

## Master 521

### Chapter 522

Aubree sensed Brielle's distraction and knew she had been browsing the news. She silently cursed herself for being a

blabbermouth; before this call, Brielle was likely oblivious to the online buzz.

"Bri, don't tell me you're taking those trolls seriously? What do they know? They're just flapping their gums. Forget about them.

Christmas is just around the corner. How about we go out and do some holiday shopping to clear your mind?"

Christmas was only two days away.

Brielle was already downcast from having witnessed Max's injury, and the online news only fueled her anger. The masterminds

behind this could only be Tessa or Alivia.

Tessa and Alivia had been echoing each other at the hotel last night, clearly in cahoots. But Alivia was always poking at Tessa's

tender spots, obviously using her as a pawn. With a personality like Tessa's, her arrogance was nothing more than a veil for

fear—fear of not measuring up, which drove her to trample over others. Alivia knew this all too well, making it easy to stir Tessa's

hatred. This was most likely Tessa's doing, as Alivia excelled at sitting back and enjoying the show.

Brielle was growing weary of these amateurish schemes. She had a plan in mind but needed to exchange a few more words with

Aubree first. "Nah, Aubree, are you spending Christmas with the Clements family?"

At the mention of the Clements family, Aubree's mood visibly darkened, and there was a long silence before she spoke. "It's

likely I won't be going back. They'd probably prefer I stay as far away from Beaconsfield and Andrew as possible. If I showed up

for Christmas, the Clements household would turn into a madhouse. Honestly, I've never really had a home; I've never felt

warmth there."

Having known she was adopted from a young age, she'd endured the scorn of the house staff, who took every chance to

humiliate her when the Clements were away.

A child who grew up in the shadow of shame, clung to Andrew for the only warmth she knew. Even though Andrew had become

a complete jerk, leaving her battered and bruised, he had once been her sole comfort during her most vulnerable days.

She couldn't let go of Andrew because she had never truly escaped those days of humiliation. No matter how tough she acted,

she could feel the clothes still clinging to her. She needed Andrew; without him, she might not survive.

Neither of them spoke again, and it was unclear who hung up first.

Brielle's mood had soured further, especially with the Rowland family's timing. She grabbed her phone and called Mason. "Has

the Rowland family been up to anything abroad?"

Mason stiffened at the question. "Are you talking about the Rowlands in Beaconsfield? They've been scouting locations to build a

medical facility. Coincidentally, we're eyeing the same spot.

With the company going public, we can't stay cramped in our old space. We need a grand office building. The first round of

funding showered us with billions. We can't let that go to waste."

Brielle chuckled, a playful smile on her lips. "Why would a tech firm like ours be interested in the same plot as a healthcare

provider? Is there something special about that land?"

Mason, impressed by Brielle's insight, responded, "Indeed, the local government plans to boost the economy over the next five

years. Buying that land now could mean a hundredfold increase in value. Where else could you find such an investment? Plus,

I've heard through the grapevine that the government plans to develop luxury homes nearby. If the Rowlands establish their

medical center there, not only will the land appreciate, but they'll also corner the market on affluent clients."

Brielle mused over the situation. "Mason, let's not rush to compete with the Rowlands just yet. I'll inquire with some insiders.

Foreign governments can be tricky and are always looking to squeeze money out of investors. Our intel might not be solid.”

“Brielle, you’re becoming more intriguing by the day. This is an international matter, and who could you possibly ask? And how

can you be sure your information will be accurate? Every investor has their eyes on that piece of meat.”

A name flashed in Brielle’s mind: Dustin Lynch.

## Chapter 523

Thanks to Tiffanie’s educational talk, she knew Dustin was cozily in bed with royalty, so to speak. If there were any governmental

moves afoot, Dustin would surely be in the know.

“Mason, wait for my word.”

Mason trusted Brielle wholeheartedly, so he agreed without hesitation.

Brielle took a deep breath, dug out Dustin’s number, and dialed. The urgency in Mason’s voice was palpable; the deal

concerning that plot of land was reaching a critical juncture. She had to get in touch with Dustin as soon as possible.

There’s no answer.

Brielle tried a second time. Still no answer.

Rubbing her temples, she pondered for a moment before dialing one last time. Dustin’s slightly husky voice came through, “If

you’re not calling about something serious, then next time I’m in Beaconsfield, I might just have to shanghai you into servitude as

penance.”

