

Master of his heart (Brielle And Max)

Chapter 6

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Max's gaze did a quick sweep over her face before he murmured, "Leave."

Brielle wasn't offended, she knew his sternness was just a show of authority for others, not truly directed at her. After all, she did benefit from the situation.

She was about to sweet talk him a bit more when the conference room door burst open. Spencer stood there, his face clouded with anger. "What are you still doing here?" he snapped

Brielle hadn't expected Spencer to double back like this. He usually paid her no mind. With no choice, she pretended to tidy up the papers on the table, gave Max a respectful nod, and left the room.

Spencer, in his sharp suit, didn't dare meet Max's gaze and mumbled, "Uncle Max, I apologize for her ignorance. She doesn't know any better."

Max responded with a nonchalant "Hmm" and looked away.

Outside, Spencer grabbed Brielle's wrist tightly. "Did you go squealing to him? For heaven's sake, Brielle, you're a lady of the Haywood family. Haven't you ever seen money before?"

The disdain in his eyes was like a thorn, brutally piercing Brielle's heart.

Brielle found him utterly ridiculous. She didn't know where he got the idea that she was money-hungry and promiscuous. Maybe because she had only been brought back to the Haywood fold at the age of ten, he assumed she carried an air of poverty about her.

"Spencer, we've known each other for thirteen years. Have you ever given me anything?" she shot back. So what made him think she was after money?

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Spencer clenched his teeth, his irritation boiling over. "You wish! The Haywoods only wanted to latch onto our family's influence. Let me tell you, stop meddling in things that don't concern you. I don't like you one bit. Just stay in your lane, and eventually, I'll make things clear to my family, and we can part ways amicably."

Brielle's wrist throbbed painfully under his grip, likely bruising. "Spencer, it was your who wanted this engagement in the first place, and now you want to call it off. What exactly do the Dorseys take me for?"

Indeed, it was a teenage Spencer who had insisted on the alliance with the Haywoods, charmed by Brielle's looks and top-notch academic performance. They were classmates, and Spencer, used to getting his way, thought she was the only girl worthy of him. The Haywoods naturally agreed, and Brielle had no say in the matter. The Dorseys probably thought it was just child's play and didn't object.

Now, the only reason the marriage contract hadn't been dissolved was because of her status as a top university graduate and her choice of a finance major, both of which

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could help Spencer secure his position at Dorsey International.

For ten years this engagement had dragged on, and Brielle had been nothing but devoted, pouring her heart and soul into it.

And what had he done? Carried on an affair with Lillian, and while with her, he'd take every opportunity to belittle Brielle as dull, unfeeling, mechanical.

Ha, if the Dorsey family saw her as some cheap commodity to be used and discarded, she wasn't about to sit back and take it

"Being engaged to you has been the biggest mistake of my life. It's utterly revolting!"

Spencer's words were meant to wound, and they struck Brielle like a plunge into icy waters. A stifled pain grew in her heart, and she couldn't help but wonder how he would react if he found out about her and Max.

“Let go. There’s a department meeting this afternoon. If you’re going to have a meltdown, do it somewhere else.”

Spencer, fearing Max might emerge from the conference room, thought he had hit a nerve with Brielle and, with a self-satisfied snort, released her. “Mom sent you to spy, actually took yourself seriously.”

and you

Rubbing her sore wrist, Brielle wished she could swing a punch at him. “I’m heading downstairs. Remember to transfer that villa into my name.”

Spencer’s eyes bulged in disbelief, and he almost shrieked, “What did you just say?”

Brielle looked up, smiling. “Uncle Max said it was a gift for me. So, please tell Lillian to move out.”

“You!”

Spencer had never seen this side of Brielle, and he clenched his fists in rage. “You’re really all about the money, aren’t you?”

Brielle didn’t bother to refute. A two-million-dollar villa was not something she was willing to hand over to Lillian.

