

Master 471

Chapter 471

Aubree's eyes flickered in disbelief as she gazed at Alivia. It was only now that she realized. beneath Alivia's gentle facade

lurked a darkness so vile it almost made her gag.

Alivia saw no reason to hide her true self in front of Brielle's friends. To her, their fear was an advantage. She let out a soft

chuckle, delicately straightening Aubree's collar. "Poor Briette's probably been tossed around like a rag doll by now. Even if she

gets out, Max won't give her a second glance. Why else would he ignore your calls? He finds it repulsive. Miss Aubree, I guess

I'll be heading up then."

Rooted to the spot, Aubree heard Alivia's smug voice trailing off. "Even if you wanted to go see her. I doubt you could. Michael

has used the Dorsey family's influence to seal that place tight. Not even a fly could get in. Such a pity."

That bitch!

Aubree trembled with rage, yet felt a profound sense of powerlessness.

She had grown up in this world and knew too well the sway Alivia held among the elite. If Alivia wanted to make Brielle's life

miserable, she could do it with a snap of her fingers.

Adding the Dorsey family into the mix, and Max no longer caring about Brielle, who was there to save her friend?

Desperate and furious, Aubree stormed out of Dorsey Tower, tears streaming down her face.

Aubree rarely cried, not even when Andrew had tormented her to the brink of death. She was a rose with thorns, while Brielle

was a verdant leaf touched by frost. Yet, both had been unlucky in love.

Feeling helpless, Aubree stood on the sidewalk, wiping away her tears with a trembling hand. A sleek sports car pulled up in

front of her, and the window rolled down to reveal Dustin's face.

Dustin still had that stunning look – eyes as charming as a spring breeze, a smile brimming with warmth. "Aren't you Andrew's

little sister? What's got you crying on the sidewalk, lost your way?"

Ignoring his teasing, Aubree focused on the face that seemed like a savior, looking more handsome than ever. Quickly wiping

her eyes, she tapped on the door. "Mr. Lynch."

Dustin wasn't one to leave a lady crying on the street. He unlocked the car, and Aubree climbed in, sniffing. "I always knew you

were one of the good ones, Mr. Lynch. Bri's blind for not seeing it."

Dustin chuckled, pulling out a few tissues and handing them to her. "Dry those tears. Are you looking for your brother?"

The car started moving. Dustin's hands were steady on the wheel, his posture a mix of composure and casual ease.

"That jerk Max is ditching Bri." She said it deliberately, aiming to gauge Dustin's reaction. If he cared for Brielle, then he might

just be the help sent from above.

"Whoa!"

The car stopped abruptly, Dustin turned, his face a picture of shock – definitely not feigned. "Has Max gone blind? He's really

giving up on little Bri?"

Aubree's eyes welled up again. "Yeah, Alivia has even arranged for Bri to be tormented in jail. The Dorsey family is putting

pressure on them so no one can visit. I'm so worried about Bri."

"Which jail?"

"The one down on South Road."

Aubree answered quickly, watching as Dustin picked up his phone, dialing a number without hesitation.

"Mr. King, it's me, Dustin."

"Dustin? When you call, it's rarely good news. What do you need this time?"

"Actually, I just rushed back from abroad to toast to your promotion, Uncle. I've got some fine wine in the car; I'll swing by later."

"Cut the crap, Dustin. What's the real reason for your call?"

"The South Road jail. I need to see a friend, but I heard the Dorsey family's been leaning on it?"

“That jail, huh? It’s been buzzing lately. Not just the Dorsey’s, but the Riddle family has made some moves too. Who’s this friend,

Dustin? Your girlfriend?”

“Come on, you’re the man in Beaconsfield. Surely, this isn’t beyond you?”

Dustin’s face held a smile, but his eyes were serious. He wasn’t up to speed with

Beaconsfield’s power plays but knew the Riddle family usually stayed out of such affairs. Why were they involved now?

“Don’t tease me, kid. If you need to go, go now.”

Dustin grinned, flooring the accelerator, his hand firmly on the wheel.

Thanks. And could you find out why the Riddle family’s getting involved?”

“Just don’t forget my wine.”

Dustin agreed readily, hanging up and tossing his phone onto the back seat.

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Aubree’s tears had stopped, replaced by a hint of surprise.

The Dorsey and Riddle families were powerhouses, but Dustin had handled them with just a phone call. Weren’t the Lynches

part of the high society in North America? How did they have such clout in Beaconsfield?

“Mr. Lynch, can we go see Bri now?”

“Why not?”

“Mr. Lynch, I never noticed before how damn handsome you are.”

He snorted, “You’re just realizing this now? One of you has got a thing for Andrew, the other for Max. You and Brielle really need

to pair up and get your eyes checked.”

Aubree decided to keep quiet.

Fifteen minutes later, the car pulled up to the prison entrance. The gates were already open, with a uniformed man waiting to

receive them. The very same man they’d seen earlier.

Without a word, the uniformed man looked at Dustin, his eyelashes fluttering downwards. “Mr. Lynch, you can go in to see Ms.