At the sound of his voice, Brielle knew exactly what Dustin had been up to. It was nighttime over there, and she realized with a

start that she had interrupted his intimate moment, coughing awkwardly.

Dustin haphazardly tied a belt around his waist, his bare chest marked with nail prints. “Regretting your life choices? Want me to

whisk you away overseas?” He had offered her this chance for regret when he left his number the last time they met in prison.

“Mr. Lynch, I need to ask a favor of you.”

Dustin chuckled, signaling for the lady in his bed to make herself scarce; the night’s mood had clearly taken a turn. “Brielle,

you’re not even blushing when you say that? No sweetener, just straight to business with me? You should ask around. A long

queue of folks are dying for my help.”

“Absolutely, I know Mr. Lynch. You’re quite the miracle worker, and mere mortals wouldn’t dare to bother you.”

Somehow, Dustin found this flattery incredibly satisfying. “What do you need?”

up

“The Rowland family’s recent land interest—Is the government really planning to pump up local economy there over the next five

years?”

the

The location of that plot of land popped into Dustin’s mind, and he let out a soft laugh. “You’re crafty, coming to me.”

“Mr. Lynch, they say you’re tight with the royal bunch, and even turned down a title once. That’s quite the noble stance. I figured

this small matter would certainly be clear to you, right?”

No matter where a person stood, they couldn’t escape the lure of flattery, unless they’d taken

vows of asceticism.

Dustin was actually hard to be buttered up, considering Infinity Brilliance’s development was pretty much the heartbeat of the

nation’s economy. Anyone meeting him was all too eager to get on his good side. But the adulation he received was too crude—

mountains of gold, silver, and blond bombshells, all too tacky.

Brielle’s flattery, on the other hand, was classy. He wouldn’t admit to a hint of double standards, but somehow, tonight, Brielle’s

words seemed as sweet as honey.

“That piece of land locates by the lake. The government’s been trying to auction it off for a decade. The starting bid is a billion.

After several failed attempts, if it bombs again, it's going to rot in their portfolio. You know we've got tycoons at the helm here;

they need the dough to stand up to the people. So, to line their pockets, they're spinning this yarn about boosting the economy

there in five years. In reality, the development's happening in a different district. The auction's going to be an inside job. If you're

keen, I can snag you an exclusive bid ticket."

This favor was monumental, involving a transaction in the billions. Brielle didn't dare accept it. She just wanted the Rowland

family to take the hit on their investment, losing a hefty sum.

"Mr. Lynch, thanks for the intel. But I'll pass on the location of that other plot; I don't have the appetite for it."

After a few more well-placed compliments, Brielle hung up the phone, relayed the information to Mason, and instructed him to

feign interest in that doomed plot, to maliciously hike up the Rowland family's bid, and to spread rumors that the government was

dead-set on developing the economy there.

Mason responded with a string of praying emojis, a symbolic vigil for the impending misfortune of the Rowland family.

## Chapter 524

If the land really ended up with the Rowlands, it was bound to go to seed in their hands. After all, there was nothing much around

those parts these days.

A glint of amusement flickered in Brielle's eyes. The Rowland clan had been spreading rumors about her back home, so she had

her people spread some false tales of their own abroad. Turnabout was fair play.

Having settled that score, Brielle felt a weight lift off her shoulders, and the online chatter no longer felt like a sting. She was

determined to become the cherry on top of Max's world, not the so-called blot on his reputation.

Downstairs, Patrick stood before Max, his tone grave. "Mr. President, the situation is as such: the online world is in an uproar. Do

we need to take action?"

The New Year was just around the corner, and they couldn't let these distractions spoil the festive mood.

Max flicked through his tablet, skipping over the posts where netizens lambasted him. He was never bothered with the opinions

of those at street level. But the jabs at Brielle? They struck a nerve.

"Spread a rumor that Ms. Tessa's been chasing me down relentlessly," he said.

At these words, Patrick choked and coughed several times. Tessa, relentlessly pursuing the President? Was this a way to

suggest that it was Tessa who had been the interloper?

Since the woman's name hadn't yet been leaked online, the moment they dropped Tessa into the narrative, any prior

orchestrated leaks would seem like a setup for the inevitable online backlash against her. It was a masterstroke.

Patrick chuckled, "Alright."

Max looked down, returning his focus to the documents in hand. It couldn't have been Brielle stirring trouble that led to Tessa's

fall into the water; it had to be Tessa's fault.