Ignoring Spencer’s teeth-grinding behind her, she returned to her office. The office was buzzing, and all eyes were on her. Brielle frowned upon hearing the whispers about a “fiancée.” Her relationship with Spencer had been exposed.

She looked up at Lucinda. With an apologetic grip on her own clothes, Lucinda said, “I’m sorry. I spoke too loudly, and someone overheard.”

Spencer stepped forward, impatiently tugging at his tie. “So they know. What can you do

about it? It’s not like it’s going to last anyway.”

In front of everyone, he showed no regard for Brielle. She received many sympathetic

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looks, but it suited her just fine. She felt the same way.

After work, a Haywood car came to pick her up.

“Ms. Brielle, the lady has requested your presence.”

It must have been Faith who called.

Brielle reluctantly got into the car, and before she could even step through the Haywood’s front door, she heard Lillian’s laughter from inside.

“Miranda, your tea is delightful. Bri has always praised it, and even Spencer mentioned it.”

“Lillian, it’s been so long since you’ve been home. I thought you and Bri had grown apart. Did you receive the gift I sent you last time?”

“It was too extravagant. I felt awkward accepting it.”

“Nonsense, take it. Why stand on ceremony with me?”

With pressed lips, Brielle paused in the foyer to change her shoes and saw Lillian massaging Miranda’s wrists. If you didn’t know any better, you’d think they were mother and daughter.

Miranda looked over with a beaming smile, “Bri, Lillian’s been here all afternoon, where have you been? Did you get Faith’s call? Spencer is still young and restless-cut him some slack next time, will you? Don’t be so headstrong.”

Brielle set her bag down, meeting Lillian’s gaze

Lillian offered a timid smile, awkwardly settling back onto the couch, “Bri, are you mad at me? I’m sorry, I’ve been sick these past two weeks and I don’t really know anyone else here, so I ended up calling Spencer.”

Miranda took her hand, her face a picture of concern, “What, sick? You’ve got to take care of yourself. Spencer’s a pampered young man, all thumbs, how could he take care of anyone? Next time, just call Bri. If that’s not an option, I’ll send someone over to look after

you.”

“Miranda, I don’t want to impose.” Lillian was visibly flustered, casting a quick glance at

Brielle.

Brielle’s expression remained cool as she walked over and sat down on the couch, “It’s getting late, you should head home.””

Lillian paled, her shoulders shrinking as if she were a small, pitiful creature, “Bri, you really are upset with me, aren’t you? I’ll call Spencer right now and tell him to stop fussing over me.” Her hands trembled slightly, barely able to grip her phone.

Miranda frowned in disapproval, “Bri, you and Lillian grew up together in the same orphanage, and you two have known each other for years. Don’t you know her by now?

Lillian has always been frail. Don’t be so cold. You might scare her.”

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Brielle and Lillian indeed grew up in the same orphanage and were as close as sisters.

They celebrated life’s little victories and consoled each other’s defeats as if they were blood. On Brielle’s seventh birthday, a two-year younger Lillian had saved up enough to buy a \$13 cake. It was the cheapest of the cheap, the kind of cake where you could still taste the bitterness of economy in the

frosting And when Lillian brought it out, clumsy as she was, it tumbled to the ground, a heap of broken dreams.

They sat there, tears mingling with laughter, making a pinky promise-when they had the means, they would feast on the finest cakes and cherish every birthday like a treasure.

So, when the Haywoods found Brielle on her tenth birthday, she didn't hesitate to bring Lillian along, pleading with the Haywoods to enroll them both in school.

In different classes but never apart, the girls were inseparable. But the corrupting allure of wealth can change a person. Those who once fretted over every meal suddenly found themselves in opulence, and their hearts hardened.

"Miranda, Lillian's cheeks flushed with guilt, her eyes brimming with tears.

Brielle thought of the used condoms in the car, and the deliberately left lipstick, "Mom, since you like her so much, why don't you adopt her as your daughter?"

It was a retort made in anger. Yet, a flicker of serious consideration passed through Miranda's eyes.

