

Master 491

Chapter 491

Brielle had a whirlwind of questions swirling in her head. Would Max have really gotten engaged if she hadn't shown up? Did he

truly suffer from amnesia?

But at that moment, she couldn't muster a single word. Her thoughts were in disarray, utterly swept up by his advances.

By the time she regained her bearings, she found herself being ushered into a secluded lounge at the end of the hallway.

"What are we—mmph."

His familiar scent, his towering height, and even his gestures were all too known to her. It was as if fireworks were exploding in

her mind, and she felt as though a predator was closing in from behind.

"Brielle, I don't want to think about anything else right now."

Max was Impassioned, the corners of his mouth turning up into a smile at the memory of her appearing at the door.

Explanations could wait.

The atmosphere and temperature collided, warping both space and time. Their deep kiss. ended.

Max rested his forehead against her shoulder; Brielle was quite a bit shorter than him, so this gesture had him slightly hunched

over, as if bowing in submission to the petite woman in his arms.

Brielle could feel his intimidating warmth and blushed, realizing that now was not the time for questions. She turned her head

slightly, silently consenting to his next move.

With her acquiescence, Max seemed to have unleashed the contents of Pandora's box.

Brielle bit her lip, her eyes rimmed red, feeling almost melted by his heat, breathless at last. There was no time to ponder the

hows and whys, only the ceaseless burst of fireworks in her mind.

Max was right there with her, not engaged to someone else, still tenderly kissing her. And that was more than enough. She felt

an overwhelming flutter in her heart.

Even the thought that members of the Dorsey, Barnes, and Rowland families were close by added a thrilling mix of shame and

excitement.

The temperature in the room seemed to be nearing a boiling point, her body's moisture evaporating. Her cheeks were flushed,

and she often felt like a fish dying of thirst, thrown onto the shore by a violent storm, only to be swept back into the sea by

another wave. The sensation of almost drowning, then gasping for air, was maddening.

She even wondered if the door might give way under the pressure.

In her daze, his long fingers grasped her chin. Seeing her reflection in the door's polished surface, Brielle felt her toes curl. "Max,

if I hadn't come, would you really have gone through with the engagement?"

Max's chin rested on her shoulder, and he chuckled softly, "No." His tone was lazy and satisfied, yet he didn't stop, turning his

head to plant a kiss on her earlobe. It was like a miraculous chemical reaction.

Who was it that said love was the most violent poison that unsettled the soul, that love signified an insatiable greed?

The intensity of this moment, the fulfillment, and the extraordinary reactions were like picnicking on the edge of an abyss, utterly

oblivious to the peril.

The fierce beast within Brielle's heart. The lover at her back.

Brielle slowly closed her eyes, a fine sheen of sweat beading on her forehead.

At seven in the morning, Brielle was completely drained. She weakly tried to push Max away with her eyes closed.

Max caught her hand, bringing it to his lips for a gentle kiss. "Tired?"

Of course, she was exhausted; she couldn't even speak. Yet, she had so many questions. Her heart was aching with a

bittersweetness that was both tart and sweet, but she was too weary to hold on any longer and slowly drifted off to sleep. Her

body felt battered and bruised from head to toe, a patchwork of tenderness.

Chapter 492

Max's fingers lingered in her hair before he couldn't help but cough twice.

Outside, Patrick heard the noise and gently knocked on the door. "Mr. Dorsey, are you awake?"

Patrick had kept watch all night. Now, hearing Max's voice and still concerned about the injuries on his body, he asked with a hint

of worry.

Max wrapped himself in a robe, casually tying a knot around his waist before opening the door.

Patrick, carrying a first aid kit, didn't glance at Brielle, who was still on the bed, but walked over to the window and placed the kit

beside the desk.

After Max sat down, Patrick hurriedly checked the wound on his chest, noticing it had slightly reopened. He quickly took out the

antiseptic, disinfected the wound, and rewrapped it with fresh bandages.

Max remained silent, a gentle smile playing at the edges of his lips. Patrick knew Max was pleased, and his own furrowed brow

relaxed.

While tending to Max's wounds, Patrick couldn't help but notice the nail marks on his chest, a testament to a passionate night.

He felt genuinely happy for the couple, aware only he knew what Max had been through these past few days.

"I've prepared Ms. Brielle's clothes; they're in the dresser, and also," he said, suddenly feeling embarrassed, "the medicines Ms.

Brielle might need."

Max was no fool, especially after the previous night's indulgence, which he remembered all too well. The reminder made his ears

flush with warmth. "Got it."

After Patrick offered his reminder, he withdrew, closing the door behind him.

Max felt invigorated and filled the bathtub with water, carefully carrying Brielle for a thorough wash. Brielle was so tired her

eyelids trembled, but she couldn't fully wake up.