He had allowed Andrew to punch him as a nod to their years of friendship, understanding Andrew's anger, and knowing Jaxon to

be a good-natured elder. This was out of respect for them, not for Tessa. If the Rowland clan wanted to keep fussing, he'd let

them reap what they'd

sown.

After a moment, Patrick cautiously inquired, "It's almost time for the New Year, sir. Won't you be going out with Ms. Brielle to

shop for holiday items?"

Holiday shopping?

Max looked puzzled. What was that?

Seeing his expression, Patrick couldn't help but smile. He'd never had to bother with such things growing up.

“It’s about going out with Ms. Brielle to buy things for the celebration.”

Just then, Max’s phone rang. Both men’s expressions darkened slightly when they saw the caller ID flashing on the screen.

Max frowned, assuming that news had spread to the Dorsey family, prompting the butler to call “Max,” came the butler’s respectful voice.

“Mr. Michael would like you to bring Ms. Brielle to the Dorsey family home on New Year’s Eve.”

The Dorseys wanted Brielle to visit.

Max didn’t think his father was ready to accept Brielle. Given the online furor, it was more likely that he was finally feeling the

heat and had thought of a way to deal with them.

“Did father say anything else?”

“If you don’t agree, he’ll come over himself.”

That was a threat. If Michael came himself, there was no telling what he’d do.

Max’s expression grew even sterner as he listened to the butler continue, “It’s just a visit. There’s no need to be uneasy. Mr.

Michael has seen the news, and now the distant branches of the Dorsey family are calling to ask about it. He’s in a difficult

position.”

Dorsey International was vast, with many relatives. Max had been untouchable in recent years, and so the extended family had

kept quiet. But if the main branch showed any sign of instability, the others would become restless.

After hanging up, Max was about to delegate the matter to Patrick when he looked up and saw Brielle standing on the staircase.

She must have come in while they were talking.

Her eyes were clear. “Do the Dorseys want me to visit?”

## Chapter 525

Brielle could feel the buzz of Beaconsfield’s social circles reverberating through the air, as Max’s words and the rampant online

chatter painted a clear picture of the town’s current preoccupation. Michael was probably on tenterhooks by now.

With a nod and a pat on the seat beside him, Max signaled for Brielle to sit down. "So, you want me to head over to the

Dorseys?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"Alright, I'll go. Is there anything I need to prepare?" Her agreement was swift and fearless, a portrait of courage.

Max chuckled, "No prep needed; just leave it all to me."

Michael, a titan in the business world, had been quiet since that tumultuous night at the hotel. Now, with him calling, it was

anyone's guess what he had up his sleeve.

Brielle, the junior in the game, had once kept up with Michael's business ventures. His ruthlessness and cold-blooded strategies

were on par with Max's, but even she had to admit that Max's vision and reach were broader and higher. That was why he had

the audacity to make a name for himself on Wall Street at such a young age.

Brielle was done hiding in his shadow, done letting him shield her from the storm and, at the same time, smother her from the

sunlight. She had to face the music herself.

The Dorsey International website was in a frenzy, bombarded with inquiries like never before. All because of the CEO's personal

affairs, it had seen millions of hits in a single day. Everyone wanted to know who the shameless mistress was.

Meanwhile, Tessa was still in the hospital, taking perverse pleasure in the unfolding news. The humiliation from the previous

night was so intense that the mere mention of Brielle caused her physical pain.

She was blissfully unaware of the karma swiftly making its way back to her. The larger the stir she caused now, the more

exposed she would be later on.

Just the thought of Brielle soon facing a public siege sent shivers of excitement through Tessa. She dialed Alivia, who always

had a game plan, possibly knowing exactly how to double down on Brielle's misery.



Alivia picked up quickly, her voice dripping with feigned concern. "God, I never thought Brielle had it in her. How are you holding up?"

"Much better, Alivia. You've seen the news, right? Should I leak Brielle's name now? Let everyone go after her?"

A sly grin crossed Alivia's face. She would let the two of them duke it out while she reaped the benefits.

"Yes, and you should target not just Brielle, but also Aubree. Hit them both. That's how you really twist the knife. With your status, taking down an unwanted Clements foster child should be a breeze, right?"