Brielle felt a sting of humiliation, sharp as a thorn. She'd forgotten that in this house, Lillian was the golden child. Even the house staff couldn't stop singing her praises.

Hadn't Brielle, too, given her heart and soul to Lillian?

Lillian, always playing the damsel with her fragile façade.

"I'm giving you three days to move out of that villa," Brielle suppressed her anger, feeling as if her mouth was filled with the taste of blood.

Ironically, she always felt like she burdened her family by bringing Lillian back. So, no matter what she did, she wanted to be the best. However, her achievements couldn't compare to Lillian's sweet words. In the end, she was the outcast in her own home.

Lillian, hearing her words, sneered inwardly. The villa had been a gift from Spencer-what right did Brielle have to command her?

While harboring such resentment in her heart, she wore a look of grievance on her face, biting her lips. "Bri, please don't be angry, I'll do as you say."

Brielle had no desire to watch the performance. She stood up, "I won't keep you for dinner."

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Miranda, looking on, held Lillian close, "Bri, what's gotten into you tonight?"

"Miranda, it's my fault. I had nowhere to live, so I moved into Spencer's villa in the suburbs. Bri's misunderstood, Lillian explained.

Disappointment filled Miranda's eyes, "Spencer has so many properties. Lillian can stay in one. It is no big deal. If you secure him as your husband, all his assets will be eventually."

yours

"Mom," Brielle stood tall, her voice steady, "then maybe Lillian should just marry Spencer."

"You!" Miranda's chest heaved with anger. "You're becoming more and more outrageous."

Brielle felt her heart tear open. All those years of obedience, the Haywoods wouldn't tolerate even the slightest mistake from her. On the other hand, Lillian, who was always clumsy and had consistently poor grades, was seen by them as naturally innocent and in need of protection.

"Why don't you ask Lillian what she's done? And while you're at it, check how many times she's slept with Spencer in that villa."

The moment the words left her mouth, Miranda's hand flew across her face.

Brielle didn't see it coming. She touched her swiftly swelling cheek in disbelief, a harsh pain making her bend slightly to cope. A bitter laugh escaped her as she grabbed her bag, "When Lillian moved out at eighteen, you all were

heartbroken. If that's the case, I might as well make it a double celebration and leave Spencer to her. After all, you wanted to adopt her as your daughter. I won't disturb your celebration."

"Brielle!" Miranda roared, unable to believe the daughter who had always been so compliant could be so confrontational.

Brielle was already at the door, Lillian's sobs, apologies, and Miranda's comforting words chasing after her.

Miranda didn't believe Lillian capable of such things. "I can't believe Bri would fabricate such lies to slander you," Miranda said.

The irony wasn't lost on Brielle as she clutched her bag, white-knuckled.

Once in her car, she licked her dry lips, tasting blood. With a press on the gas, she drove

away.

Arriving at her apartment building, she saw Spencer's Porsche, him leaning against it, smoking. His greeting was anything but warm. "Lillian's missing, Brielle. Did you hassle her again? I told you, she's with me because I forced her. If you've got a problem, take it out on me, not her. She genuinely cares about you, and treats you like a sister."

Without missing a beat, Brielle slapped him hard.

Spencer's head turned with the impact, his chiseled jawline swelling. The slap was

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merciless, leaving him dazed. After a few seconds, he touched his face, incredulous, "You hit me?"

"Didn't you say to take my anger out on you?" Brielle spat back.

Spencer's lips trembled, "You bitch-"

He couldn't finish his curse, his mind a blank slate of fury.

“Thank you. I feel much better now,” Brielle said, stepping past him into the building.

“Brielle!!” Spencer shouted, kicking a trash can in a fit of rage.

Brielle ignored him, entering her apartment to calm her boiling emotions. She even started working overtime, going through company emails on her laptop.

Since her graduation, she’d been positioned at Spencer’s side, naively thinking the Dorsey family saw her as one of their own. It was only now that she realized how masterfully Faith had played her hand.