Max found the ointment Patrick had prepared and applied it to her. Brielle, mistaking his intentions, pleaded in a pitiful tone, "Can

I rest a bit?"

Max chuckled at her words, playfully stroking her nose with his fingertip. She frowned but said no more.

After being carried back to bed, she didn't make another move, falling into a deep sleep. Without further ado, Max lay back

down, carefully pulling her close, and drifted off to sleep. This time, it wasn't just a pillow he held; her presence softened his

heart.

Brielle slept for hours before she finally opened her eyes. By the time she woke up, the sun was high in the sky.

Seeing his face so close, she thought she was dreaming. It took her a moment to remember seeking out Max the previous night,

their wild encounter, and then sleeping till now.

Her waist was trapped in his strong embrace, immobilizing her.

With a slight movement, Max awoke. "Not going to sleep a bit more?"

Considering her recent experiences, including last night's events, Brielle couldn't fall back asleep. Her lips pressed tight. Now

wasn't the time for rest.

She noticed the bandages on Max's chest, and with a nervous jump, she got out of bed only to collapse weakly to her knees.

Max's hand caught her waist, pulling her back into his embrace. "Careful."

Brielle settled back on the bed, staring fixedly at the scars on his chest, unable to resist. Reaching out to touch them. He

intercepted her hand. "I've already changed the dressing. Get dressed first."

Brielle's legs were weak. She truly didn't have the strength to stand and go to the dresser for her clothes.

Max chuckled softly, getting up to fetch her clothes.

Despite their numerous intimate moments, the sight of his broad shoulders, narrow waist, and his handsome features, still made

Brielle blush. But she quickly regained her composure, feeling that last night's actions had been somewhat impulsive.

Would exposing their relationship to the public eye affect him?

She had been selfish in wanting to keep their affair secret, and now she was the first to reveal it selfishly.

Max stood so high in the social circles of Beaconsfield. What would they think of him being entangled with his nephew's former fiancée?

Chapter 493

The buzz of last night's festivities had faded, and now the stark light of reality was shining through the blinds. Brielle was pulled

from her reverie by the jingle of a phone. It was Max's phone.

Michael had seemed tight-lipped last night, deftly steering the conversation away from the elephant in the room, but Brielle knew

that his silence didn't mean approval of their relationship.

What Michael would do next was anyone's guess.

The phone lit up, and Max pressed the answer button, calling out, "What's up, Kenzo?"

Surprisingly, it wasn't Michael on the other end of the line, but Kenzo.

Brielle couldn't help but marvel at how the old fox was still full of tricks. Michael was playing the long game. After the mess of last

night, it was unsettling how Michael had yet to call and confront them. The calmer the sea, the more Brielle feared the storm

lurking beneath.

Kenzo's call was obviously about the previous night's drama. He had used drunkenness as an excuse to keep the situation from

boiling over, but everyone who was there knew that Alivia wasn't drunk, and Max had flat-out rejected her.

Kenzo's tone carried no hint of blame, remaining as soothing as ever. "Max, are you still with Brielle?"

"Yeah."

"My grandpa's bound to hear about this soon. He's always hoped for a union between our families. I'll try to talk to him. Is this

your final decision, Max?"

"Kenzo, could you handle things with the Barnes family? Thanks."

No more words were needed. Kenzo understood Max's choice. A deep shadow passed through his eyes, followed by a light

smile. "Sure."

After hanging up, Kenzo surveyed the chaos in the room.

Alivia was buried under the covers, not a single strand of her hair in sight. The room was a battleground of shattered objects,

with traces of blood amidst the wreckage. Shards of mirror were scattered across the floor, and even the plush slippers were

spattered with drops of red.

"Alivia, come on out and have something to eat," Kenzo coaxed as he nudged her.

She didn't respond. This was the first time in her life that she felt so out of control, wishing she could destroy everything. Every

memory of last night's events made her heart ache until she could hardly breathe. Her body felt crushed, her soul trembling.

She had thought she was watching Brielle's downfall, only to become the butt of the joke herself. Was she still held in any

esteem in Max's eyes?

Her eyelashes fluttered fiercely, her voice hoarse. "Kenzo, I'm not hungry."

"You're just going to lie there? You heard the call. Max has chosen Brielle and plans to stick with her. Do you think he'll care

about you if you keep degrading yourself like this?"

Alivia's body began to tremble again, her eyes swollen from crying. The Alivia everyone knew was always the center of attention,

never this disheveled.

She bit her lip so hard, tasting blood. "What should I do?"

How could she turn the tables? How could she tear those two apart?

Panic was setting in. Thinking of all she had done since Max regained his clarity, all her so-called clever moves were now her

greatest embarrassment. If he had never forgotten, her actions must've seemed so foolish and so insincere in his eyes.

Kenzo sat down beside her bed. "Alivia, you've had an easy ride all your life. Is this little setback really going to beat you? I've

always told you Brielle isn't ordinary."