Tessa straightened up, her pride swelling. "Of course. The Clements are all hoping I tie the knot with Andrew soon. And I've

subtly hinted at Aubree's little seduction game with her brother. They're already guarding against her, not even letting her

through their doors. You know how much Andrew's mother adores me. Aubree's just an outcast now. She probably doesn't even

know where she'll spend the holidays, just like her friend Brielle—both of them are orphaned strays!"

Tessa felt she had to make up for the previous night's disgrace by stomping on Brielle at any opportunity. It was like treading

water. Push it down, and you rise. In any social hierarchy, those lacking confidence often asserted their status by oppressing

those they deemed inferior. Unwilling to admit her insecurities, Tessa was determined to crush Brielle underfoot, to erase the

shame of last night's debacle.

"Then go on, attack Brielle while you're at it, and take Aubree down too. It should be easy for you."

A triumphant gleam flickered in Tessa's eyes, her chest boiling with anticipation. "Will do."

The door to her room swung open as soon as the call ended. It was Andrew, bringing her lunch. In a familiar lunch box—wasn't

that the one Aubree bought for Andrew? Her lips curled into a smile, and she couldn't resist teasing, "You bought this lunch box

yourself?"

“No, Aubree got it. She made this, too. I liked the look of it, so I brought it over for you to enjoy.” Such a brazen act was classic

Andrew.

Tessa, barely able to contain her glee, urged him, “Open it. Let me see.

Andrew sat down and lifted the lid. Aubree’s cooking skills were admittedly impressive.

After snapping a few photos, Tessa ate her meal without further ado. “Aubree’s cooking is way better than our family chef’s.

Maybe she can cook for me every day while I’m recovering. Someone’s got to take care of me, and I’m sick of the Rowland

family’s chef’s dishes.”

If she was going to trample Aubree, she might as well use Andrew to do it, to ensure that Aubree couldn’t rise again. She would

leave her and that wretch Brielle out in the cold together. Andrew hesitated only for a moment before nodding. “I’ll ask her.”

## Chapter 526

Aubree had just hung up with Brielle but decided she needed to check on her in person. She got herself together and made a

beeline for Premier Palace.

Premier Palace was Max’s turf, and he had someone come out to meet her. It was probably because he was worried about

Brielle feeling tense, with the visit to the Dorsey family’s ancestral home only two days away. If Brielle needed to offload, being

with her best friend might just do the trick.

Aubree couldn’t help but feel a rare sense of welcome from Max. She was actually stepping foot in Premier Palace!

As she walked, Aubree couldn’t resist snapping pictures every few steps, until she spotted Max sitting in the courtyard with a

coffee, rifling through some documents.

“Hey there, Mr. Dorsey.”

Max’s brow furrowed as he looked up.

Aubree plopped down beside him with her usual candor. “I got it all wrong about you last time with Bri’s drama and never got

around to apologizing in person. Thought you were just another trash can like Andrew, but it turns out you're not half bad."

She chuckled, sitting back and noticing the 'do not disturb' vibe rolling off Max, so she leaned back a bit more.

"But you've gotta treasure Bri, Mr. Dorsey. Last time, you blew me off, and that snake Alivia gave me an earful. Oh, and she had

the nerve to say something about making Brielle carry a criminal's baby. Can you believe that? She said if I were late, Brielle

would've been humiliated over and over. Do you see what I was dealing with? So when I gave you a piece of my mind, I wasn't

wrong, was I? You better watch out for Alivia. Her smile gives me the heebie-jeebies."

Aubree was unknowingly spilling beans that Max hadn't heard yet. Max's grip on his cup tightened, a chill spreading in his eyes,

but Aubree was oblivious. She was still fuming about Alivia's words back at Dorsey International's lobby, itching to expose

Alivia's true colors to the world.

Max's hand twitched, the veins prominent, as he slowly set his cup down. "What else did she say?"

"What do you mean 'what else?' Isn't that enough? Plus, I bumped into Mr. Lynch on my way out. I'd have never seen Brielle if

he hadn't pulled some strings. And speaking of which, you probably don't know about the call Dustin made, do you? Turns out

the Riddle family was involved. Your buddy Jaired's been meddling too."

"Bang!" Max's cup shattered in his palm, his face dark as a thundercloud.

Aubree, startled by the sight of coffee mixed with blood in his hand, clamped her mouth shut.

She had never dealt with Max directly and had only spoken so boldly because of Brielle's

connection to him. But now, with Max visibly enraged, she chickened out and stood up. "Ha, I just remembered Bri needed me

for something; she's feeling down and needs a bit of cheering up from me. I'd better get going, Mr. Dorsey. We'll chat another

time, yeah?"