Michael had all the young bloods up and at ’em early, placing them in Dorsey International with high hopes they’d make something of themselves.

Brielle, the top student from Beaconsfield College with a degree in Finance, was a wiz. With her smarts, Spencer’s performance outshone all the other greenhorns. The glory was Spencer’s, and so was the year-end bonus. What was in it for her?

In the future, if Spencer grew tired of her, the Dorsey family could dissolve the engagement with an air of superiority. All those years she’d put in they’d amount to

zilch.

What a genius move.

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Brielle pressed her lips together, trembling with rage. In the company’s internal network, she found Max’s private profile and shot off an email with her whistle-blowing letter attached. It was a detailed account of Spencer’s embezzlement and negligence.

Brielle waited and waited, until she dozed off on her desk, but no reply came.

When she woke up, it was 6 a.m. and her eyes were sore. She saw a new message notification on her computer screen. With a surge of excitement, she clicked it open, only to be met with one icy word- “Rejected.”

That son of a bitch.

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On the way to the office, Brielle clenched her jaw in frustration.

One reason was the throbbing pain in her cheek, and the other was the aches all over her body from spending the night sprawled across the desk.

Upon seeing her arrive, Lucinda hurriedly handed over a stack of documents, “Brielle, the director sent back your report last night, and now Integral Elements Inc. has been hounding us for the bid proposal. If we don’t get it to them by nine tomorrow morning, it’ll be seen as a forfeit.”

Lucinda’s tone was laden with reproach as she spoke. Previously, Spencer never meddled in these affairs, so the approval of the reports was solely on Brielle’s shoulders.

However, because of the slap last night, Spencer let personal grievances creep in and deliberately rejected the report. The report concerned the acquisition of Integral Elements Inc., and Brielle had already met with the head of Integral Elements Inc. Failing to submit the bid proposal at this critical juncture would tarnish not only Dorsey International’s reputation but also her own.

Grinding her teeth, Brielle dialed Spencer’s number, only to be greeted by a familiar female

voice.

“He’s in the shower.”

It was Lillian's voice.

Brielle took a deep breath, "I don't care what he's doing right now; if he's not at the office within half an hour, I'm taking this report straight to the top floor."

Lillian was clueless about these matters. She had deliberately not told Spencer about her visit to the Haywood family last night, and when Spencer returned to the villa and found her gone, he indeed made trouble for Brielle.

Lillian's lips curled into a smirk, "Half an hour, huh? Guess you'll be waiting then."

The call ended abruptly, and Brielle set a thirty-minute countdown on her watch.

Lucinda had overheard the conversation, especially the suggestive mention of the shower. Her gaze shifted from sympathy to disdain and finally settled into a sneer. "Brielle, we don't mean to rush you, but procuring Integral Elements Inc. is a short-term goal for our department. If this gets delayed because of your personal issues, all our hard work goes down the drain."

The blame should have fallen on Spencer, but being a Dorsey, no one dared challenge him. So, to everyone else, Brielle, perceived as a woman of no significant background and scorned by Spencer as his fiancée, naturally became the scapegoat.

Now, with Max himself at the helm of Dorsey International, the slightest disturbance

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caught his attention, and indeed, the whole department suffered the consequences.

Ignoring the stares around her, Brielle sat down and waited for Spencer's call. In less than ten minutes, Spencer did call back.

"Brielle, I'm not satisfied with your report on Integral Elements Inc., so I've decided to have Lucinda take over your duties."

Spencer might have been cavalier about the company, but his status afforded him veto power over anyone in the department.

“Spencer, keep personal grudges personal. What’s the point of dragging the company into this? We’ve dispatched so many people to Integral Elements Inc., invested so much time. and resources.”

“This is your problem, Brielle.” Spencer’s tone was dismissive and even a bit nasty, “You’ve made your bed, now lie in it.”

Taking a deep breath, Brielle grabbed the report from her desk and headed straight to the executive floor. Her colleagues were surprised by her bold move, and their eyes betrayed a hint of mockery.