"I don't understand," Alivia said, emerging from the covers. Her hair was a tangled mess, and her eyes were swollen nearly shut.

Her cheeks were flushed from a lack of air.

"I don't get how an orphan from the foster system, unwanted by all, is anything but ordinary. I thought I could crush her with a

flick of my finger, and yet she's given me the biggest humiliation of my life. I can't accept it! I may not need to get back at her, but

I want her to regret stepping into that lounge last night!"

Chapter 494

Kenzo gently raised his hand and placed it on her head, soothingly stroking her hair. "Max not liking you is not his fault,

sweetheart. Matters of the heart can't be forced. Get up and grab some breakfast. Grandpa's been worried sick about you."

Alivia's return home last night was nothing short of a horror show, flinging stuff around from the living room all the way to the

bedroom, her emotional outburst akin to a madwoman. To fall from grace overnight, from the belle of the ball to a laughingstock,

the stark contrast drove her to the brink of insanity.

She cried, she raged, and her heart swelled with bitterness. Right, she couldn't keep spiraling down. She needed to act swiftly,

take advantage of the fact that Brielle and Max hadn't tied the knot yet.

No, it didn't matter whether they were married or not; she was determined to keep those two apart. The dignity she had lost, she

would reclaim, little by little.

As her finally regained her composure, Kenzo's lips curled into a smile. "It's good to see you thinking straight. Now, head

downstairs. Grandpa probably has an inkling about what's going on and might still be fuming at Max. Everyone thought you two

would end up married, and I bet there are already rumors swirling. If you hide away, that's the real defeat."

Alivia quickly dabbed at her face, restoring her composure. She wouldn't let Brielle gloat for long!

After sprucing herself up, she eyed her swollen eyes in the mirror and clenched her jaw, her fingernails digging into the edge of

the washbasin.

Stepping downstairs and catching sight of Jose seated in the living room, her steps faltered. her eyes brimming with tears.

Jose was thumbing through a newspaper, glancing up at her with a kind tone. "Time for breakfast.*

Alivia pursed her lips and slowly took a seat at the dining table, methodically swallowing her food. She maintained her usual

poise, though a storm was brewing within. At least on the surface, she seemed to have calmed down completely, as if last night's

hysteria was but an

illusion.

Jose folded the newspaper and came to sit beside her. "Thought things through?"

"I won't lose. What Brielle's flaunting right now is just Max's favoritism. She has no family background and no connections in our

circles. There's no way I could lose to someone like her."

Jose chuckled softly and patted her on the back. "A man's favor for a woman is limited, my dear. As someone who's seen it all,

let me tell you, young love peaks the moment it begins, and it's all downhill from there. No one can truly overcome the barriers of

class and upbringing. The education we receive, our worldviews, and even the way we perceive the world are all

different. Their relationship won't last. I'll call the Dorsey family in a bit. You think about whether you really want to go down this

road."

“Grandpa, once I make a choice, I stick with it. Max is my goal in this life, and I’ll have him. I’ve already thought of a way to strike back.”

Jose looked at her approvingly. This was the treasured pearl of the Barnes family, resilient in the face of adversity, A single fall

wasn’t the end; what mattered was getting back up.

Alivia had always had everything she wanted in life, and perhaps this humiliation would serve as a valuable lesson. Jose loved

his granddaughter, and he knew that Max was at fault this time. As Max’s senior, it was only right to call and inquire.

The call to the Dorsey family was made shortly after.

Michael was in his study, practicing calligraphy, the scent of ink lingering in the air. The chair beside him was laden with sheets of

his practiced characters, a testament to a troubled mind seeking tranquility through the art.

The butler knocked respectfully on the door. “Sir, Mr. Jose is on the phone for you.”

Michael’s brush paused mid-stroke. The inevitable had arrived. He set the brush down, and the butler handed him the phone.

Michael pressed the answer button. On the other end, there was no accusation in Jose’s voice. The two were old friends,

through and through.

“Michael, what’s to be done about this mess? Alivia’s been shaken up for a night, and you know how the Barnes family dotes on

her. I’m truly upset with Max.”

Michael massaged his temples.

“I’ve made it clear who I want for a daughter-in-law, and it’s Alivia. That hasn’t changed, and it won’t change. The Dorsey family

owes your family an explanation, and I won’t allow my most outstanding son to be involved with an inappropriate woman. I’ll find

a way, but this can’t be rushed. The more we push, the more Max will hide her away.”

Michael knew his son well. The more they tried to separate them, the more it would strain their relationship.

“Jose, the woman Max will marry is Alivia. The Dorsey family will make it up to her tenfold for any suffering she’s endured, even

a hundredfold. Max will, too.”

