much, and her thoughts often drifted to the emptiness

where her unborn child had been. Bedridden and in pain from the appendicitis, she'd become numb, as if the baby had never

existed. Yet the memory of those two little lines on the test kept reminding her of the life that had been there, a life that vanished

before having a chance to see the world.

Brielle yearned for the distraction of a bustling environment, to avoid sinking further into her thoughts.

Brielle entered her office and Sydney followed close behind, while Spencer was left waiting outside.

But Spencer wasn't upset. On the contrary, he was eager to see what Brielle would do next. After losing a child because of Max's

mother, could she really continue to be with Max with no hard feelings? It seemed inevitable that they would fall out.

At that moment, Spencer felt an unprecedented sense of satisfaction, barely containing the smirk on his face.

Inside the office, Brielle took her seat at her desk.

Sydney couldn't help but recall her first time with Spencer, right there in that very office. A sneer—of mockery flashed in her eyes

as if she had triumphed over Brielle. If Brielle knew, she'd surely be disgusted, right?

Brielle's expression remained impassive as she looked at Sydney. "Has Spencer done something inappropriate to you?" She

had noticed something off in Sydney's gaze towards Spencer and wondered if it was just her imagination.

Sydney's heart skipped a beat, but she was undeniably thrilled. If it weren't for Spencer's explicit instructions to keep their affair

secret, she might have already shouted it from the rooftops, "Your ex-fiancé has been addicted to sleeping with me lately."

But she dared not. She had no power to contend with the Dorsey family.

"No, Ms. Haywood, you're overthinking." Sydney replied quickly, handing over some files. "By the way, Ms. Haywood, you've

been under the weather and probably in a bad mood. Why not go

out for a meal, watch a movie, or do some shopping? The other ladies in the department love shopping, but I've noticed you

don't go much."

Brielle had always been preoccupied with work and deeply committed to the company. Was it because of this dedication that the

CEO had taken notice of her?

As Brielle pondered Sydney's words, Sydney scrutinized her calm and delicate face, which seemed aloof when silent.

Sydney internally despised her, thinking it was all about the face. What was so special about that face other than being a bit

dolled up? Despite inwardly belittling Brielle, Sydney couldn't stop observing her.

Brielle showed little interest in movies or shopping, having rarely indulged in such activities. "I'll keep the files. You may go,"

Brielle said coolly, her gaze returning to the pile of documents on her desk.

Sydney had no choice but to leave.

Once alone, Brielle massaged her temples. She hadn't yet informed Max of her return to work. unsure of how to face him. Max

had done nothing wrong from the start. He didn't even know what she had gone through.

But she couldn't let go and, therefore, couldn't face him.

However, she knew she couldn't avoid it forever. After work, her phone buzzed with a message from him. [Come up.]

The tone seemed somewhat angry.

Brielle hesitated in her office chair, sitting stiffly for half an hour without going upstairs. Her eyes listlessly scanned the messages

on her computer screen.

It wasn't until two hours later, at ten o'clock at night, that her office door swung open, and Max's tall figure appeared in the

doorway.

Brielle's heart skipped a beat, pretending to keep her eyes glued to the computer as if unaware of his arrival.

Max's expression was calm, almost serene, as he approached her while she continued to stare at her screen, fingers trembling

slightly as she typed.

Standing behind her, he remained silent. The two engaged in a silent battle of wills, each testing the other's endurance.

Chapter 452

Time and space seemed to slow to a hush.

Outside the window, starlight sprinkled down, and the night breeze threading through the office. seemed to move more gently.

Brielle was supremely uncomfortable. If she had known he would just stand there like some kind of guardian statue behind her

when he entered the room, she wouldn't have pretended not to notice him. Now, if she initiated a conversation, he would

definitely realize she had been. intentionally ignoring him.

The sensation of ants crawling under her skin was unbearable, partly because he was her boyfriend and partly because he was

her high-powered boss. Being silently scrutinized by him like this doubled the pressure.

What on earth did he want?

Brielle squirmed in her seat.

Max just watched her as she tapped out a string of gibberish, yet maintained an air of seriousness. He observed her fingers

tremble as if she was about to give up. He sighed, approaching slowly, and leaned in to wrap his arms around her from behind.

“Brielle, what’s on your mind?”

If there was one area where Max wasn’t adept, it was definitely understanding women.

Her body was immediately enveloped by a warmth that was neither sharp nor accusatory, but like a gentle spring breeze blowing

across a pond, compelling her to lean into it.

Brielle’s hands, poised over the keyboard, froze. Her eyes flickered as she looked up to see her computer screen filled with a

chaotic mix of numbers and text. He had been watching her pitiful act for so long.

She pursed her lips, realizing that all her pretense was futile in front of him; she couldn’t hide her sadness.

Max was uncertain about her thoughts and felt the need to guess. “I was thinking, it can’t be a TV show that’s got you upset. If it

really is that, I could ask Kenzo to write a script just for you. and get some A-list stars to shoot it just for your viewing pleasure.

How’s that?”

He was trying to cheer her up, though his way of consoling was so dominantly CEO-like, and had many points of criticism.

Brielle couldn’t help but find it amusing. The tears that had threatened to spill were now being pushed back.