Aubree's heart was racing. She feared if she moved any slower, she might've just ended up buried in the Premier Palace garden.

After she left, Max's clenched fist relaxed slightly. Patrick approached, witnessing the scene, his heart skipping a beat in alarm.

"Mr. Max, this-" He quickly called Wesley over to clean up and wrap a bandage around Max's hand.

After taking care of the mess, Max stood up and headed out.

Meanwhile, Jaired was at Kenzo's place, animatedly recounting the brawl between Max and Andrew.

Kenzo had his eyes closed, lounging on the sofa, and flickered his eyelids upon hearing, "Just like that, a punch landed right on

Max's cheek. I couldn't stop it in time, and now, it's all messed up. No more brotherhood over a couple of dames."

Jaired caught a tossed orange slice with his mouth and crossed his legs leisurely. "Kenzo, out of all of us, you're the most even-

tempered. Maybe you should step in and mediate? We grew up together. We shouldn't fall out over some women."

Before he finished, someone pushed the door open, and both men looked up to see Andrew, dressed in black, stepping in.

Jaired felt the awkwardness of being caught talking behind someone's back and set his orange down, sitting up straight.

Andrew's face bore the mark of five fingers, looking rather disheveled. Kenzo and Jaired exchanged a glance - Max, no matter

how angry, wouldn't actually slap someone, would he?

Andrew took a seat, his arms folded, and his eyes shut in frustration.

Jaired stood up hastily. "Max went too far, man. He can't just go around slapping people like some drama queen."

## Chapter 527

Andrew's eyelid twitched in irritation as he rubbed his cheek. "It wasn't him."

"So, Tessa, then?"

"No way, she'd never lay a hand on me."

"Who else would you let slide, then? I'm almost worried you buried someone before coming here."

Andrew's fire went out in a puff. That slap had come from Aubree. It was because he had the gall to ask Aubree to cook for

Tessa.

When he found out Aubree had gone to Premier Palace, he'd wanted to follow, but with the tension between him and Max, he'd

just met Aubree on the street corner to pass on Tessa's message.

Without a word, Aubree slapped him again, then stormed back into Premier Palace, calling him trash.

Andrew had been in these circles too long, never learning to think about others. His comfort was his only concern. So he thought

his request of Aubree was reasonable, but her reaction was unexpected.

There was a slap, but no words were exchanged.

Damn, had he been too indulgent with Aubree? When it came to him, she hit him with no hesitation—as if she put her whole

strength into it.

Usually, Andrew would turn to Max, who was a good listener despite his stoic demeanor. But after last night's harsh words and a

punch, Andrew's thick skin wasn't enough to face Max again.

Andrew's gaze fell, lips pressed tight.

Jaired, casually crossing his legs, twirled an orange in his hand. "Look, Andrew, I'm not one to talk, but what you said to Max last

night, that was low. You know how rough Max had it growing up."

A kid who never smiled or cried would face cold shoulders even at the top of the food chain. Martha even brought in a shrink at

one point. Not just any shrink, but the kind you'd find at a psychiatric ward.

When you were out of step with the world, people thought you were a monster. And with the Dorsey family's high status, the last

thing they wanted was a freak in the family.

So, doctors frequented the Dorsey household, trying to diagnose Max with something, anything, to explain his lack of emotional

display.

When Michael decided to make ten-year-old Max the heir to the Dorsey fortune, everyone was

floored. How many assassination attempts would the kid face? How much backstabbing would he endure in private?

Everyone thought Michael didn't care for his youngest son, that he was setting Max up to fail, using him as a shield against the

majority of blows, and waiting to put his favored son in place once Max was out of the picture. Even Max's friends thought that

way, instructed by their families to believe it.

Max excelled in everything but social skills. Quick to learn anything but how to get along with others.

Andrew had labeled himself a lackey, a hanger-on, because his "brotherhood" with Max was something he'd instigated,

challenging Max to duels, competitions, and one-sided declarations of war. So, calling Max unfeeling and a machine, was

probably a deep cut for him.

Andrew had been regretting his words since last night. He could call Max trash, scum, but never a machine.

Andrew stood up, frustration boiling to the point where he wanted to kick the coffee table in front of him. "So you think it's my

fault? Max thinks of Brielle, don't I think of Tessa? If Brielle's out to get Tessa, should I just stand by and do nothing?"