Chapter 495

Jose breathed a sigh of relief. As long as Michael accepted Alivia as his daughter-in-law, Brielle would never gain the approval

of the Dorsey family.

Knowing Michael for years, Jose was well aware that this old man was far from calm. He was merely biding his time.

With his fiery personality, Max couldn't be suppressed by mere tactics. Brielle needed to accumulate enough disappointment to

leave of her own volition.

The chasm between the two was too great; what passed for affection would become a deep, bitter bond. The further things

progressed, the more unpredictable the dangers became.

After hanging up the phone, Michael handed his mobile to the butler.

The butler, noticing the fresh calligraphy spread across the chairs and table from the night before and that morning, knew Erik's

mind was already in turmoil. It was only Michael's years of business acumen that kept him from flying into a rage.

Considering the gravity of the situation, the butler marveled at Michael's composure and dreaded the thought of what his

response might be when he finally took action. Then, remembering the figure still kneeling at the entrance, a flicker of uncertainty

crossed the butler's face. "Sir, Mr. Spencer has been kneeling at the doorstep for over twenty-four hours now."

Michael's brush paused, his temples throbbing with pain.

"And you haven't had breakfast yet, sir. Your health is important." The butler's voice held a note of concern.

Michael set aside his brush and took a warm towel to clean his fingers before making his way outside with the aid of his cane.

There was Spencer, ashen-faced and unsteady, his forehead bruised from his steadfast vigil.

Michael felt a stronger pulse at his temples – one nuisance after another!

“Grandfather! Please don’t let Uncle Max be with Brielle. She was my fiancée, and Uncle Max’s dalliance with her will be the talk

of Beaconsfield! If Brielle is to marry, it should be to me, Grandfather, I-”

His plea was cut short as the cane came crashing down upon him. Spencer winced in pain but bit his lip, refusing to make a

sound.

“Brielle has you all in a twist! You’re determined to drive me to the grave. It was you who insisted on getting engaged to her when

you were both so young, and it was you who later called it off. If it weren’t for you, would Brielle have ever met Max?!”

This was precisely why Spencer felt such indignation. His knees ached from kneeling, and his blood felt like it had turned to ice.

“I was the one who saw Brielle’s shine first, and Uncle Max has no right to steal her away!”

Michael swung his cane again, fury in his stroke. Tears welled up in Spencer’s eyes, and he couldn’t hold them back any longer.

His pitiful state only fueled Michael’s anger. “You were outdone by a woman in business and are now in love, too? If you want to

kneel, keep at it, and maybe it’ll clear that lovesick fog in your head.”

Spencer fell silent, his lips pressing together as tears continued to fall.

Michael stepped past him and headed downstairs, calling for the butler to accompany him on a walk. He needed to cool off and

escape the sight of this weakling that infuriated him so. He had never been this way with Max, who had a calmness unlike others

from a young age. Any anger thrown at Max would be met with a silent gaze, making the aggressor look more like a fool

To deal with Max, Michael had to be colder and more ruthless. But with Spencer, his disappointing grandson, Michael sometimes

wished he could end it all with a few good swings of his cane.

Spencer had been kneeling since the previous evening, his knees numb, his mind aflame with the image of Max and Brielle hand

in hand. Why should they be together so carefreely?

Spencer continued his vigil into the afternoon, hungry and swollen, utterly disheveled. He heard footsteps behind him and

thought Michael had returned, but turning his head, he saw William. William had been at the scene last night, too, but since

Brielle showed up in the box, he had remained silent. Without saying a word or making a move, Michael had locked himself up

all morning – a clear sign of his disappointment in Max. Now, with his grandson still fixated on the Issue, Brielle was likely to

become a thorn in his side.

“Spencer, kneeling won’t change anything. Get up. Even if you faint here, your grandfather won’t stop Max. Who in the Dorsey

family could? If you want to break those two apart, you have to start with Brielle.”

Spencer raised his hand, furiously wiping away his tears. The rough fabric stung his tender skin, but the pain only sharpened his

resolve.

Chapter 496

Panic seized him, and fear knotted in his stomach. Spencer had known Brielle for over a decade, and the thought of her

belonging wholly to someone else sent a sharp pain through his heart.

Brielle’s disdain for him was as clear as day, just as her fondness for Max was unmistakably apparent.

It dawned on him that his affection had been one-sided all along. He had thought Brielle was coming to see him last night, and

for a fleeting moment, he had envisioned a thousand ways to make her happy in the future. He had thought, perhaps naively,

that he held some place in her heart after all these years, considering how kind she used to be to him. But now, looking back, all

he felt was regret and an unwillingness to let go.

Spencer was desperate, a man grasping at straws. He slowly stood up, but his legs, numb from kneeling too long, gave way, and

he was forced to kneel again.