Kenzo’s scripts were worth millions, and top directors couldn’t even secure a meeting with him. Yet here, Max was willing to use

one to placate a woman. If Kenzo knew, even someone as mild-mannered as him might swear.

11:50

However, Brielle was well aware that if she nodded, Max would be on the phone with Enzo right this moment.

If she had been upset about something else and didn’t want to see Hay, she would be won over by now. But it was because

of that child. The thought alone made every teardrop, and even his tender breath felt like knives tormenting her skin.

How could two people be so physically close, yet their souls drifted further and further

Max noticed that Brielle remained silent, so he tilted his head and kissed her earlobe. He forcefully turned

her face towards him, kissing her nose, and finally her lips, the spot he loved the most.

Brielle's heart raced in this quiet, forbidden moment, where every hint of intimacy magnified a hundredfold, a thousandfold. If it

didn't stop, her heart might just catch from the overload.

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But Max clearly had no intention of stopping. When she tried to escape, he turned her car to face him directly, trapping her

between the desk and his embrace,

"Tell me, why are you ignoring me?"

Max had never been so disregarded in all his years at the top. His heart had felt tingled these past few days.

Brielle opened her mouth, wanting to say it wasn't because of him, but what if he persisted in probing?

"Brielle, are you- Max hesitated, looking at her intently for a long while without completing his thought.

Brielle's heart was in her throat, fearing he might have discovered something.

But what Max said next was... "Do you like someone else?" There was hesitation and uncertainty in his voice.

"No, that's impossible!"

Brielle denied it twice in quick succession. No one compared to Max. But she also realized the better and kinder Max was, the

more her heart ached, the more regret she felt.

Max exhaled with relief. Everything else seemed bearable as long as it wasn't about that

there in the evening and

"In three days, Kenzo's organizing an outdoor barbecue. We can stay there and watch the stars. If you're feeling down, should I

take you?"

Lately, Brielle really didn't want to be alone at Pearl Estate. Getting out for a change of scenery seemed good.

"Yeah."

Receiving her agreement, Max leaned in and kissed her lips, then straightened up. "I'm going to check on my mother tonight.

Should I drop you off first?"

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Chat

He hadn't noticed that at the mention of his mother, Brielle tensed all over. That sense of panic at not seeing a future enveloped

her again. She bit her lip, slowly widening the gap between them.

"I'd like to go back on my own."

"Brielle."

"I said, I want to go back on my own."

Chapter 453

It wasn't exactly fair to take it out on Max, but maintaining composure around him was like trying to hold onto water—it just slipped

through your fingers.

"Max, pick me up in three days, okay?" she murmured, the heaviness in her heart making it difficult to keep her voice steady.

Max just stared at her, a silent sentinel, not quite grasping where things had gone awry.

Brielle's lashes fluttered downward in a valiant effort to dam the emotions threatening to spill over. She let out a sigh, rose on her

tiptoes, and cradled his face in her hands, sealing their lips together in a tender kiss.

Max's resolve melted like butter on a hot skillet. His arms encircled her waist, pulling her so close it felt as though they were

trying to merge into one person. Their kiss deepened into a sweet, inescapable addiction.

Eventually, amidst the heat of their embrace, Max swept aside the clutter of papers on his desk. and in a smooth gesture, Brielle

found herself perched atop the cool wooden surface.

Her legs twined around his waist, and the temperature in the room seemed to soar with their closeness. But she had to pull

away. The wounds she bore were still healing, and any further exertion risked reopening them. Besides, If Max's hands

wandered to those areas, he'd discover the scars that marred her skin.

So she gently grasped his wandering hand, stilling it. "Don't you have a visit to the sanatorium?" she asked, her voice barely

above a whisper.

Indeed, Max was due to visit the sanatorium, and her teasing had flustered him more than he cared to admit. His lips pressed

into a thin line, and he released her after a moment's hesitation. "Brielle, are you doing this on purpose?" he asked, a note of

Irritation creeping into

his tone.

"Great." she thought, "he's even angrier now."

Brielle frowned, took a few seconds to consider, then offered, "Maybe another kiss would help?" Max took a deep breath and

remained standing, motionless, as they locked eyes in a silent. standoff that lasted minutes. Finally, without a word, he turned

and walked out the door.

The room fell quiet, and Brielle sat alone on the desk, gazing out at the city's twinkling lights through the window. The room's

earlier charged atmosphere had dissipated, but his scent still clung to her, warm against her cool skin.

She lifted a hand, touching the spot where she'd had an appendectomy. The bandage was still wrapped snugly around her

abdomen..

It wasn't that she was being overly sensitive. In the days following her surgery, she had worked hard to build up her mental

fortitude. At first, the mere thought of Max had her weeping silently

in her bed, but now she could face him, even though her rational mind sometimes took leave.

As long as she didn't cry, she would be fine.

Her current situation felt like she was a greedy treasure hunter who, in the midst of digging. uncovered a skeleton. Even after

hastily burying the bones and planting trees and flowers over the spot, she knew all too well what lay beneath. Whenever she

saw the flowers or the trees, the buried skeleton was what came to mind.

Similarly, whenever she saw Max's face or experienced his gentleness, all she could think of was the child. She was trapped in a

cruel stasis.