Brielle, but this young lady..."

He glanced at Aubree with a troubled expression. Impatient as ever, she tried to barge right in. Dustin held her back. "You wait

here. If anything happens to her, I'll turn this police station upside down, deal?"

Aubree stopped in her tracks, never before had she seen Dustin so towering and impressive.

Dustin gave the uniformed man a sidelong glance and a slight chuckle. "Lead the way."

The man nodded and led them through the twists and turns of the prison, stopping finally at the door to Brielle's cell.

Dustin didn't enter right away but gave the uniformed man a meaningful look. He was different from the other guards, seemingly

of a higher rank.

Dustin was raised in influential North American circles and was well-traveled. He was no stranger to domestic and international

military bases, and moved in and out with ease.

The way this officer walked, back straight and footsteps light, he was a professional. Such a man shouldn't be guarding a small-

time prison, let alone be stationed outside Brielle's cell.

Whose man was he?

Dustin smiled as the game was getting more interesting. He leaned in closer to study the man's face. The guard stepped back,

his hand subconsciously moving towards his belt. "What are you trying to do, Mr. Lynch?"

Dustin didn't answer his question. "The Riddle family or the Dorsey family, whose side are you on?"

The Lynch family had stood strong in North America for years, and every member was formidable. Dustin himself was honored

by foreign royalty and at the helm of Infinity Brilliance as CEO, and was far from a frivolous fool.

The guard stepped back, lowering his gaze. "I'm just a prison guard here, with a few men under my command. I'm not affiliated

with any family, as you speculate."

Dustin stroked his chin, chuckling softly. "If you're not with any family, then you must belong to someone. Who might that be?"

Cursed in his mind, the guard dared not speak further. With Dustin's approach, the more you said, the more you erred.

Seeing the guard's sealed lips, Dustin glanced at the door. "Well, aren't you going to open it?"

Reluctantly, the guard took out his keys and unlocked the door. Dustin peeked inside to find Brielle sitting on a cot, looking as

though she was about to nod off.

Brielle thought it was just another meal delivery and didn't even open her eyes. That was until a hand hovered near her nose as

if checking for breath.

She furrowed her brows and looked up to see a face that shouldn't have been there. She might have thought it a hallucination,

but even then, Dustin would be the last person she'd imagine.

Dustin waved a hand in front of her face. "What's the matter, stunned to see me?"

Brielle slid off the cot. "Mr. Lynch?"

Dustin raised an eyebrow, his lips curving slightly. "Yes, it's me. Someone asked me to check in on you and claimed you were

mistreated. But here you are, looking fine and dandy." His gaze swept over her, ensuring she was unharmed, before taking a

seat.

"Who asked you to come?"

Dustin's eyes held a playful glint, "Certainly not Max."

It had to be Aubree, then. Brielle lowered her gaze, biting her lip, feeling a sharp pain in her heart.

Dustin surveyed the room. It was small, yes, but securing such a space in a prison was no small feat. He didn't know the details,

but someone was protecting Brielle, and that uniformed man at the door was their agent.

"Mr. Lynch, when you leave, tell Aubree I'm alright."

"You're not coming with me?"

Dustin's brow wrinkled, a pang of pity striking him at the sight of her suffering. If Max couldn't protect her, then Dustin would take

her out of the country. Once they were gone, the sky was the limit. She could do whatever she wanted.

Brielle's face paled; a headache was throbbing. "I can't leave. Even if I did, where would I go?"

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Michael had the power to throw her into that mess once: he could very well do it again. And if they found out she was MIA from

her personal prison, who's to say what he'd get up to next?

The Dorsey clan, the Barnes bunch, the Rowland gang they were all eyeing her like a pack of wolves circling their prey. Maybe,

just maybe, sticking around here was the safer bet.

Dustin didn't press her for answers. After all, a girl who could rake in a cool billion at the blackjack tables in one night wasn't

without resources. She had her reasons for staying put.

"Little Bri," he said, his voice casual but firm. "I'll leave my digits with that uniformed dude at the door. If you ever get cold feet or

whatever, give me a ring. The Lynch turf ain't in Beaconsfield, but keeping a lady safe? That's a cakewalk for us."

He pondered for a second, then nonchalantly ruffled her hair like she was a pet bunny or something.

"Besides, I kinda dig being

your knight in shining armor, if..." he added, trailing off before he could finish the thought. A rare hint of melancholy flickered

across his eyes.

"Anyway, if you smell trouble brewing, have that guy outside give me a shout. Can't quite peg who he's rolling with, but he seems

to mean you no harm."

"Mr. Lynch, thank you," Brielle said, heartfelt gratitude lacing her voice. Through all the time she'd known Dustin, with his rep and

all, he'd been nothing but good to her. He had never crossed a line.

There was no further hesitation from Dustin. With Aubree waiting at the door, he didn't want to give her the wrong idea by

lingering. "Alright, I'm out. Remember, hit me up if things get too hot to handle."

Brielle felt a lump in her throat, her eyes misting over.