A smirk flashed across William’s eyes as he kindly offered a helping hand. “Max reigns supreme in the Dorsey family; you can’t

touch him. But with your status, taking Brielle down should be easy. Didn't I teach you before? Destroy her career and her social

circle, and she'll have no choice but to follow your lead."

Spencer's fingers clenched suddenly. If Brielle was destined to hate him, he might as well deepen that hatred. At least then, she

would never forget him for as long as she lived! He wanted her to feel a stab of pain every time she thought of the name

Spencer!

A touch of madness crept onto Spencer's face. "Uncle, I've got it."

William raised an eyebrow, his eyes twinkling with amusement.

All William had to do was sit back and watch the drama unfold. Since last night, Max and Brielle had positioned themselves

against the Dorsey and Barnes families, and all William had to do was fan the flames at the right moment. Max's greatest

blunder was letting a woman cause such disappointment in his father.

Both the Dorsey and Barnes families were restless, watching each other with bated breath. Yet, for Brielle and Max, life seemed

tranquil.

After breakfast, she wanted to ask Max about everything that had happened in recent days. Seeing the faint dark circles under

his eyes, she guessed he hadn't had an easy time either. If he hadn't forgotten their memories, then he must have had a reason

for his deliberate actions.

Had her impulsive visit disrupted his own plans? With so many witnesses last night, the social circles were probably buzzing

about their affair now.

Brielle lowered her lashes, sitting on the bed. She couldn't help but lift her hand to wrap around Max's waist.

Max was standing at the bedside, so this gesture only caused her head to rest against his side.

17:59

Brielle closed her eyes, silent. In everyone's eyes, Max had always been an untouchable idol. But now he was involved with his

junior's former flancée and had forgone an alliance with the Barnes family. It was as if his pedestal was quaking, and his walls were about to crumble.

People reveled in his high-flying status and equally relished the prospect of his fall. She didn't know how many in Beaconsfield

were waiting to see him stumble. At this moment, all she wanted was to grow stronger so that his reputation wouldn't suffer, and

ensure he had no weaknesses.

She was filled with a burning determination to call Mason right then and draft a few hundred. pages of proposals, but

skyscrapers weren't built overnight. Without a solid foundation, such structures couldn't withstand even the slightest breeze.

She looked at Max, and he was already gazing down at her. His eyelashes were long, casting deep shadows over his eyelids.

Brielle's heart melted. She had so many questions, but the fact that he had done everything for her was enough. Whether their

future held moonlight or high altitudes, she was willing to stand. by him. Even if it meant crossing eighty-one trials, she didn't

want to let go of Max. This man was the kindest to her in all the world and asked for nothing in return.

Their eyes met, and both, almost embarrassingly, looked away first. Despite their history, this was the first time they recognized

each other clearly as partners, as boyfriend and girlfriend.

From now on, they could walk out hand in hand without anyone labeling Brielle as Spencer's former fiancée. She was finally free

of that tag. They could do all the things couples did – watch movies, dine out, or even invite a few friends for a barbecue in the

great outdoors. All these romantic experiences were something they had yet to cherish.

Max felt a bit out of his depth. He had finally claimed Brielle as his own, but what now? What was dating supposed to be like? He

didn't really understand.

Brielle let go of his waist. "You never had amnesia?"

"Hmm."

“Then why pretend to have it?”

Amused, Max found their current situation somewhat comical. They were now seated in the car, him in the backseat, Brielle

facing him. Patrick, in the driver’s seat, discreetly lowered the partition.

“I didn’t.”

He had never claimed to have lost his memory; it was merely everyone else’s assumption.

Chapter 497

Max’s first conscious sensation was the oppressive weight of anesthesia pinning him to the hospital bed, ghostly whispers of the

world beyond teasing his ears, yet his body remained unresponsive. His father had been there, pocketing Max’s cellphone and

turning the hospital into a fortress so secure that even Patrick couldn’t slip through to visit him on that first night.

Speaking Brielle’s name would’ve been a death sentence, given Michael’s resourcefulness. Mar was certain that if he’d uttered

her name upon waking, Michael would’ve had Brielle thrown into the deepest, darkest cell before sunrise. Powerless and weak,

Max had no choice but to bury his worries temporarily.

Upon regaining some strength, he reached out to Patrick and meticulously orchestrated their next moves. Only after overhearing

Alivia’s phone conversation in the hospital corridor did he consciously decide to keep Brielle’s name off his lips.

Max was still reeling from near death, and couldn’t quite parse the entirety of Alivia’s chatter. Bits and pieces about Brielle, jail,

and Jaired floated through his throbbing mind. When Alivia swept into his room, announcing Jaired’s imminent return, Max’s

gaze was fixed outside the window, his brain ablaze with pain and suspicion.

Why would Alivia bring up Brielle to Jaired? Max had been clear about his feelings for Brielle to Alivia long ago. If she was as

refined and composed as she claimed, she wouldn’t gossip about Brielle in private.