Patrick didn’t show any surprise when he saw her coming, “Ms. Brielle, the president is in a meeting.”

Brielle decided to wait right there. Integral Elements Inc. was pressing hard, and Spencer couldn’t care less about the success of the bid

“The president’s meeting will go on until 3 p.m., followed by an international video conference until 7 p.m. At 7:30, he’ll depart for a charity gala, and won’t return home until

9.”

Patrick flipped through the schedule, his tone diligent and committed. Finally, pushing his gold-rimmed glasses up his nose, he concluded, “The president will be available after 9 p.m.”

Though his words held no hidden meaning, Brielle still felt a subtle hint of intimacy in them, which made her cheeks warm.

“May I have a way to contact him directly?” The Integral Elements Inc. matter had to be discussed with Max personally.

“Sorry, without the president’s permission, I can’t make that decision.”

With that, all of Brielle’s hopes were extinguished. She inwardly mocked herself for a moment. To this assistant named Patrick, she was no different than anyone else. In his eyes, Brielle was just the same as all the others. Coming to the executive floor in was already overstepping her bounds..

person

So what if she was an employee of Dorsey International? Unless she was part of the management, meeting Max required an appointment.

A small company like Integral Elements Inc. didn't even reach the financial threshold to request the upper management's attention for the acquisition.

Her decision to seek Max out with the report was nothing short of ludicrous. Realizing this, Brielle finally saw her place clearly.

She was nothing more than a bed partner for Max, disposable at his whim. The talk of protection was nothing more than pillow talk.

Recalling the pathetic complaint letter she had sent the night before, she felt a wave of shame wash over her. Brielle slid the report back into her bag, nodded politely, and stepped into the elevator.

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The moment she stepped into the office, all eyes were drawn to her like magnets. They felt like sharp, judgmental knives, ready to peel away the facade she had so carefully

constructed

Whispers swirled around her

"Must be off to see Mr. Dorsey again. Some people have all the luck. Marrying into wealth sure has its perks"

“Marrying into wealth? Please, there’s not even a ring on her finger. Didn’t Mr. Spencer publicly deny any engagement?”

“Besides, word has it Mr. Spencer deliberately delayed the bid proposal because he’s got

issues with her.”

“But I heard that Brielle’s family is quite wealthy. Otherwise, how could she get engaged to Mr. Spencer? Don’t prestigious families emphasize matching social status?”

“Ha! Since when do rich people drive cars worth only tens of thousands? No chauffeur even. She just happened to be Mr. Spencer’s classmate, which is how she even got a foot in the door.”

“No wonder. Taking advantage of Mr. Spencer’s naiveté, she probably hoodwinked him into an engagement.”

After what Spencer had said yesterday, everyone was even more convinced of their

theories.

Brielle had always been an outlier in the department, landing a manager position in the Mergers and Acquisitions division straight out of Beaconsfield College, stirring discontent among her peers.

Now with the revelation of her engagement to Spencer and her modest background everyone suspected nepotism or worse, that she traded her body to get ahead. To self-proclaimed elite, she was no different from a courtesan.

The financial world was notorious for its hierarchies, and those within it often develop an inflated sense of self due to the massive capital they handled, imagining themselves as titans of the age.

Brielle, with her natural allure, had been unwelcome from day one. In the three years she’d been there, Lucinda was the only one she could really talk to.

Lucinda handed her the department’s internal phone with a casual tone, “Several companies have sent their bids to Integral Elements Inc. The

president previously discussed a price of 130 million with you, but they're now hoping to hit the 200-million

mark."

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Brielle had done her homework on Integral Elements Inc., poring over annual reports and other investment banks' research. She had even checked multiple simulation models; 130 million was the sweet spot. The sudden jump to 200 million was a clear indicator that other companies were courting them.

She dialed Integral Elements Inc., but instead of the president, his assistant picked up.