Kenzo, lounging on the sofa, had been silent the whole time. Now, he merely opened one eye to glance at them, then dropped

his gaze again, as if disinterested in the whole affair.

When the two were arguing, the third was not welcome to spectate, so Andrew turned to Kenzo.

"Kenzo, what's your take?"

Kenzo's eyelid fluttered. He rarely got involved in disputes. He opened his eyes, picked up his tea, took a delicate sip, and

offered a gentle smile. "Brielle was a friend of mine. She's actually quite reserved, not the type to stir up trouble." The implication

was clear: Tessa might've been the instigator.

But of them all, Andrew had the biggest prejudice against Brielle. After all, she was the one who had helped an intoxicated Max

right under his nose. Their first meeting was so dramatic that Andrew never warmed to Brielle afterward.

In his eyes, she was the kind of woman who'd latch onto any opportunity to climb the social ladder, even at great personal cost.

He didn't believe Brielle truly loved Max.

## Chapter 528

Andrew fell silent as his cell phone erupted with Tessa's trembling sobs. "Andrew, have you seen what's all over the internet?"

Andrew's brows furrowed. He knew Tessa had planned to spread rumors to slander Brielle and that the plan had been a

success. But why was she crying now?

Panic washed over Tessa, draining the last bit of color from her face as she lay trembling in the hospital bed. After calling Alivia,

she was about to leak Brielle's name to the press, hoping the public would crucify the bitch. But just ten minutes ago, every

media outlet started reporting that Ms. Tessa had been hounding Max relentlessly.

They identically mirrored the scheme she had used against Brielle. Not just one media outlet, but dozens were parroting the

same story. So now, the one taking the heat was none other than Ms. Tessa herself.

Already frail, Tessa had thought she'd soon trample over Brielle, only to find herself trampled instead. She couldn't bear the blow.

After several gasping breaths, her voice shook uncontrollably.

"Easy, tell me slowly. What's the news online?"

"Somebody... somebody's saying I've been harassing Max," she wept.

Tessa's teeth clenched with hatred. Who could be behind this? Was it Max? Had he stopped caring about his bond with Andrew

altogether?

Andrew's expression darkened. After hanging up, he checked the online news. At the top of the trending list was Ms. Tessa's

name, with the comment section ablaze with condemnation.

"She and Alivia were close, and because of her health, she rarely went out. But since Alivia left the country, she's been seen out

more and more."

"Disgusting. She's probably been exploiting her frailty to gain Max's sympathy while Alivia is away."

“Home–wrecker! Using her sickness to snag her best friend’s man. If you ask me, she’d be better off dead! Why waste the air if

she’s so unwell? Ugh, nothing but a sad, pitiful excuse for a woman!”

The comments were harsh and seemed well–substantiated.

Indeed, Tessa had rarely been seen before Alivia’s departure, but afterward, she became a regular at various events.

Only those in the know understood that Tessa was trying to secure her spot with Andrew, not Max, but the public wouldn’t believe

that. They wanted to drag the entire Rowland family through the mud.

Tessa was like a flower in a glass jar, well–protected within the Rowland family fortress, and

adept at manipulating its members to maintain her standing. But once the battlefield changed, her frailty and life experience

became her Achilles heel.

Andrew, hearing Tessa’s labored breathing, hastily summoned the doctor and rushed to the hospital himself.

Jaired and Kenzo glanced at their phones and frowned upon seeing the news that had rapidly risen to infamy.

Just recovering, Tessa was in turmoil again, likely headed back to the emergency room. Tessa’s hands gripped the bedsheets

beneath her, nails almost piercing her skin.

It had to be Brielle! That bitch was emboldened by Max’s favor and acting without any regard!

Damn her!

Tessa’s scalp tingled with rage, and she longed to confront Brielle and tear her apart!

Brielle had destroyed everything – first causing her embarrassment within their circle and now on the internet, where everyone

was shaming her for shamelessly soliciting sympathy with her ailments.

Tessa was on the brink of madness. How could things have turned out like this?

When Andrew arrived, Tessa was being wheeled back into emergency care. The doctors cited a severe panic attack with bouts

of vomiting blood. Her frail body couldn’t cope.



Andrew's fist collided with the hospital wall, his features twisted in fury, but when he thought of Max, that fury melted into

powerlessness. He couldn't fathom who else besides Max could orchestrate such a media frenzy. It seemed their brotherhood

was nothing anymore.