His concern grew, wondering if his pain wasn't clouding his judgment, conjuring delusions. After all, he had known Alivia for over

a decade, and Kenzo had been a close friend for years. For now, his only move was to play it cool and send someone to protect

Brielle in jail.

"So the guard in the uniform was your guy?" Brielle asked with a hopeful lilt in her voice.

"Yeah, I was worried someone might try to hurt you," Max admitted.

Brielle's lips curled into a sweet smile, her suspicions confirmed. She had always been sharp. Initially, she was rattled by the two

guards, but had pieced together the uniformed man's cryptic message. "When titans clash, the mortals suffer, and it's unclear

who'll come out on top." Clearly, someone wanted her in trouble, yet someone else was safeguarding her. Two forces were

colliding, and the victor remained uncertain.

When Brielle had been led to believe Max had forgotten her, she felt a pang of despair. Yet, that subtle hint from the uniformed

man had sparked a realization: someone powerful was protecting her. Who else in Beaconsfield could it be but Max?

Aubree's only potential ally was the Clements family, who would never openly support her against their own interest. Despite her

connections, Tiffanie was still under the Dorsey family's thumb, unlikely to make a bold move against her grandfather's wishes.

That left Max, the beacon of hope for Brielle's release and the very reason she had the courage to step into that VIP room

alone. And now, Max's words were the affirmation she needed.

49.60

Her heart melted completely, and for a moment, she was at a loss for words. What could she possibly say that would equate to

what Max had done for her? Her bravery seemed so small in comparison.

"Max, where are we headed now?" she inquired, noting that the car's trajectory was neither towards Premier Palace nor Pearl

Estate. Their relationship had just been made public, and Max certainly had a plethora of issues to attend to, yet they were

driving towards the outskirts. "I'm taking you somewhere special," he replied with a touch of mystery.

Brielle didn't press further. Instead, she pulled out her phone, which was peppered with missed calls from Aubree, Tiffanie, and

even Sophia. She opened Sophia's message first—just two words. [Brilliant, congratulations.] The 'Brilliant' was for last night's

spectacle, and 'congratulations' for her relationship with Max that was now out in the open. She replied with a simple [Thanks.]

Next was Aubree's characteristically bold message. She had been ready to feign ignorance if Brielle failed, but she was

genuinely surprised by her success. (Andrew called me this morning. I could feel his anger through the phone. Finally, I've turned

the tables. We'll talk more about it later,] she wrote.

Tiffanie's message, expectedly gossipy, was surprisingly serious. [Alivia has invited a bunch of society ladies for afternoon tea

today. Brielle, be careful.]

Brielle sighed. Alivia was quick to recover from the embarrassment of the previous night. already playing hostess to

Beaconsfield's socialites. It was a clear signal that the game of high society chess was far from over.

Chapter 498

Alivia had a poker face that could fool the best of them.

If she were to make a list of people Alivia despised, Brielle would take the top spot without contest. Yet, the man Alivia couldn't

have was warming the bed of her most hated rival. Instead of crumbling, Alivia managed to keep her composure and even made

a dignified appearance. When people like her snapped, it was a sight to behold.

Brielle lowered her gaze, tucking her phone away. She noticed the streets bustling with activity and leaned in closer to Max.

"Hey, Max, is it a holiday or something?"

Max glanced up from the papers in his hands, amused at her face almost pressed against the glass.

"Yeah, in three days, it's

New Year's."

Their first New Year's together was always going to be special.

A small smile curled at the corner of Brielle's lips, but she remained silent. When the car pulled up in front of a suburban

mansion, Brielle looked puzzled. Where was this?

Several people stood at the entrance, one of them being the uniformed man who had guarded her in jail. "Boss." The man called

out, his eyes landing on Brielle as he nodded in greeting.

Brielle picked up on the informal title. It wasn't Mr. Dorsey or the CEO, indicating a different power dynamic at play with Max.

She followed him into the foyer, where two people were on their knees. They were the doctors from the clinic that had operated

on her.

Blindfolded and trembling, the doctors prostrated themselves upon hearing footsteps. "Mr. Dorsey, we were sorry. We truly

realize our mistake."

Brielle said nothing, her grip on Max's sleeve tightening, her face paling.

Max knew. He knew about the baby. She lowered her eyes, feeling as though a blade was twisting in her heart.

The uniformed man offered Brielle a chair, his voice gentle. "Ms. Brielle, please sit.

After being up all night and suddenly confronted by these doctors, Brielle was indeed not in the best shape. She slowly sat down.

The uniformed man's voice was so soft that only Brielle could hear him.

The doctors were ignorant of the reason they were there, but they knew it was because of Brielle.

"Mr. Dorsey, we'll tell you everything. Please spare us."

They had committed too many misdeeds over the years, knowing retribution would come, yet they hadn't expected it so soon.