After composing herself, Brielle slid off the desk. She bent down to pick up the scattered documents before grabbing her purse

and preparing to leave. However, as she stepped out of the office, she noticed a stranger peering around hesitantly, seemingly

searching for someone. "Can I help you find someone?" she asked, sizing him up. She hadn't seen him on this floor before: he

likely didn't work there.

Upon seeing her, the man quickly masked his initial tension and explained his presence. "Hi, I'm Adrian. I'm looking for my

girlfriend, Sydney. She's been working late a lot these past few days and mentioned she'd be pulling an all-nighter at the office. I

was worried, so I thought I'd come to check on her."

In Adrian's hand was a thermos, no doubt filled with homemade soup—a thoughtful gesture.

No one in the department was working late tonight. Brielle was the last to leave, which was why Max had come into her office.

"No one's working late in the department today."

"That can't be right. I spoke to her on the phone an hour ago, and she said she was still at the

office."

"Why don't you try calling her again?"

Brielle hadn't given Sydney's potential infidelity a second thought. After all, Sydney always came across as bubbly and

straightforward, seemingly without a hint of guile.

Adrian fished out his phone and dialed Sydney's number once more.

Brielle was locking the door when she heard Adrian put the call on speaker. At that moment, Sydney, flushed and pinned

beneath Spencer, was exasperated by yet another call from Adrian. Didn't he have anything better to do?

Spencer, who had been irked by Brielle earlier, was venting his frustrations on Sydney. Adrian's previous call wasn't answered,

but now, Spencer urged her to pick it up.

Sydney, intending to disconnect the call, hesitated when she heard his command and reluctantly pressed the answer button.

Spencer was indulging in the thrill of betrayal, and their excitement was heightened by the

11:50

situation.

Standing next to Brielle, Adrian heard the call connect and immediately asked with tenderness In his voice, "Sydney, are you still

working?"

Sydney, also on speaker, stifled her responses with her hand, careful not to reveal any compromising noises.

"Sydney?"

She couldn't help but smirk at her own cunning. "Yes, uh, still working."

Adrian glanced up at Brielle, confusion etched on his face.

Hearing Sydney's voice strained with suppressed excitement and seeing the deserted department, Brielle would have been

foolish not to figure out what Sydney was up to.

However, Adrian was blissfully unaware. "But I'm at your company right now and can't find you. Sydney, did you go somewhere

else?"

Spencer found the man's pitiful tone amusing and pitied his ignorance. Indeed, Sydney was somewhere else, but beneath

Spencer, not where Adrian imagined.

Sydney reveled in the situation but perked up as Adrian's voice came through again. "I even bumped into your colleague. She

said no one's working late in the department tonight."

"She's... she's just talking nonsense, uh, we have two departments," Sydney managed to say between breaths.

Had Brielle not heard it with her own ears, she would never have believed Sydney capable of such deceit.

Chapter 454

While juggling the honest affections of one man, she reveled under the touch of another, all the while spouting lies.

Any fondness Brielle had for Sydney vanished in an instant. How could someone so devoid of moral fiber be anything but

complex?

The irony wasn't lost on Brielle; she had misjudged Sydney.

But Adrian, ever trusting of Sydney, reminded her. "You keep at your overtime. It's almost midnight, and my birthday's ending.

Just wish me a happy one, will you?"

Sydney was lost in the moment, and cut the call short. Her patience had worn thin as her arms found their way around Spencer's

neck.

On the other end, Adrian felt a sting of rejection but then remembered he wasn't alone—Sydney's workmate was there—and a

blush crept up his cheeks. "Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to intrude."

Adrian was honest, sensible, and easy on the eyes.

Brielle pursed her lips, not revealing she was Sydney's boss, nor did she expose the lie. Instead, she offered, "Wanna head

down together?"

Adrian was relieved to be acknowledged, and beamed with gratitude. "Sure, thanks."

As they shared the elevator ride, Brielle couldn't shake her doubts and had to ask. "Have you and Sydney been a thing for long?"

The mention of Sydney brought out his smile. "Yeah, we grew up near each other. She'd always come over to play, claiming

she'd marry me. My folks adored her and funded her education, so we've been classmates since grade school. It's been nearly

twenty years now.”

His tone softened when he spoke of her.

Brielle glanced at his modest attire, much like her own. Yet Sydney’s purse alone cost a fortune.

“So why haven’t you two tied the knot?”

A shadow of sorrow crossed Adrian’s face. “I’m saving for a house. My salary isn’t much. It’ll take a few more years to afford the

down payment.”

“Why not ask Sydney to cut back? Her bags don’t look cheap.”

“No way, I told her from the start—I can’t skimp on her. I meet her every need, and she’s sensible. We’ll marry soon.”

Brielle felt a pang of sadness, maybe anger, thinking of the ten years she spent being deceived by Spencer. Yet here was a man

still in the dark, heart brimming with sincerity.

She couldn’t bear bursting his bubble and simply wished him well as they reached the lobby. “Take care, and happy birthday.”

Adrian stiffened; she was the first to wish him well that day. “Thank you.”

Brielle sighed, watching his retreating figure.

Meanwhile, Max had arrived at the sanatorium, post-chat with the doctor, standing aside, lost in thought.