At the door, Dustin paused, then turned back and pulled her into a hug. Brielle stiffened, caught off guard, but he simply patted

her back – a gesture devoid of any untoward intent, perhaps a reaction to the bruises on her neck.

It was brief, and the

he was standing straight again. With any other guy, Brielle would've fought back, even in her weakened state, like she had with

Spencer. But with Dustin, it was different. There was this vibe of utter tranquility between them from the get-go.

He was open with her, letting her know the kind of man he was. So straightforward it disarmed any need for guards.

Dustin reached the door and slowly closed it behind him. The uniformed man seemed more on edge, eyeing him like a hawk,

muscles tensed as if ready to throw a punch at any second. The guy's hostility had ramped up a notch.

Dustin raised an eyebrow, sensing something, and curved his lips into a half-smile. He fished out a business card from his

pocket and handed it over.

"My number, for little Bri."

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The uniformed man stayed silent and didn't take it at first.

"What's up? Your boss doesn't want guys getting close to little Bri?" Dustin mused, his sharpness catching even the slightest

hesitation.

The man hurriedly took the card, lips pressed into a thin line, clearly itching to see Dustin off.

Dustin wasn't fazed. He strolled out to where Aubree sat on a bench, anxiety written all over her face.

"Mr. Lynch Aubree bounced up and hurried over. "How's Bri? Is she-

Let's talk in the car."

With a tone as cool as the evening breeze, Dustin glanced around and stepped outside, Aubree hot on his heels. Once the car

door shut, she saw him slip into contemplation, his finger tapping the steering wheel rhythmically.

"Bri's holding up well. No need to worry."

Aubree's tension melted away, and her eyes reddened as she unclenched her fists. She felt a sour sting in her nose.

"Aubree, when you were at Dorsey International, did you see Max?"

At the mention of Max, Aubree's expression soured. "Yeah, I saw him. He and Alivia were all cozied up. Looks like they're tying

the knot soon. Good for him. He finally shook Bri off his tail" Dustin lounged back, fingers still playing on the wheel. "Really?

How's Max doing? Didn't I hear he got banged up?"

"He seemed better than ever. Shame Ryan didn't finish the job."

Dustin squinted a smile. "As long as he's doing fine. Little Bri seems to be worried sick for the guy. If he bit the dust, she'd be a

hundred times more miserable."

Aubree went silent, swallowed by sadness. Women often lacked the ruthlessness of men. Aubree despised Andrew, but the pain

of hating him was nothing compared to the agony of him being gone from this world. No matter the hate, she wished he was still

breathing.

If only love had an off switch, to easily retract all feelings without a trace. If such a thing existed, she'd trade the world for it.

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Inside the Dorsey Tower.

Max had barely set foot on the top floor when he caught sight of a figure from behind. Had Spencer been there, he would have

instantly recognized her. It was Sydney,

Sydney's recent sartorial choices were a carbon copy of Brielle's minimalist chic. Her original style was bright and bubbly – a

drastic shift that sparked quite the buzz among her colleagues, But Sydney couldn't care less about the chatter. Catching a

glimpse of Max, a flash of delight swept through her eyes. It wasn't for nothing that she'd been frequenting the top floor.

After snagging a few million from Spencer, she had revamped her image. Even her wardrobe mimicked Brielle's. To an outsider

unfamiliar with both Sydney and Brielle, Sydney's silhouette could've easily been mistaken for Brielle's.

Didn't Max and Spencer both have a penchant for such elegance? With her persistent presence, perhaps Mr. Dorsey might just

take a shine to her.

Sydney noticed Max's glance and curved her lips into a smile. However, Max merely spared her a fleeting look before

emotionlessly stepping into his office.

Sydney's face fell. What went wrong? Why didn't he linger on her a moment longer?

These past few days, Spencer hadn't reached out to her either. She was on edge, worrying that things were slipping out of her

control.

Her focus had drifted from her job, consumed by the thought of winning Spencer's attention and usurping Brielle in his and Mr.

Dorsey's esteem. Sydney believed in her eventual triumph. Brielle hadn't been to the office in days who knew which man she

had run off with this time? She was even pregnant, truly nothing but loose morals incarnate.

Sydney snorted dismissively and returned to her department in her tailored outfit.

She keenly noticed fewer people engaging with her, aware of the whispers about her mimicking Brielle. Brielle's distinctive

personal style was starkly different from Sydney's usual look.

This abrupt change, coupled with her new role as Brielle's assistant, had tongues wagging, but she was oblivious to their stares.

After all, she had hooked up with Spencer – perhaps one day. She would even marry into the family.

Sneaking into Brielle's office in her absence, Sydney would sit at the desk as if she was already slipping into Brielle's shoes. It

was only a matter of time. Brielle, with her pregnant frame, couldn't possibly continue to entice Max.

Upon entering his office, Max massaged his temples, the headache persisting. "Patrick."

At his call, the ever-ready assistant approached.

"How's the investigation going?"

"Mr. President, we're nearly there."

Max leaned back, eyes half-closed, his aura cool and detached. Looking paler than usual, he was even more inscrutable, his

thoughts a mystery.

Patrick hesitated, ultimately holding his tongue.