Max stood quietly for a moment, then ruffled Brielle's hair in a comforting gesture, but his

words were directed at the doctors. "Repeat what you know."

The doctors shivered, spilling the beans almost immediately. "Ms. Alivia and Mr. Spencer brought Ms. Brielle to our clinic,

thinking she was pregnant, and Ms. Brielle believed it too. However, after examining her, we found she wasn't pregnant. Mr.

Spencer suggested an appendectomy instead, and Ms. Alivia came up with a plan to make Ms. Brielle believe she had lost a

child. They thought it would hurt her and possibly affect her relationship with you, Mr. Dorsey."

The doctors omitted the part where Alivia pinned everything on Martha, more out of ignorance about Martha than intent to

deceive.

As for Brielle, she was thunderstruck. Was she not pregnant? She couldn't believe her ears, thinking she was hallucinating.

Her mind was blank, her fists clenched so tightly that marks were left on her palms. Had there never been a child at all? The

revelation was too staggering, and she couldn't come to terms with it immediately.

The doctors, shaking, continued. "Ms. Brielle was heartbroken when she woke up. She barely ate over four days, surviving on

glucose. Sometimes, I wavered, wondering whether to tell her the truth. But after years at the clinic, knowing so many secrets,

we didn't dare. Mr. Dorsey, we are really sorry. Next time, if there's surgery for Ms. Brielle, we will personally call you."

Max gestured to the uniformed man, who understood and led the doctors out.

Brielle sat stiffly in her chair, even as hands gently lifted her face. Max looked into her eyes, his voice calm. "You weren't

pregnant, so no need to be sad about it anymore."

Brielle's eyes widened, torn between tears and laughter. She had nearly cried herself dry over those few days for a child that had

never existed, only to be told it was all a ruse.

Blinking back the sting in her eyes, she should have felt relieved, but a smile eluded her. So, had he been investigating these

past few days? How did he come to suspect anything?

Max seemed to anticipate her question and simply said, "I overheard Alivia talking to your assistant.

Chapter 499

He still remembered the jolt of fear that had struck him then, so intense it made him spit blood in a fit of fury. Someone had dared

to harm the child she carried within Brielle, the woman he adored and couldn't bear to see hurt. Max even wanted to make

everyone involved pay a steep price, no matter who they were.

But luckily, Brielle wasn't pregnant.

If Alivia were here, she would be astounded to know that Max had overheard her and Sydney's conversation that day. He had

pretended not to, but every move she had made since then had become a joke to him.

Max frowned slightly, unwilling to dwell on that moment any longer. On one hand, he was shocked by Alivia's true nature; on the

other, the thought of Brielle being pregnant had shaken him to the core. And he had been kept in the dark, clueless.

Overwhelmed by anger, he could feel the taste of iron rising from his chest. Even now, his heart ached as if pricked by needles.

"If we ever have a child, let's have it. Don't worry too much," he said, his voice low and reassuring. He could sweep away all of

her worries.

Brielle looked up at him, slowly wrapping her arms around his waist. "Okay."

Max breathed a sigh of relief, saw her expression soften, and his lips curved into a smile.

*Kenzo invited me to a welcome-home party for Jaired tomorrow night. Would you come with me?" he asked.

Brielle did want to go. At this point, if he suggested they elope, she'd nod without hesitation. But they had just humiliated the

Barnes family the night before, and Kenzo had been there. Could he really let it slide?

"About Kenzo..."

*Kenzo invited us, which means he's come around. Besides, the guest of honor is Jaired. Kenzo is just organizing it, and Jaired

is a Riddle. The Riddles have always held office. I've known Jaired since we were kids. It's rare for him to be back in town."

Relieved, Brielle relaxed. They had been on edge these past few days, and a chance to unwind was welcome. The child matter

turned out to be a misunderstanding, and Brielle felt a sense of relief.

Max kissed her on the lips and said, "I'll let Kenzo know that you'll attend in my girlfriend's name."

Previously, Kenzo had gone to great lengths to screen people, looking for individuals who were tight-lipped. But this time, there

was no need for that. Even if others wanted to report or complain, what difference would it make?

The biggest bombshell had already been dropped. As long as they didn't have a child, Michael could only choose to turn a blind

eye before that happened.

Max's words echoed in Brielle's mind, more enchanting than any sweet nothings in the world.

In society, the criteria for selecting a partner have always revolved around three dimensions: physical attractiveness, personality,

and control over social resources. It is often said that individuals who score high in all three aspects are scarce commodities at

any given time. But someone like Max, who not only maxed out each aspect but even exceeded them, what kind of existence

was he? Just the thought of having such a person as her boyfriend made Brielle's smile almost uncontrollable.