"Ms. Brielle, we've yet to receive your bid. It seems you're not serious enough."

"Our bid will be on your desk by nine tomorrow morning. However, your new asking price is a departure from our previous discussions, and I'd like to discuss this in person with Mr. Tanner."

"Ms. Brielle, Mr. Tanner is very busy," came the curt reply.

An excuse, no doubt. Tanner was probably meeting with competitors.

Brielle stood up, signaling three of her team members, including Lucinda, "Book the next flight out. You're coming with me to Integral Elements Inc."

The ones she picked, especially the two male colleagues, were none too pleased to be bossed around by a woman they considered to be a backdoor hire. Graduates from prestigious schools, they all had dreams of greatness.

Brielle had been decisive in her role, never showing weakness or seeking help in a damsel-in-distress manner, always maintaining a cool demeanor that seemed to threaten their sense of male pride.

What was the point of a woman being so assertive, they thought, when she was destined for domesticity?

But with Brielle as the manager and Spencer currently absent, she was the one in charge.

Integral Elements Inc., a small components manufacturer waiting to go public, was nestled in a neighboring town, providing over 3,000 jobs to the local community.

Brielle had been preparing for months with her team to acquire Integral Elements Inc. Now with the bid proposal stalled by Spencer, she had no choice but to fly out personally to make her case.

As she and her team boarded the plane, Max was wrapping up a meeting on his end.

Back in his office, he opened his laptop as Patrick brought him a cup of coffee, “Mr. Doesey, Ms. Brielle stopped by earlier.”

Max paused, setting down his coffee to check his inbox. Aside from the email from the previous night, there was nothing new from her. She must be upset, he thought.

Max tapped a few keys and sent Brielle a message – just a question mark. As the international conference call started, there was still no word from her. Max turned his attention back to the screen, his expression unreadable.

Brielle arrived in the neighboring city by four in the afternoon. The group then took a local bus straight to the town.

Before entering Integral Elements Inc., Brielle straightened her attire. The company was housed in a quaint five-story office building, with sprawling factories just a kilometer away, employing the whole town.

She had already researched Tanner, the young millionaire who returned to his hometown after college to start a business and enriched not just himself but his entire community.

To persuade a man like that, she knew that mere talk of fame and fortune wouldn't

suffice.

“Sorry, Ms. Brielle, Mr. Tanner is currently entertaining guests,” the receptionist informed her upon arrival.

Brielle smiled and gestured towards the lobby sofas, “We’ll wait right here.

The receptionist had no choice but to oblige, offering them refreshments as they settled

Lucinda’s expression was one of cool indifference as she settled into her seat, her words dripping with sarcasm as she criticized Integral Elements Inc.’s penny-pinching ways. “After all these years, they’re still holed up in this small town,” she muttered.

“Brielle, why did we bother to come in person? Without Integral Elements Inc., there are still other companies. We need to maintain a higher posture. After all, we represent Dorsey International. Your decision is not wise at all.”

Lucinda had held her tongue until now, but the audacity to speak her mind came from a text she had just received from a colleague.

Mr. Spencer had decided to promote her over Brielle, to put her in charge as the manager of the Mergers and Acquisitions department.

With a smirk, she thought, why bother with the pretense of deference in front of Brielle any longer?

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Brielle's knees doubled as a makeshift desk for her laptop as she cast a glance at Lucinda. "Have you looked into this company's cash flow, market share, profits, and sales forecasts?" she asked, her tone casual but pointed.

Lucinda's face tightened, her annoyance growing by the second. Being called out in front of the others like this was a low blow from Brielle.

Fingers dancing across the keyboard, Brielle didn't need a physical proposal in front of her; she had meticulously analyzed the future trends of Integral Elements Inc.

The firm wasn't large, but it was a powerhouse of profitability, with each employee generating a whopping three hundred percent profit for the company.

What's more, Integral Elements Inc. had cut costs to the bone by eliminating packaging, engineering design, and marketing expenses.