When footsteps approached, he didn’t turn until Alivia’s voice reached him. “Max, still here at this hour?”

She had just left Martha’s room with a tray in hand, the epitome of care.

Max nodded, noting her weariness. “Alivia, let others handle this.”

She handed off the tray to a passing servant, wiping her hands with sanitizer before approaching Max, aware of his need for

cleanliness.

“I could, but I’m back in the country anyway. The research center’s site has just been finalized, and there’s debate abroad about

who to send. I’m free for now, so I visit Aunt Martha often.”

Max wasn’t keen on small talk.

Alivia, sensing his cool demeanor, probed, "Ms. Brielle didn't come with you?"

At Brielle's mention, Max's expression turned colder.

Alivia, pleased, sensed discord. With Brielle blaming Martha for her supposed loss, facing Max upon awakening would be

anything but calm. Their strife was her opportunity.

"Max, you've always struggled with women. Is there a problem? If you see me as a friend, you can confide in me. Aside from Ms.

Brielle, I'm the only woman you've been close to."

Her sincerity was disarming.

Aunt Martha is concerned too, hoping we'd marry. Now that you've found someone, I won't pressure you. But cherish what you

have. Ms. Brielle seems like a good woman. Otherwise, I'll regret letting you go."

She deftly wove a hint of intimacy, suggesting life with her wouldn't be as troubling.

Chapter 455

"I just don't know what she's thinking sometimes." Max spoke with a casual detachment. "Brielle tends to keep a lot bottled up."

A slight smile tugged at Alivia's lips as she heard this. Alivia knew that even if it were someone else in Brielle's shoes, they

wouldn't spill the beans to this man either.

From Brielle's perspective, the child was gone, and that was a fact no one could change. If Max found out, he wouldn't just clash

with Martha, but maybe Michael would get involved too, and before you know it, the whole Dorsey clan would be up in arms. And

as the heir to the Dorsey estate. Max would undoubtedly bear the brunt of the chaos.

The more Brielle cared for Max, the tighter she would hold onto this secret. But the more she kept it to herself, the more she

suffered alone. Sooner or later, her emotions were bound to collapse.

Moreover, Alivia had made up her mind. Tormenting Brielle was just the beginning. She would slowly make Brielle realize the

consequences of taking what belonged to someone else.

"Aunt Martha mentioned Ms. Brielle today. It seems like she's caught on to your relationship." Alivia added.

Max glanced at her, his gaze unintentional yet probing..

Alivia rushed to clarify. "I never mentioned anything to Aunt Martha, but you know how perceptive she can be when she's lucid."

Max was initially suspicious of Alivia, but over the years, she'd always maintained a respectful distance, never too close for

comfort, so there was no reason for her to stir trouble. "I know," he acknowledged.

Alivia breathed a sigh of relief, a trace of resignation appearing on her face on cue.

"We've known each other for years, Max. You should know the kind of person I am. If I really wanted to force you into marriage,

playing the damsel in distress would be the most direct approach."

Indeed, if Alivia were determined to marry Max, that tactic would certainly pressure both sets of parents to lean on Max. But that

would mean losing his heart forever. What good was a title without love? She had always been clear about her goal: she wanted

Max's heart.

"Max, if you're feeling down, my brother organized a barbecue. Not sure if you got the invite, but are you going?"

She probed about the barbecue guest list. Kenzo had asked if she wanted to attend, but being tight-lipped as ever, he didn't

reveal the guest list. Alivia had found out that some of the people she knew weren't invited.

Max was surely on the list, but it was uncertain whether he'd attend. If he brought Brielle along, it would be quite the spectacle,

with Brielle becoming an awkward presence there.

"I'm going, and I'm taking Brielle for a breath of fresh air."

With the answer in hand, Alivia's lips curled slightly, pretending to glance at the time. "It's getting late, and even if there's a

misunderstanding between you two, it's best to clear the air soon. Let's head out together."

Max nodded, but his mind was elsewhere. As they reached the nursing home's entrance, Alivia bid him farewell and hopped into

her car first.

Max stood in the chill of the night air for a moment, the cold breeze sharpening his senses. Just as he was about to head to his

own vehicle, Alivia emerged from hers. “Max, can you give me a lift? I’m out of gas, and I can’t even make it to the nearest

station.”

She had put it so plainly. Given that she was here to see Martha and that they had known each other for years, Max couldn’t just

leave her to hail a cab.

“Sure.”

Alivia finally got her wish to ride in Max’s car.

The moment she saw Max at the nursing home, she had someone discreetly drain her car’s fuel. Max might’ve not been fond of

her, but he wouldn’t let a friend take a cab home.

Settling into the car, Alivia’s lips curved up again. Following his gaze, she could only see his stern profile.

Around them, journalists who had been lying in wait snapped photos of them leaving the nursing home together and getting into

the car. They quickly posted them online.

Alivia’s return to the country had already drawn attention, especially within the circles of the elite.

Almost everyone was tracking

her movements.

Though a union between the Barnes and Dorsey families was seemingly destined, Max himself had never publicly acknowledged

it. The media had always speculated, eager to know the truth. Fortunately for them, someone tipped off the reporters about their

whereabouts that night, and they got their big scoop.