Minutes later, Max's eyes opened as his phone rang. It was Michael. Assuming Max was already back at the company, Michael

naturally wanted to discuss the vacant position left by Brielle's absence, inevitably bringing her up.

"Max, with Brielle in jail, she can't continue as the director. It's time for Spencer to step back in. He's a Dorsey, after all. It's

unseemly to have a woman overshadowing him like this."

Max, who had been flipping through documents, paused at Michael's words. "I had Spencer step down not because of anything

else but his lack of competence."

*Competence can be nurtured, but character flaws? Those are marrow-deep."

*Father, you're saying I should just remove Brielle from the director position. Is that enough?"

Michael had feared Max's reluctance, given that Brielle was his protégé. Michael even suspected that there was something

between them, so Max's quick agreement left Michael momentarily at a loss.

"Father?"

Max called out, his voice still even-keeled. "Did you ever look into why Brielle and Spencer came to blows?"

His tone was unchanged even when speaking of Brielle as if she was merely a stranger.

"It's likely just some romantic tiff."

"Have you considered, father, that keeping Brielle locked away might not be wise? The position of director at Dorsey

International is coveted by many. It started with Spencer stepping down for Brielle to step up, and now it's reversed. Everyone is

curious about the drama. And if Brielle doesn't resurface soon they'll start suspecting us of foul play."

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Michael never really pondered the implications of the situation; his mind was set on keeping things under wraps. Yet, he was well

aware that some folks just couldn't keep their lips sealed. "Max, what do you reckon we do? You can't bear to let Brielle go, can

you?" Michael's tone carried a hint of sternness. If Max hesitated, Michael was resolute about not letting Brielle off

the hook.

"Dad, I'm simply looking at the facts. Sure, we can remove Brielle from her position—after all, Dorsey International is our family's

turf. But she's built a reputation in her department. Even fabricating a resignation letter might not stop the chatter. As for the

mess with William and Sue, we've already leaned on the police and gagged some of the press. If we keep this up, it'll only draw

suspicion from the higher-ups. There's been a shake-up in their ranks recently—new faces in, old ones out. The new broom

sweeps clean, and the Dorsey family's reputation can't afford a single misstep."

Michael squinted, considering the recent shift in power and the truth in the saying about new officials making big changes. The

debacle William stirred up had been a major

embarrassment, and now, with Spencer's predicament, it was likely to grab unwanted attention.

Max's words, though—purely objective and in the family's best interest—caused Michael an instant headache.

"Wouldn't stripping Brielle of her title let her off easy? Thanks to her, Spencer ended up in the ER."

"Since it's all about emotions, and with Spencer's wedding around the corner, consider that chapter closed. As for Brielle, she's

nothing without her job. Cut her off from Dorsey International, and she's done for. That's a more bitter pill to swallow than mere

confinement. She's a tough cookie, but it's the softest cuts that hurt the most."

A flicker of satisfaction crossed Michael's eyes, and his lips curled into a faint smile. "Follow your plan then. I'll have someone

notify the police to hold her for two more days, then release her. As you said, once fired, we'll make sure she can't find work

anywhere else: She'll have no choice but to leave the country."

"Exactly my point, Father."

Michael sighed, immensely pleased with the strategy. Max always handled things without personal feelings, and his indifference

toward Brielle reassured Michael.

After hanging up, Max couldn't help but cough, the action stirring the chaos in his mind. Discharging himself from the hospital

after only three days was pushing it.

Patrick rushed over with a cup of warm water. "Mr. Dorsey, maybe you should head back to the hospital for a bit more rest?"

But Max shook his head, ignoring the water and closing his laptop. "Move this afternoon's meeting up, and convert all meetings

in the next three days to virtual."

Patrick complied without protest.

Meanwhile, Alivia lingered on the top floor. She intended to visit Max's office but knew better than to interrupt him. Instead, she

strolled through Dorsey Tower and made her way to Brielle's department.

There, she spotted Sydney, dressed to the nines, just like Brielle. Alivia smirked internally. approaching Sydney and tapping on

her desk.

"Hello there."

Sydney looked up, a flash of admiration passing through her eyes at the sight of Alivia. The media had been all abuzz about her,

touting her as a golden girl, her achievements surpassing

many men.

Sydney was contemptuous of such praise. In her opinion, a woman's place was to keep a man happy in bed—that was all it took.

Like with Spencer, Sydney made him happy, and he showered her with more money than she could ever earn on her own.

However, facing Alivia, Sydney felt a sense of inferiority and quickly stood up. "Ms. Alivia, hello. Are you looking for someone?"

Alivia smiled gently. "Actually, I'm here to see you. Do you have a moment? I'd like to have a word with you.

A look of discomfort crossed Sydney's face, and she was genuinely clueless as to what Alivia might want to discuss. This was

their first encounter, and Sydney didn't see any need for a chat.

But this was Alivia, someone she dared not offend, and whom she knew she must treat with utmost care.

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"Alright, how about we hit the coffee shop outside Dorsey Tower? It should be pretty quiet there now."