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Their long-term relationship with Dorsey International was built solely on reputation no small feat. Just that alone made their trip worthwhile.

After quietly finishing up her notes, Brielle looked up at the trio before her.

"Organize the reports you've prepared yourselves," she instructed calmly.

Lucinda was the first to express shock. "What reports?"

The two male colleagues' brows furrowed in confusion. "You mean the proposal? But wasn't that kicked back by Mr. Spencer?"

Brielle took a deep breath, her gaze sharp. "Besides the proposal, I want all the preliminary research we've done on Integral Elements Inc. – their distribution channels, logistics, you name it. If we're going to impress Tanner, we need to understand this company inside. out."

Lucinda, who hadn't even brought her laptop, stood there empty-handed. "Why all the fuss? We're here. Isn't that enough?"

"Lucinda," Brielle's voice turned icy. "If that's your attitude, you might as well go back now. I didn't bring you here to make snarky comments. You're

employees, and if you don't even have the basic data with you, what do you think we're here for? To have tea with Tanner?"

Lucinda's face flushed with embarrassment and anger. She usually got on well with Brielle, but today had been a series of humiliations.

Recalling the text from that colleague, she snapped. "This mess is your fault! If you'd just groveled to Mr. Spencer, we wouldn't be here getting eaten alive by mosquitoes!"

With that, she stormed off, forwarding the incriminating text to the two male colleagues.

– [Lucinda, Mr. Spencer was in the office this afternoon. He's making you manager, and

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Brielle's been demoted!]

Now she was the boss, and Brielle was nothing. Poor thing got cheated on by her fiancé and lost her job. Haha, she didn't even know yet.

Brielle could sort everything out here herself. When the time came, Lucinda would swoop in with the proposal and seal the deal with Tanner. All the credit would be hers, and Brielle's efforts would be for nothing.

The two men had been in a sour mood since boarding the plane, but out of respect for Brielle's position, they had followed her. Now, with the text in hand, they found an outlet for their frustration and quickly followed Lucinda out.

"Lucinda, don't be upset. She can't do it alone."

"She's always been like this, acting all high and mighty. Let's head back and watch her fail."

They left as if it was all Brielle's fault.

Lucinda felt a surge of relief and adopted a softer tone, "Ah, negotiation is really a man's game. Once I'm manager, I'll make sure the guys step up."

That was exactly what the men wanted to hear, winning their approval. The trio booked tickets home, leaving Brielle alone in the waiting area. Blinking away the sting of tears, she tucked a lock of hair behind her ear and dove back into the data.

A new email popped up, a single question mark from Max, dripping with condescension. After a moment's hesitation, Brielle deleted it. She wasn't going to wait for a savior in a

suit.

With newfound clarity, she focused more intently on her work. After another hour, she finally saw Tanner, flanked by two associates, walk in.

Gathering her laptop and files, Brielle approached him.

"Mr. Tanner, long time no see," she greeted, extending a hand with a warm smile.

Tanner recognized her but frowned at the thought of the still-missing proposal, feeling played by Dorsey International. "Ms. Brielle, what are you still doing here?"

"Mr. Tanner, the missing proposal was my oversight, but I'm hoping you'll give me another chance. This is the prospectus I've prepared for Integral Elements Inc. I hope you'll consider it before making your decision."

Tanner, a man in his forties with an imposing yet efficient demeanor, looked at the thick prospectus, intrigued by its heft. "Seventy-five pages?"

Most prospectuses

were a few pages at best; this one was a tome.

"It includes my analysis of Integral Elements Inc.'s operations, debt-to-equity ratio, and as

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you hold a hundred percent stake in Integral Elements Inc., you know well that the company needs this IPO opportunity.”

The sheer volume of the seventy-five-page document was a testament to Brielle’s dedication, and it softened Tanner’s initial skepticism.

Glancing at his watch, his expression softened further. “I have another meeting in ten

minutes.

Brielle sighed in relief and gestured for him to proceed.

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