The moment the photos hit the internet, they were blasted by suggesting the two were having a late-night rendezvous.

every major news outlet.

One particularly well-angled shot made it seem as though they were kissing under the cover of night, even though they were still

a distance apart. The photo captured an intimate moment that wasn’t, sparking a frenzy of speculation and gossip.

Chapter 456

"Is this what it looks like when a handsome guy and a beautiful girl kiss? My heart flutters just watching it!"

"Mr. Dorsey is so sweet to her. He has such tender eyes."

"Alivia loves Mr. Dorsey too, you know. She waited for him for years. And their kiss is so innocent and pure. It's like something

out of a fairy tale."

The internet was buzzing with chatter, but Max was blissfully unaware of the storm brewing online.

He never paid attention to the gossip on social media, and no one bothered to fill him in.

As they pulled up to the Barnes' estate, his car came to a stop, and Max's brow furrowed at the sight of the crowd gathered

outside.

What in the world?

Alivia, seated beside him, feigned surprise while mentally patting herself on the back. She had tipped off the press, deliberately

leaked that misleading photo, and hinted to her servants that Max would soon be arriving at the Barnes' doorstep.

And so, the Barnes family elders had come out to greet them, grinning from ear to ear, clearly amused by the situation.

With the elders present, Max, as the junior, was expected to get out and exchange pleasantries according to tradition.

It was then that Alivia spoke up. "Max, if you're tired, there's no need to get out. I'll explain to them. Otherwise, Grandpa will rope

you into a game of chess, and we'll never get away."

Alivia had lured the Barnes family out for this very moment—to show Max just how much she cared for him and how well she

understood the big picture.

Indeed, Max felt a momentary relief at her words, rubbing his temples as he muttered an acknowledgment.

Stepping out of the car, Alivia approached her family. She could have easily explained that it was Max's assistant, not Max

himself, who had accompanied her home. But she chose not to.

"Grandpa, Dad, let's head inside. Max is so tired he's about to fall asleep. I didn't want to make him come out and greet

everyone."

The family members exchanged knowing looks and chuckled. "You're not even married to him yet, and already you're taking his

side?"

"He's my future husband. If I don't stand by him, who will?"

Alivia had always been the darling of the Barnes family, their little princess.

Hearing her words, the Barnes clan seemed even more delighted. "Yes, Alivia's all grown up now. We can't hold onto her much

longer. Only Max can keep you in line."

The corners of Alivia's mouth turned up in a smile, signaling to the Barnes family that things between her and Max were going

well. If Max ever announced his relationship with Brielle, these people would see Brielle as the homewrecker.

A detestable homewrecker—why would they ever look up to her?

Alivia felt as if she held all the cards.

Moreover, she wielded her kindness toward Martha as both a weapon and a shield. Max couldn't be cold to her, not with that in

play. That was where Alivia's cleverness lay.

During this period of strife between Max and Brielle, all Alivia had to do was capture his heart and ensure Brielle's complete exit

from the picture.

To make a man fall, a woman had two avenues: one is through the body, the other through the heart. While the physical

approach might've yielded quick results, it rarely ended well. Men were rational creatures. Even if they succumbed to their

passions in the heat of the moment, they eventually cooled down.

Max and Brielle's relationship was seen as such—a temporary passion that most believed would fade once Max grew bored.

Alivia considered herself above such tactics, and chose the path of the heart. She would never stoop to replicate Brielle's

methods, which she deemed beneath her. Thus, she constantly showcased her virtues.

with She wasn't worried about wasting time or effort. The moment Max felt tired or weary Brielle, he would suddenly appreciate

Alivia's virtues. This slow-boiling approach could lead Max to believe she was the one who truly understood him, the one most

suited for him.

And everything with Brielle? It was merely a fleeting infatuation.

That was Alivia's mantra; she never considered Brielle a real threat. A woman of such standing wasn't worth her concern.

Chapter 457

Brielle had returned to her elegant abode at Pearl Estate, and her thoughts were tangled with the secret she had accidentally

unearthed earlier that evening. A crease of concern formed between her brows.

She reached for her phone, her fingers swiftly dialing Patrick's number. "Patrick, can you do me a solid and send over the

security footage from the Dorsey International elevator? Not the private one, just the one from today."

Had it not been for the unexpected encounter that night, she wouldn't have found herself requesting surveillance footage.

It was Sydney's glance at Spencer that had set off alarms in Brielle's mind. At first, she thought it was fear, a kind of wariness,

but now, replaying the lies Sydney had spun to her own boyfriend, Brielle knew better. Those lies were delivered with the ease of

practice. It was clearly not for the first time.

Making such a call to her supposed boyfriend while tangled in deceit was both cruel and shameless. While waiting for Patrick to

send the footage, her phone buzzed with an incoming call from Aubree. "Bri, have you seen the buzz online? You weren't with

Max? That jerk was caught locking lips with Alivia!"

The news hit Brielle like a cold splash of disbelief. Max wasn't that kind of guy.

Still, she instinctively scrolled through the latest news feeds, and there it was—the top story was Max and Alivia.

The image was like a bright flash that left her eyes stinging with pain.