"No need. It's the middle of the workday. I'll only take a few minutes of your time.

Sydney breathed a sigh of relief, "Ms. Alivia, please pick a spot then."

With a gentle smile to the passersby, Alivia headed out first, her heels clicking against the floor. Sydney had no choice but to

follow. She thought Alivia would lead her to the break room, but she was wrong. Instead, Alivia entered the ladies' room.

Reluctantly, Sydney followed.

Alivia stood before the mirror, looking back at her. "Lock the door."

Sydney felt like a maid, but she complied.

Once the door was locked, Alivia's smile grew wider. She gestured towards the stalls. "Check if there's anyone inside." Her

caution was habitual.

Sydney's face twisted in displeasure. She acknowledged Alivia's high status, but why should she be ordered around like some

servant? It was infuriating.

But despite her inner resistance, she didn't dare make a scene and started checking the stalls.

Empty.

"There's no one here, Ms. Alivia."

The softness on Alivia's face faded away, replaced by a piercing gaze that made Sydney's skin crawl.

"What do you know about

Brielle? I won't tolerate a single lie."

The confrontational stance made Sydney nervous. "Ms. Alivia, that's none of your business."

As soon as the words left her mouth, Alivia's hand flew up and slapped her across the face. "I don't appreciate defiance.

Remember your place. You're not even worthy to look me in the eye when you speak," Alivia hissed.

Sydney's lips bled from the blow. She stared at Alivia in disbelief, her body trembling with fear at the malice in Alivia's eyes.

Alivia tilted her chin up, her eyes flickering with disdain. "Answer my questions, and perhaps things will go smoother for you."

Sydney's lips quivered, too scared to meet her gaze.

In front of peers, Alivia might have kept up appearances, but with Sydney? She wasn't worth a shred of kindness.

Sydney's hand clenched at her side. Humiliated and powerless, she whispered, "Brielle... she's pregnant. Don't know who the father is."

"Who else have you told?"

"Mr. Spencer. He asked me to keep an eye on Brielle. He's the only one who knows."

A glint of satisfaction flashed in Alivia's eyes. She patted Sydney's face mockingly. "Change out of those hideous clothes. If I

catch you in them again, I'll have someone waiting on your route to work to strip you clean."

Her smile was chilling.

Sydney's legs gave out, and she crumpled to the floor.

Alivia turned to the sink, washing her hands as if touching Sydney had soiled her.

Sydney shook uncontrollably, biting back any protest.

Alivia dried her hands and strode out, only to freeze at the sight of someone in the corridor. It's Max. He shouldn't have been

there. Her heart raced. How long had he been standing there?

She had assumed the ladies' room was a sanctuary, not expecting anyone to linger outside. If Max had been there from the start,

he might have heard everything.

Alivia clenched her fists, her eyes darting to the men's room where Andrew was emerging with a cigarette between his fingers.

Seeing Alivia, he raised an eyebrow. "What are you doing here?"

Words failed her, panic overwhelming her as she scanned Max's expression.

Max casually fiddled with his phone, frowning at Andrew. "What took you so long?"

Andrew gestured to his half-smoked cigarette. "Couldn't find a smoking area on this floor. And you, the big boss, don't know

where it is either? But, wait, did I hear some argument, or was it just me?"

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Andrew hadn't meant to cause a stir when he popped over to see Max. Hearing that his buddy was out of the hospital he just

wanted to make sure everything was on the up and up.

But as luck would have it. Max was caught up in a last-minute meeting, and with the top-floor conference room snagged by

another team, they had to settle for a space on this floor.

Max ran into Andrew, who asked after his health, but Max barely had time to exchange pleasantries before Andrew had to duck

out to the men's room to curb an itch for a smoke. What Andrew hadn't banked on was running into Alivia there.

Alivia was a bundle of nerves at Andrew's words, shaking like a leaf in a storm. All her life, she'd never known such panic. It was

the kind of dread you felt when you were about to be exposed, when that beautiful veil was lifted to reveal the writhing maggots

beneath.

And for her, the most terrifying part was that the one lifting the veil was her greatest love. That was a truth she couldn't face.

Her fingertips quivered, her cheeks drained of color.

Max, with a sense of impatience, just pocketed his phone and muttered. "Didn't notice a thing."

Andrew was left doubting himself. Had he misheard?

Alivia sighed with relief at Max's response. "Right," she thought. Her voice had been soft, and Max was absorbed in his phone,

probably wrangling some work issue. He was so engrossed in his world. How could he notice anything amiss?

"Lucky break," she mused. But she couldn't afford to be careless next time.

Before she could fully relax, Sydney emerged from within.

With a cheek sporting a vivid handprint, Sydney shrank at the sight of Alivia still lingering. Her face blanched, and her instinct to

beg for mercy was nearly overwhelming.

But Alivia was quicker, feigning concern. "Are you alright, dear? Did someone bully you?" She reached out to Sydney, who

recoiled in fright.

With her back against the wall, Sydney saw the icy look on Alivia's face and noted Max with another man. She realized Alivia

was putting on an act, a sickening charade. Yet she couldn't call her out; she had to play along.