As they settled into the car, Max glanced outside. "Alivia, she-"

Before he could finish, Brielle's phone rang. It was an unfamiliar number. She braced herself, expecting it might be Michael. But

when she answered, Alivia's voice came through.

"Brielle."

Gone was the mockery from the night before. Now, Alivia sounded perfectly composed. I've arranged for afternoon tea with

some ladies from our circle. Would you care to join us?"

Brielle frowned, almost suspecting she was hearing things.

What was Alivia up to? Unclear of her intentions, Brielle held her ground.

Meanwhile, Alivia sat amidst the Beaconsfield socialites, each one keen to see Alivia's downfall after the previous night's events.

But to their bewilderment, Alivia had just invited the other protagonist of the incident, Brielle, to tea. They had expected to see a

disheveled Alivia, yet she looked poised and as regal as ever. She greeted them with her usual gentle demeanor.

The ladies didn't dare provoke her. Regardless of the rumors, Alivia's position as the youngest head of the research institute

meant that those who wanted to curry favor with her could fill Beaconsfield several times over.

They sat in silence, exchanging glances, curious about what would unfold between Alivia and Brielle.

Chapter 500

Alivia signaled the maid to pour more coffee for one of the guests, her lips curling into a subtle smile.

"Brielle, about last night, I'll

explain everything to Max personally. I sincerely invited you over, and if you're feeling uneasy, you can always check in with Max

first."

"Alivia, what are you scheming now?" Brielle's tone was indifferent, while Max, overhearing Alivia's name, frowned almost

imperceptibly.

Alivia didn't genuinely want to invite Brielle; it was merely a pretext to broach her next topic. "If you don't join us for afternoon tea,

perhaps you'll attend the welcome-back dinner tomorrow night. Jared is a mutual friend of Max and me. My brother is

organizing this dinner, and I was worried he might have overlooked to call you personally, so I thought I'd extend the invite."

Brielle narrowed her eyes, about to respond, when Max snatched her phone away the call.

and endo

A flicker of annoyance crossed Alivia's eyes as she pretended the call was still ongoing. "Well then, that's settled. Jared is really

looking forward to seeing you."

After hanging up, she lifted her cup and took a sip of her coffee.

Finally, someone at the table couldn't contain their curiosity. "Alivia, what exactly happened last night?"

Gracefully picking up a fork, Alivia speared a piece of cheesecake and took a bite. After her conversation with her grandfather

that morning, she had summoned several estheticians to address the swelling on her face. Now, with her makeup meticulously

applied, she looked no different than usual

She had already planned her next moves.

First, she needed to prevent the spread of last night's debacle, ensuring she made a poised appearance before the others, and

personally calling Brielle in their presence. Regardless of Brielle's reaction, it would make the socialites question whether they

had the full story of the previous evening, thereby leaving Alivia with some dignity.

The call to Brielle was not only to sow doubt among the ladies but also a declaration of war. Did Brielle think she had won so

easily last night? How naive!

The more composed Alivia acted, the more rattled Brielle would become.

Alivia's lips curved into a cold smile as she considered her second objective: to redeem herself in Max's eyes.

Her image had surely taken a hit, but not beyond recovery, and she had already devised a plan. Jaired's return was the perfect

opportunity.

Jaired was highly respected in their circle and a friend to Max. He was the key. If she could leverage Jaired effectively, she could

regain the favor she had lost.

So, when asked about the previous night's events, she smiled and set down her silverware. "It was just a misunderstanding.

Everyone knows I had feelings for Max, but he made it clear he might be interested in someone else. I stepped back and wished

them well. But it seems Brielle is unaware that Max has already discussed his relationship with her to me, which led to last

night's tension."

She told half-truths, leaving much unsaid.

The socialites grasped the implication immediately. Brielle was nothing but a jealous woman who had deliberately caused

trouble.

"Alivia, what status does Brielle have to deserve a call from you? If she doesn't show, good riddance. If she does, I fear her

pauper's stench will keep us up at night."

"Really, she was raised in an orphanage, has no parents, and was jilted by Spencer. I wonder what kind of siren's tricks she used

to make Max dote on her so."

"They say it's the work of a temptress, surely nothing decent. Have you heard of Tequila Sunset? Some girls there are trained to

be very obedient. Someone's son tried it out recently and said it opened up a new world for him. Brielle probably came from a

place like that."

"That means she's a call girl, then? Just lucky to have climbed up to Max. We won't accept such people. Let her be awkward and

alone tomorrow night. Nobody should pay her any mind. She thinks she can enter our circle just by clinging to a man."

H

The group's chatter grew louder as Alivia's smile widened subtly.

That was also part of her aim today. If Brielle were attending tomorrow's dinner, Alivia would ensure she understood how difficult

it was to enter their elite circle. Brielle might have been lifted by a man, but she would always need to hide under his protection.

The very thing that had raised her to the skies could just as easily cast her into darkness.