Max wasn't that kind of guy. He had introduced her to Alivia with such openness, which meant there was nothing untoward

between them. But as a woman, Brielle knew Alivia's tricks all too well. The objective was clear—to chip away at her, piece by

piece, just like the lipstick stain on Max's collar from before.

Brielle could shrug off such incidents, confident in the strength of their relationship. But what if it happened time and time again?

She wasn't heartless, not a machine devoid of emotion. Each incident was a prick to her heart. and over time, all that would

remain was disappointment. Besides, she had lost a child, and the pain from seeing such a photograph was like a needle digging

in deep.

Though neither of them had done anything wrong, that was the most disheartening part of it all. Once Brielle felt too weary to go

on, that would signal the end of this silent war.

"Bri?"

"Bri?"

Aubree called out twice, but there was no reply.

Aubree was concerned and nearly ready to rush over to Pearl Estate when Brielle finally said with firm denial "It's fake."

Somehow, those two simple words carried a weight of helplessness that even Aubree could feel, making her own heart clench. Il

Brielle and Max weren't right for each other, it was better to cut ties now before things got messier.

"But he also took Alivia back to the Barnes residence. At this hour, he's dropping off a woman who's got a thing for him... I'm not

buying the innocent act," Aubree said, her voice tinged with a cruel edge.

Brielle didn't respond. The pain was throbbing more intensely as if salt was being rubbed into her wounds. She let out a weary

sigh, and after a long pause, her voice was hoarse as she said, "Aubree, I just want to sleep."

Aubree could tell Brielle was dodging the issue, and it sparked annoyance within her. "It's just Max, for God's sake. We don't

need him. How about you come out, and tonight, I'll help you find someone way better?"

Brielle, not wanting to be alone with her thoughts, considered the offer for a moment before replying, "Come pick me up in a bit."

A cheer erupted on the other end of the line as Aubree hurried to get ready.

Meanwhile, Patrick had sent the elevator surveillance footage. In the video, Sydney was the first to step into the elevator,

followed closely by Spencer crowding in after her.

"Did Uncle Max ask you about Brielle? What did you tell him?"

"Brielle! Brielle! That's all anyone ever talks about! Am I invisible to you all?!"

"Why do you think you can even compare to her? Don't you have a clue?"

The footage was crystal clear, every word cutting through the silence.

Brielle's gut instinct was right. There was something off about those two, most likely more than just a passing fling. Perhaps

Sydney's companion that night had been Spencer.

Every time Brielle thought Spencer couldn't sink any lower, he managed to outdo himself.

Her expression twisted with disgust, and she was about to slam her laptop shut when a new email notification caught her eye.

She had blocked Spencer, but there he was, invading her inbox. [Brielle, I told you, you and Uncle Max aren't a match. He was

just toying with you. You've seen the news, right? He and Alivia kissing... I bet they've done more than that.]

The message left Brielle feeling irate, and without a second thought, she relegated the email to the spam folder.

Twenty minutes later, her doorbell chimed. Expecting Aubree, she casually opened the door in her thin nightgown. To her

surprise, it wasn't Aubree at the door but a slightly inebriated

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Spencer, his gaze brazenly sweeping over her.

As Brielle moved to close the door, Spencer seized the moment, pushing his way in and deadbolting the door behind him.

Brielle's alarm spiked instantly. "Spencer, what the hell do you think you're doing?"

Chapter 458

Spencer's mouth twitched into a smirk. He hadn't taken advantage of Brielle when she was undergoing surgery for appendicitis,

mainly because she was unconscious then, like a lifeless body, and that just didn't excite him.

But now, Brielle was awake, and she was also having problems with Max. It was a time when she was most vulnerable,

physically and emotionally.

Spencer had fucked Sydney, but it still didn't feel enough, like scratching an itch through a boot. When Sydney's boyfriend

mentioned running into a coworker in the department, Spencer instantly thought of Brielle. The idea of her hearing him in the

throes of passion with another woman heightened his desires.

Then, he saw the news and got a phone call that further emboldened him.

Would Max still want her if Spencer could get something going with Brielle tonight and spread the photos everywhere? Would he

want a woman who cheated on her fiancé?

His lips twisted into a smirk as he contemplated the feasibility of his plan.

Spencer yanked off his tie, and his gaze fell on Brielle, predatory and intense. Brielle felt the pain of her wound, and the

weakness from days of being on a glucose drip left her with no strength.

Without hesitation, Spencer pounced. "Brielle, you've been with so many guys. What's one more? Stop struggling. I'm going to

make you feel good."

Brielle hurled her phone at him. The phone struck Spencer's forehead, raising a welt instantly. but this pain was nothing

compared to the reaction elsewhere in his body.

Usually, Brielle could have easily taken Spencer down with her clever moves, but weakened as she was, she could only retreat

and look for an opening.

Spencer, looking smug with triumph, had already ravaged Brielle with his eyes. As he lunged for the second time, he pinned

Brielle beneath him and started to tear open her shirt buttons.

“So beautiful.”

Her neck was as graceful as a swan’s.

Spencer felt a heat surge through him. His eyes reddened with desire. He leaned down, ready to bite down viciously. But before

he could touch her, a sharp pain exploded in the back of his head, and his face went pale.

Brielle, clutching a lamp, retreated. Seeing the blood on the lamp, she panicked.