"I'm fine, just feeling a bit under the weather. I'll just rest a bit," Sydney said, her voice barely above a whisper.

Alivia's expression softened as she gently patted Sydney's shoulder. "Take care of yourself. If you're facing any bullying at work,

report it to your supervisor. Don't suffer in silence. Only then can you get the help you need."

Sydney shuddered involuntarily at Alivia's touch, as chilling as a serpent's hiss. Terrified, she

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murmured, "Mr. Dorsey, Ms. Alivia, I'll head back to my desk now."

Without waiting for a response, Sydney bolted.

Watching Sydney's retreat, Alivia's eyes were inscrutable. But as she turned back to Max, her face was all warm again. "Max,

sure you don't need more rest? You look rather pale."

"I'm fine."

Max's tone was dismissive, and his phone rang, signaling the start of the meeting. Patrick was wondering where he was.

Max glanced at Andrew and said, "Meeting will wrap up in half an hour."

Andrew nodded, a cigarette dangling from his lips, his voice casual, "Okay. Kenzo is at Premier Palace already. I'm just here to

pick you up. You go do your stuff. I'll wait."

"Oh. Looks like you and Alivia are in sync, both dropping by the office today. It'll be quite the scene if you guys don't tie the knot.

Even Michael seems antsy. But he's off courting the Rowland family today, trying to set up Spencer with Sophia. Go figure."

Max stepped ahead and replied with even more indifference, "Dad wants someone to keep him in check."

"So Spencer settles down, and you're next in line, huh?"

"Possibly."

Alivia's heart soared at his words. Was he agreeing to marriage? Her hands were sweaty with anticipation, and she couldn't help

but fixate on Max's retreating figure.

Andrew, removing the cigarette from his mouth, grinned. "Looks like your patience paid off, Ms. Alivia. Good things come to

those who wait."

Alivia's breath quickened, her lips curling into a smile. "And how about your wedding with Tessa? Must be soon, right?"

"Yeah, getting close. She's keen on meeting new people lately and even brought up marriage."

At the mention of marriage, Andrew's mind wandered to Aubree, who kept calling him. His brow furrowed with annoyance.

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Aubree had been trying to reach him numerous times lately because of some issues with Brielle, but he hadn't picked up the

phone even once.

Still, he hadn't blocked her number.

Honestly, if he wanted to avoid Aubree's calls, he could have just blocked her, but ever since they'd been whatever it was they

were, he'd almost never blocked her number.

The one time he did, he wanted to spend his birthday alone with Tessa. Poor Aubree got stuck at the restaurant and got caught

in a torrential downpour and a traffic jam, all while clutching the birthday cake she'd bought for him. She had called him twenty

times. Eventually, he grew so irked and Tessa's mood was soured by the interruptions—that he blocked Aubree's number.

That night, he slept with Tessa in his arms, only to find out later that Aubree had waited for him all night downstairs, holding that

birthday cake. But Andrew wasn't moved by her gesture; he even thought it was all pointless.

Because of that block, Aubree refused to let him touch her for half a year, and only then did he realize the gravity of his action.

After he slept with her again and sweet-talked his way back into her good graces, he unblocked her.

Since then, Andrew never blocked Aubree again, as if afraid she'd really get angry.

What would happen to Aubree if he married Tessa? He subconsciously shied away from the thought.

Alivia's voice broke into his reverie. "Andrew, did you know Max always had this woman named Brielle by his side?"

Did these people know about Brielle and Max being together during her time abroad?

Andrew chuckled, "Ah, the canary you're talking about? A canary's just a canary. If it can't bring joy, it's only going to be tossed

aside. Max has come to his senses upon waking up this time. hasn't he? He's ready to marry you now. What more do you want?"

Alivia knew he had a point, but she still felt uneasy. "Max doesn't talk about her because he had amnesia after the accident. I'm

worried that if he sees Brielle again, he'll—"

Andrew was stunned. Amnesia? How had he not noticed?

He thought Max hadn't mentioned Brielle simply because he wanted to marry Alivia in peace. deciding to cut ties with Brielle. But

did Max have amnesia?

“Are you sure? He doesn’t seem like he’s lost his memory, though. He does sometimes rub his temples as if he’s got a headache.”

“Yes, I’m certain.”

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11:56

Otherwise, why would he have shown no reaction when she deleted Brielle’s contact from his phone? To the Max of today,

Brielle never existed in his life, so of course, he wouldn’t find it odd or question her.

Aside from worrying about Max’s health, Andrew didn’t say much else. Forgetting Brielle was no big deal, especially for two

people who were never meant to be together. Better forgotten, perhaps. “Alivia, you should know you’re the one best suited for

Max. We’ve all known each other since we were kids, and after all these years, everyone sees you two as the couple that should

be married.”

With that. Alivia finally felt at ease. Even if people found out about Brielle and Max, nobody supported them.

Her lips curved into a smile as she started to chat with Andrew about other things.

Meanwhile, Max had reached the conference room door, where Patrick, seeing him, let out at sigh of relief.