After Andrew left, Jaired and Kenzo sat in silence, sipping tea on the couch. They both knew who was behind it all; it looked like

a showdown was imminent.

Jaired's phone rang as he gazed into his teacup. He pressed the answer button and heard Max's voice. "You remember where

the boxing gym at your place is?"

Of course, Jaired knew. He had grown up loving to fight, mastering every weapon from blades to bats, which led to him setting

up a full-scale boxing gym at his place.

"Jaired, I'm waiting for you here."

## Chapter 529

After hanging up the call, Max strode out of the room with a sense of determination.

Jaired rose from his seat, the corners of his mouth curling into a smile. "Kenzo, fancy a trip down to my old boxing gym?

Remember how we used to spar there all the time?"

Upon hearing this, Kenzo had already stood up, but as Jaired continued, "Max says he'll be waiting for me there. It's been ages

since we've had a good session."

Kenzo settled back into his chair, shaking his head. "Nah, you better layer up, though."

Jaired stretched out his long legs and waved a dismissive hand. A scar trailed from his brow to the edge of his ear – a memento

from a knife fight with some dangerous thugs – adding to his rugged charm. "You ever heard of someone training in a winter

coat? Suit yourself. I'm off," Jaired quipped.

Kenzo looked up slowly, eyes dark and mysterious, and offered a gentle smile. "Sure."

Jaired frowned, feeling an eerie chill from that smile.

When he arrived at his place, the door to the sparring room was ajar. Excitement bubbled within Jaired. This was the spot where

they'd all sparred as kids, but since his grandfather had shipped him off to the military, his visits had become rare.

He strolled in, slipping off his jacket and tossing it aside.

The room was spacious, a good two hundred square meters, with its walls decorated with an arsenal of cold steel. Jaired

approached one of the guns, quickly loading it. "Max, check this out. The AK-107 assault rifle, effective up to five hundred

meters. A relic from the '70s, took me ages to find all its parts."

He continued, polishing the barrel of a Remington sniper rifle. "This beauty, a product of the '80s, has an eight hundred meter

range and a muzzle velocity of 853 meters per second. I don't even use this one on missions anymore. I've switched to the 110.

Last time I used this, I blew a terrorist's head clean off."

As he spoke, he glanced over to Max, who was elegantly loading a Glock 17. The contrast between his fingers and the bullets

was striking.

Jaired was about to say those bullets were live, only to see Max fill the magazine and aim it right at him. Max's expression was

calm, too calm for a joke.

Jaired stood still.

"Bang!" The bullet whizzed past his ear, mirroring the curve of the scar. Smoke wafted from the gun's barrel as Max wiped it

away without a flicker of emotion.

"The latest Glock 17, with its dual recoil spring, has less kickback, safer too. I checked, and it has got three reliable safety

features. It might even suit a woman. Shrink it down a bit, and I'll gift it to Brielle," Max said, his tone even.

If not for the black mark on the wall behind him, nobody would have known he'd fired.

Jaired, still rooted to the spot, took a few seconds before replying. "That model's in use everywhere but Austria. You sure you

want to gift Brielle something so dangerous?”

Max ejected the magazine and tossed it aside casually. “Yeah, that way, If someone’s foolish enough to trouble her, she can

handle it herself. I’ll handle the aftermath.”

He weighed the unloaded gun, frowning. “The fourth gen’s still over six hundred grams. I need you to cut it down to four hundred.

It shouldn’t tire her out.”

Jaired’s temper flared. His custom work was worth a fortune. How was Brielle, with no official status, deemed worthy of it?

“I won’t do it. What if she turns the gun on you one day?”

Max’s reply was almost too casual. “How do you not realize she might be aiming at you?” Max, in his rolled-up shirt sleeves

revealing his toned forearms, spoke as if it was a passing thought.

Jaired rubbed his ear, still feeling the sting where the bullet had grazed. Damn, if that shot had hit him, he doubted Max would

have felt a shred of guilt.

So this was it: the sparring was a pretext; the real agenda was modifying a gun for Brielle.

Max grabbed his jacket and handed the gun to Jaired. “Four hundred grams, fifteen-round mag, silver finish. I want it after the

holidays.”

Jaired weighed the bullets in his hand, no fool to Max’s intentions, but, as neither of them called the other out, the pretense

continued.

“Deal.”