Spencer touched the back of his head and found blood, and his lips thinned with determination as he continued his assault. He

would rather die on top of her than give up.

His lips approached, and just as he was about to bite into her flesh, Brielle struck a second blow.

Spencer felt dizzy, collapsing on top of her, drained of strength.

The pain in his head threatened to crush him, and he even contemplated using his last ounce of strength to strangle Brielle—to

die together.

Silence hung between them. Ten years of warmth and beauty were now sharp as knives raining from the sky.

Brielle’s fingers trembled. Her wound felt like it was tearing open.

Spencer mustered his last bit of energy, rolling off her, gasping for air. “Brielle, you’re ruthless.”

He wouldn’t expect her to call for help. She stared blankly at the ceiling, her shirt half unbuttoned, exposing her pale neck.

Somehow, that image of brokenness pierced Spencer’s heart. Regret washed over him, and he tentatively reached out to grasp

her hand. "Brielle?"

She didn't respond. Her eyes were open but seemingly senseless. Panic set in for Spencer, "Brielle, you- Before he could finish, Brielle blinked slowly, gripped the lamp, and swung it at him again.

Spencer vomited blood from the blow. Brielle was intent on killing him.

"Fine, let him die," she thought, "not a tear shall be shed for him." Brielle's mind was blank. Her body's instinct to protect itself

told her she couldn't stop, or she would fail to protect herself as she had failed to protect that child.

The phone rang frantically, and someone was pounding on the door. Faith's voice was shrill, "Spencer! What the hell are you

doing in there? Are you okay?!"

"Crash!"

The door burst open under the security's force, and Faith screamed at the scene before her, striding over to push Brielle aside.

"Are you insane, Brielle? Have you lost your mind?"

With a wooden expression, Brielle seemed to snap back to reality, looking down at Spencer, who was already unconscious.

Her grip on the lamp loosened, and her lips trembled.

Faith tested for Spencer's breath with a finger under his nose; he was still breathing, and only then did she break down in tears.

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Chapter 459

"Brielle, I swear on the Dorsey family name, I'll sue you to the grave!"

The bodyguard had Brielle cornered, and within ten minutes, a stretcher was wheeled onto the floor.

All the while, Brielle just watched silently until a stinging slap snapped her head to the side. "You bitch! You better pray Spencer

is fine, or I'll make your life a living hell!"

Her cheek turned with the blow, and she even stuck out her tongue, tasting the metallic tang of blood at the corner of her mouth.

It was blood. She had knocked Spencer out cold, and there was a lot of it.

She couldn't fathom why she had done it. It was as if all the hatred from losing a child and the helplessness with her situation

had exploded in that instant. It turned out she had always been teetering on the edge of a breakdown, and Spencer's intrusion

had just pushed her over..

Blinking back weakness, she didn't argue this time.

Faith glared at her with disgust. Had Spencer not been avoiding her calls and refusing to come home recently, she wouldn't have

had to track down his whereabouts and rush over. If she hadn't, Spencer might well have been dead.

Brielle was capable of such malice. Such cruelty!

When Aubree arrived, she was greeted by the sight of Brielle being escorted into a police cruiser. She was shocked, even

thinking she had seen wrong.

By then, Faith had followed the ambulance away, leaving only Brielle in the custody of the police. Aubree hurried over, grabbing

Brielle's wrist. "Officer, what's going on here? Is there some mistake?"

Was the same person she had just made plans to hang out with now being put into a police car?

"Please step back, ma'am. Don't interfere with police business."

Aubree's face went pale, and she reached to dial Max's number. But Brielle seemed to come back to life in that moment,

speaking wearily, "Aubree, don't tell him."

Aubree froze, then tightened her grip on her phone. "What's going on, Bri? You have to give me some reason. You're scaring me,

you know? You look like you've lost weight, and now you're being taken to the station, and-"

"My baby, my baby is gone..."

Her voice was hoarse as if she was on the verge of tears. But she didn't cry, perhaps having spent all her tears in those four

days.

Aubree stopped dead, thinking she must have misheard.

What baby? When did Brielle have a baby?

“Max’s baby. His mother... I don’t even know if it was a boy or a girl. Aubree, it hurts so much here.” She pointed to her abdomen

and then to her heart, her words sounding disjointed.

It seemed Brielle had never really gotten over the loss of her child. Four days and nights of crying had not brought her peace.

The better Max treated her, the guiltier she felt. The gentler he was, the more panicked she became.

Spencer’s assault and the humiliation were all just a trigger for her to explode. She wasn’t retaliating against Spencer, but

against herself, as if to destroy her own being.

Aubree was speechless, holding onto her hand. “Just calm down, Bri. Let’s just take a moment to calm down and talk this

through.

While urging Brielle to stay calm, Aubree was in a panic, and her lips began to quiver. What could she do now?

The police didn’t give them another moment, pushing Brielle into the car.

Aubree held onto Brielle’s hand, attempting to follow, but was stopped. Through the car window, Brielle seemed to regain a shred

of sanity. “Aubree, don’t tell Max.”

Aubree stood outside, the chill of the night air biting at her. How did it come to this?