Just as he was about to speak, Max coughed twice. His face was even paler, and he grasped at his chest.

Patrick jumped. “Let’s switch the meeting to virtual. You can join from the Premier Palace online and have a doctor check you

out. You’re looking very pale.”

Max wanted to refuse, but as he opened his mouth, he tasted blood. His brow furrowed, and taking the handkerchief Patrick

offered, he wiped his mouth, noticing the specks of blood on the fabric.

At this, Patrick didn’t dare let him go into the meeting and hurriedly called a doctor. Max didn’t resist any longer and was helped

into the car.

As he settled into the seat, Andrew opened the car door, his forehead beaded with sweat from anxiety. Seeing Max's calm

demeanor just made him more frustrated.

"Patrick said you coughed up blood?"

Max coughed again as soon as he finished speaking, faintly covering his mouth. His handkerchief was stained with more blood.

Andrew's voice dropped to a whisper, his face turning ashen—paler than Max's. "Patrick, hurry, drive to the hospital." If they

delayed any longer. It could be a matter of life and death.

Alivia stood outside the car, wanting to join them, but Max's gaze didn't turn to her. He closed his eyes instead.

Andrew offered her a reassuring smile. "Max is just being stubborn. He probably doesn't want you to see him like this. I'll take

him to the hospital. You've been caring for him a lot lately. Better you go home and rest. You don't want to end up with dark

circles under your eyes."

Concerned, Alivia looked at Max, who remained impassive. "Alivia, go home."

And so, she complied, leaving as instructed.

Chapter 479

The atmosphere in the car was as tense as a boardroom meeting gone wrong, and Andrew was itching for the sedan to make a

beeline to the hospital already.

But as the vehicle sprang to life, Max spoke up. "Patrick, take us to the Premier Palace," he commanded.

Patrick, not one to cross Max, simply nodded.

Andrew, incredulously whipping his head around, blurted out, "Are you out of your mind? You're coughing up blood and want to

go to the Premier Palace?!"

"Cough, cough, cough."

No sooner had Andrew finished his rant than Max started coughing again, his face turning a shade paler.

Andrew clamped his mouth shut, grinding his teeth in frustration, and finally let out a resigned sigh. Fine, the Premier Palace had

its own private doctors, which was a heck of a lot better. than staying cooped up in the office working overtime.

They reached the Premier Palace in no time, where a private physician was already waiting.

Max stepped out of the car and was promptly whisked away for a thorough check-up. The rest of the group in the living room

wore grave expressions, dreading the doctor's verdict.

The doctor was on edge, too, understanding that coughing up blood wasn't a trivial matter; any serious diagnosis could throw the

Dorsey family into disarray.

After the examination, the doctor breathed a sigh of relief. "It's just acute stress," he said. "Rest up, and take a couple of days off

from the office. Stay home and recuperate."

Max, with his eyes closed, didn't respond. Andrew and Kenzo exchanged glances, noticing Max's unusual vulnerability. Neither

wanted to say anything that might agitate him further, especially after the doctor's diagnosis.

Wesley, the butler, came in with a cup of calming tea and handed it carefully to Max. After a couple of sips, Max frowned. "I'm

tired."

That was the signal for everyone to leave.

Kenzo's eyebrows knitted together, noting the lack of color in Max's lips. "Are you sure your don't need the hospital? Who gets

discharged in three days with injuries like yours? What's the rush?"

Andrew chimed in with his agreement. "Yeah, let's head to the hospital now, Max. You look as pale as a ghost."

Max lifted his gaze, sweeping it over them, and then stood up, heading upstairs. "I'll have Patrick see you off."

1/3

11:56

Andrew's mouth twitched with annoyance, but with Max's dismissal clear, Andrew couldn't glue himself to the spot and stay.

“Look at him! Feels even colder than before, doesn’t he? Is all this because he forgot Brielle?”

At the mention of Brielle, Kenzo’s eyebrows shot up in surprise. “Forgot Brielle?” he queried.

Andrew, ever the chatterbox, scoffed, “Your sister said so. Max woke up with amnesia, leaving Brielle in the dark. I reckon it’s

true; he’s less human than ever.”

Both men turned their questioning gaze to Patrick, who was trailing behind.

Patrick bowed respectfully, his answer watertight as ever. “I am not at liberty to discuss Mr. Dorsey’s matters.”

Andrew snorted. After all these years, Max’s assistant was still a closed book. No wonder Max trusted him.

Knowing he’d get nothing out of Patrick, Andrew hopped into his convertible, ready to speed away.

“Regardless of whether he

forgot Brielle or not, it makes no difference to us. Patrick, just make sure he takes care of himself. If anything goes awry,

Beaconsfield will have quite the stir.” Andrew said before leaving.

Patrick’s face remained respectful. “Mr. Clements, rest assured, I will take good care of the CEO.”

With a nod, Andrew drove off in his convertible.

Kenzo stood for a moment, eyeing Patrick. Hewas the very image of composure, neither too humble nor arrogant—truly Max’s

man.

Kenzo chuckled to himself and got into his car, driving away.