Max wasn’t truly here to cause trouble over Brielle, which meant she wasn’t all that important to him. Perhaps it was time to push

the boundaries a little further.

## Chapter 530

But it wasn’t until much later that Jaired would come to understand the full extent of what Max had meant by his words that day.

Time flew by, and the online chatter about Tessa hadn't died down. Even those within their social circle were starting to speculate

about what was really going on.

After Tessa's rage had landed her in the emergency room, she spent another restless night before she regained consciousness,

still groggy and disoriented.

The Rowland clan was in a state of utter chaos, ruing the decision to let Tessa confront Brielle on her own. If Brielle had been

easy to handle, she wouldn't have ousted Alivia and secured her place at Max's side.

As Tessa sluggishly came to, her eyes met the sterile white ceiling of the hospital room. When she recalled the news she'd seen

before losing consciousness, the bitter taste of bile rose in her throat, and she nearly spat blood in frustration. Her eyes were

swollen from crying, her heart filled with indignation. After all her efforts, it seemed everything had backfired.

Andrew gripped her hand, his brow furrowed with worry. "I've managed to suppress the news online, but still, I'll head over to the

Rowland estate to take care of you during this time," he said.

Tears resumed their path down Tessa's cheeks. Why did it always seem that every encounter with Brielle left her on the losing

end? Despite Brielle's lack of a significant background, how did she always manage to slip away unscathed?

Hatred flooded Tessa's gaze, but the blow she'd received served as a stark lesson—her usual tactics would no longer suffice

against Brielle. She had to bide her time, to devise a plan that would strike directly at Brielle's heart.

That afternoon, Tessa returned to the Rowland estate, claiming she needed half a month to recover from her ailment.

Upon hearing of Tessa's discharge, Brielle was in the middle of knitting a scarf at Premier Palace. She had been aware of the

online news, which was still a hot topic of public debate. With Andrew's assertive crackdown, the rumors appeared even more

credible. After all, the public was like that—the more you tried to suppress them, the more they yearned to rise up in defiance.

Although Tessa's name had vanished from the headlines, she remained a topic of conversation, with people secretly scheming to

stir up trouble again.

At the moment, however, Brielle paid little heed to these matters. She had already set Mason to work on a plan that would funnel

the upcoming land auction toward the Rowland estate. A cash loss of several billion would be a massive blow to any successful

company.

All she had to do was wait for the news. Her primary concern now was her own affairs. What would Michael want to discuss

when she visited the Dorsey family?

Her knitting pace slowed as she took a sip of coffee from the table, then resumed her work on the scarf, determined to finish it as

a New Year's gift before the celebrations began.

Fighting off sleepiness, Brielle spent the entire afternoon knitting.

Come evening, she noticed several unmounted holiday decorations on the coffee table. The villa had none displayed, prompting

her to ask Wesley about it.

"Why are these decorations here not put up?"

"Ms. Brielle, Mr. Max has never been one for these New Year customs. I bought them," Wesley replied.

It was such a significant occasion, and yet Premier Palace remained unchanged. If it weren't for Brielle, the place would be even

more desolate. A pang of sympathy hit her. Had Max never truly experienced what it meant to celebrate the New Year?

Most of the time, he was alone abroad, guarding against assassination attempts since childhood, with no time to savor the

simple joys of life.

She picked up the decorations, her face breaking into a smile. "Where's the ladder? Let's get these up."

Wesley's eyes lit up. He had prepared for the New Year before, especially when Max was expected to return home for the

holidays. But Max never did and spent time in hotels or at the office instead.

Tonight, with Ms. Brielle present, surely Max would come home.

In a flurry of activity, they fetched a ladder and affixed the decorations to the walls. An hour later, the entire Premier Palace was

aglow with gaudy reds and greens—a stark contrast to the subdued elegance of the European-style architecture.

Brielle laughed at the sight. It was tacky, yes, but it was also filled with the warmth of tradition. She continued to sit in the living

room, knitting the scarf, awaiting Max's return for dinner. But by eight o'clock in the evening, there was still no sign of him.

Instead, Patrick called.

"Ms. Brielle, Mr. Max is tied up with matters tonight and won't be returning," he informed her. Brielle's joy was instantly doused

with cold disappointment. Max had been incredibly busy these past few days, coming and going at all hours, his actions a

mystery to all.

With her visit to the Dorsey family's ancestral home looming on the next evening. Max's absence tonight unsettled her.