She was so agitated, just about to call Andrew when his call came through first. “Aubree, you’ll need to go home on your own

tonight. I won’t be back. There’s trouble with Max.”

Aubree’s mind whirled, struggling to process everything. “What happened to Max?”

Andrew sounded irritable, taking a deep drag on his cigarette. “It’s the Dorsey family drama. He got Ryan’s kid out of there, and

for some reason, Ryan lost it and rammed Max with his car right outside the Dorsey residence. Now he’s unconscious.”

How could Max be so easily hit? What was he thinking?

“Is he alright? Is it serious?”

“Don’t know, just a temporary blackout. Michael is furious, and Kenzo and I have to head to the hospital to check on Max once

he wakes up.”

As Andrew spoke, he wished he could just have someone take out Ryan. How could he cause such a scene at the Dorsey

doorstep? What could have provoked him?

Andrew rubbed his temples, realizing that even he wouldn’t have expected Ryan to snap like that.

They said Max had already gotten out of the car, intending to go in and find Michael, when Ryan charged out of a corner and

plowed into him. If Max hadn’t been quick on his feet, they

might’ve been arranging his funeral by now.

Cursing under his breath, Andrew hurried to the hospital.

Chapter 460

In the hospital at this ungodly hour, the corridors were packed with people.

Michael’s hands gripped his cane, and he sat brooding in a corner. His expression was dark and stormy.

No one dared to utter a word, not even the usually boisterous Tiffanie, who was now curled up in a corner, wishing she could

vanish into thin air.

The Dorsey family would be in chaos with Max’s accident. It was the calm before the storm. Everyone was on edge, waiting for

news of Max from the emergency room.

Michael closed his eyes tightly and asked in a cold voice. “Where’s that disgrace?”

He was talking about Ryan. No one could have predicted that tonight, Ryan would go off the rails. When Michael had asked Max

to handle the situation with Ryan’s child, Ryan hadn’t raised any objections, had he? In just a few days, for the sake of his

youngest son, Ryan had rammed into Max with his car right at the gates of the Dorsey estate.

With that single act, he’d thrown away everything he had within the Dorsey family.

William sat off to the side, a hint of glee in his eyes. With Max injured and hospitalized, and Ryan about to be exiled, plus the

third son absent and not returning soon, he was the only one left in the Dorsey family..

Even if Michael were disappointed in William for the moment, all attention would have to be focused on him.

William couldn't let Max leave the hospital unscathed. This was his best opportunity.

"Pop, Ryan's locked up in the Dorsey estate. What do you want to do with him?"

"How should I deal with him?" Michael roared and slammed his cane down hard. "I wish that bastard would drop dead this

instant! What has he done for the Dorsey family over these years. besides loafing around? He's not content with fathering an

illegitimate child and has now injured his own brother over that same kid!"

Michael's chest heaved, and a shadow crossed his face. "Hand him over to the police. For intentional assault, let the law decide

his fate."

A smile flickered in William's eyes. Michael was making a statement for Max – choosing justice over family and not even giving

Ryan a chance at exile. It seemed Michael was truly done with Ryan as a pawn.

"Alright, Pop, you just cool down. I'll have someone take care of it right away."

Michael sneered, "Don't think I don't know what you're plotting. Even if Max were to become crazy after this, this position is still

his, and no one else in the Dorsey family should even dream of it!"

Michael had decided when Max was ten that he would be the heir to the Dorsey family. His youngest son had fought his way

through Wall Street at sixteen and had never once disappointed him.

Michael's high regard for this son was matched only by his disappointment in the others. Max's journey was supposed to take the

world at large and not just cling to Dorsey International.

It was the first time Michael had openly shown his preference for Max, sending a clear warning to William.

A flicker of hatred passed through William's eyes, his mouth tasting bitter.

Even if Max went mad, he was still to be the heir. Fine, In that case, William would make sure Max never left the hospital alive.

Then, no one could challenge him for the throne.

“Dad, you’ve got me wrong. I never thought about that. Max is in trouble, and I’m more worried than anyone.”

Too tired to argue, Michael closed his eyes and held his cane tightly.

The emergency room light was still on, and no one knew what condition Max was in.

In the oppressive silence, Faith’s crying broke the stillness. She ran over like a madwoman, dropping to her knees before

Michael.

“Dad, Ryan just lost his head for a moment. Please don’t send him to jail. Dad, I’m begging you. Spencer is also in trouble. I can’t

lose my son and my husband. Dad, please.”

Faith was completely distraught. When she followed the ambulance to the hospital, she had heard about Ryan’s actions and felt

like the world was collapsing. Then she got a text from Victoria saying Michael was sending Ryan to the police. She had rushed

over as fast as she could.

“I know Ryan did wrong by Max, and he shouldn’t have done it. But Max is in surgery, and so is Spencer, Dad, on account of my

years with the Dorsey family, I’ve never put a foot wrong. Please spare Ryan this time. We’ll leave for another place, and never

to return to Beaconsfield. Please, Dad,”

As she spoke, Faith banged her head on the floor, and blood-streaked her forehead.

Michael felt weary but caught the key information. “What happened to Spencer?”

Tears fell from Faith’s eyes as she sobbed. “Brielle, she’s gone mad. She tried to kill Spencer. He’s lost so much blood, oh...”