Patrick sought out Max, who had just finished showering, droplets of water trickling down from his hair.

“Have they left?”

“Yes.”

Max walked to the window. “How much longer before everything is settled?”

“Two days at best. The paperwork is complex, but the lawyers are pushing things along.”

Hmm.’

Max’s tone was indifferent, but he couldn’t help another bout of coughing.

“Sir, you should really rest these next few days,” Patrick urged. “We have a lot riding on your well-being, and there’s the

impending alliance with the Rowland family. A dinner between the families is in order.”

Max nodded, then pressed a hand to his temple before lying down on the bed.

Patrick turned off the light and quietly left the room.

2/3

11:56

Malay Pex had suctively reaching out beside him, only to embrace empty air. Hist

hast decat party, the taste of blood almost too much to bear.

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A few coughs escaped him as he chiklishly stuffed a pillow into his arms, holding it tight as he drifted off to sleep

Chapter 480

Two days later, at the prison.

Brielle was somewhat stunned when she was told she could leave. Lifting her gaze to the sunlight streaming through the prison

gates, she involuntarily closed her eyes. It all felt so surreal; the light was so intense it almost brought tears to her eyes.

The room she had been staying in was dimly lit, and having spent time in solitary, she hadn't been bathed in sunlight like this for

ages.

She awkwardly wiped her eyes as the man in uniform beside her returned her cell phone. “Ms. Brielle, the Dorsey family has

decided not to pursue the matter further, and here's your resignation letter. Someone asked me to give this to you.”

Resignation letter? Rubbing her eyes, Brielle took the brief document and saw Max's signature at the bottom. It felt like a

thousand needles piercing straight into her heart. Her face turned pale as she clutched the paper tightly.

The uniformed man said nothing more and turned to re-enter the building.

Standing amidst the flood of light, Brielle could feel the warmth of the sun, yet she felt as if she were still in that dark cell,

surrounded by shadow, and her mind a complete blank.

She sat down, lost and bewildered, only to see a car slowly approach and stop beside her. The car door opened, revealing

Aubree's face, alight with surprise. "You're free! I couldn't believe it. when I got the call. I thought I was dreaming. How on earth

did the Dorsey family let you off the hook?"

Brielle's eyes still held a touch of bewilderment, but she latched onto the key point in Aubree's words.

"Who called you?"

with the Dorsey family> <

"A stranger, using your phone, told me to come pick you up and said you were released. What's

Why'd they let you go so easily? I heard Spencer just got out of the hospital two days ago, and now he's apparently getting

engaged to Sophia, of all people. Talk about a plot twist."

It felt to Brielle as if she had been away from Beaconsfield for ages, completely out of touch with its current affairs.

Spencer and Sophia? How did these two unrelated people suddenly become a pair? Sophia was from her camp. She didn't

know whether this was all a coincidence or if someone was orchestrating these events.

Curious about the document in Brielle's hand, Aubree took it and started cursing up a storm upon seeing the signed resignation

letter. "That jerk! How could he be so heartless? You have his child and-"

She stopped mid-sentence, her mouth snapping shut as she saw Brielle's eyes brim with tears.

The discomfort was palpable.

"Bri, forget Dorsey International. We'll find you a job somewhere else. The sky's the limit, right? You don't need them to survive."

Brielle didn't respond and was about to get into the car when another vehicle pulled up in front. of her. Spencer stepped out, his

expression neither bright nor dejected. He simply looked Brielle. over and asked, "Brielle, would you marry me?"

Her face instantly darkened, disgust clear in her eyes.

Spencer, expecting this reaction, continued, “Even If you don’t want me, Uncle Max won’t choose you either. Did you know?”

Tonight, the Dorsey family is dining with the Barnes and the Rowland families to discuss marriage. Uncle Max is getting hitched.”

Brielle went pale, disbelief written all over her face. Her heart shattered, and her bones ground to dust.

Spencer took pleasure in her pain, his own heart feeling a twisted sense of relief. Noticing the resignation letter in Brielle’s hand,

he smirked, “You probably don’t know, but Uncle Max. personally requested your resignation. In his eyes, you’re now just a

stranger who hurt the Dorsey family. He has a hematoma, resulting in memory loss—he’s forgotten you. Even if you showed up

on his doorstep, he wouldn’t spare you a second glance.”

After delivering his piece, he looked at her despondently. “So, will you still choose him? If you marry me, I’ll tell Grandfather right

away. We’ll put aside our past grievances and start over. You know, choosing me is your best option now.”

“Get lost,” Brielle said bluntly and got into Aubree’s car.

Aubree responded to Spencer with a resounding middle finger.

Spencer stood still, chuckling at himself. He knew coming here was masochistic, yet he couldn’t help but want to see Brielle. He

was a glutton for punishment.

Inside the car, Aubree cautiously watched Brielle’s expression. So Max had forgotten Brielle—a dramatic turn of events that was

actually playing out in real life.

Swallowing hard, Aubree wasn’t sure how to console her friend. Then, Brielle spoke up. “Can we find out where these families

are meeting tonight?”