

Master 641

Chapter 641

Brielle learned that Tessa had been hospitalized the next morning, and a smirk tinged her eyes. Tessa had always been as fragile as a porcelain doll, seemingly on the verge of fainting at any moment. After all the recent setbacks, it was a wonder she hadn't collapsed sooner. Brielle half-expected her to have been rushed to the hospital, coughing up blood long before now.

She had inquired about Tessa at the hospital and learned that her condition was more serious than ever before. Word was Tessa had been taken to the emergency room in the middle of the night and hadn't been released yet.

Tessa had to gamble on who truly held Andrew's heart if she wanted to cling to him as her lifeline.

After freshening up, Brielle descended the stairs just in time to see Max donning his new scarf. To complement it, he had deliberately chosen an overcoat in a matching shade. It was rare to see Max out of a suit, so when Brielle caught sight of him in this ensemble, her step faltered, and her cheeks flushed with color.

In a suit, he seemed untouchable, distant, but in an overcoat, he exuded a gentle warmth. The scarf was looped just once, showing off the Adam's apple, and the iris detailed at the end wasn't too conspicuous - one had to look closely to discern its type.

Brielle had always known that Max was strikingly handsome, and despite the countless times they had hung out, she still found herself dazzled by him every morning. Now, with a slight change in his attire, she found her cheeks heating uncontrollably.

She feigned composure as she approached the breakfast table and noted that he had finished his meal and was getting ready to leave. As he passed by her, he paused behind her and leaned in to ask, "Does it look good?"

The answer inside Brielle's heart was a resounding yes. She had never seen anyone more attractive than Max. But outwardly, she casually picked up a glass of milk from the table and took a sip. "It's alright, I guess."

Max glanced down, noticing the blush on her earlobes, and smiled.

Patrick called from the doorway, hurrying him along. Max left her with a simple reminder, "Make

sure to eat well."

Brielle nodded, waiting for him to leave before allowing her tense body to relax. It wasn't that she couldn't resist the temptation; he probably would have that effect on any woman. Upon seeing Max, any woman would have to restrain herself from letting out an excited squeal.

The glimpse of him in the morning uplifted her spirits, and she felt as if a fluttering butterfly with wings of vibrant crimson hovered before her eyes.

It wasn't until she pulled into the Stellar Stage Entertainment lot that her smile began to fade. In the rearview mirror, she noticed the car that had been following her coming to a halt. She had been aware of it for a while, assuming it was another executive from Stellar Stage

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Entertainment, but when she saw who stepped out, Brielle raised an eyebrow and opened her car door.

Andrew, his face clouded with fury, strode directly toward her, Brielle didn't back away but instead casually tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and looked up at him with a composed smile. "Mr. Clements, not at the hospital with Tessa but here blocking my way? How unusual."

"Who gave you permission to sell Aubree's house?!" Andrew's eyes were bloodshot as he grabbed Brielle by the throat. "Brielle, don't think that just because Max is protecting you, I wouldn't dare lay a hand on you. That slap you gave me last time is enough. for you to pay with your liffe a hundred times over."

Brielle had always been aware of Andrew's bad temper and his tendency to act without regard for the consequences. As her oxygen

was cut off, her face turned an angry red, but her eyes still held a look of disdain. "Do you really think I could have sold the house without the owner's permission?"

Andrew's pupils contracted sharply, and his grip on her throat turned into a tight hold on her wrist pulling her toward his ear. He had never been gentle with other women, and Brielle felt her wrist might snap from his forceful tug.

The car doors locked, trapping Brielle inside. Her expression turned cold.

"Andrew, what do you

think you're doing?"

Andrew's chest heaved with suppressed rage as he gripped the steering wheel.

"Take me to

Aubree."

Chapter 642

Brielle couldn't help but smirk, a sarcastic curve playing at the corners of her lips. "Sorry about that. I've no clue where Aubree's at," she said, her voice tinged with irony.

No sooner had the words left her mouth than the gas pedal was slammed down hard. She hadn't even had time to buckle her seatbelt before she was nearly thrown backward.

Andrew was fuming, and today, he was driving a two-seater sports car that could go from zero to sixty in a heartbeat. As he floored it, the world outside the windows became nothing but a blur.

The speed was so intense it gave her a feeling of extreme weightlessness. Her scream was like stuck in her throat, unable to escape or be swallowed.

Brielle had never experienced anything like it. All she could hear was the roar of the engine. Everything else was lost to her. Time and space seemed to be in reverse, her recent meal pressing uncomfortably against her stomach, making her feel nauseous, but the cold sweat breaking out on her back made it impossible to vomit.

Andrew was torturing her on purpose, perhaps because she had sold Aubree's house or maybe because of the slap she had given him last time. He was always one to hold a grudge, and she was sure he was looking for a chance to get back at her for that slap.

Brielle's face grew colder, but she maintained her composure. "Andrew, are you trying to get us both killed?"

"Do you really think you're worth dying with me?" His tone was cool, his muscles tense, as he pushed the gas pedal to the floor again.

Once the speed picked up, he slammed on the brakes. Even with her seatbelt fastened, Brielle felt her stomach churn with each jolt.

"Tell me where Aubree is, Brielle, and I'll let you go," Andrew demanded again.

Aubree wasn't answering her phone, so the only person who might know her whereabouts was Brielle. The thought that Brielle had sold Aubree's house without his permission sent Andrew into a panic. It was as if he was about to lose something vital.

Brielle gripped the safety belt, closing her eyes to ease the dizziness. "Aren't you about to marry Tessa?"

With a sneer, Andrew sped up the car again. "My marriage to Tessa won't affect what Aubree and I have. Tessa's not in good health."

Brielle found it both funny and bitterly ironic. So, he truly believed Aubree was just Tessa's replacement when he needed to relieve himself?

She closed her eyes, her face growing pale. The car continued at this insane speed until they were far outside the city.

"The moment you tell me where Aubree is, I'll let you go," he said, pulling out his phone for her to see.

Brielle saw the flashing name. Max was calling, but Andrew didn't answer. He simply switched the phone to airplane mode. His phone had anti-surveillance technology, so no one could track

him.

She knew he meant it. There was nothing Andrew wouldn't do, even if it meant killing her.

"You sure you want to play this game, Andrew? Tessa's probably still in the ER, and if she doesn't see you soon, who knows what kind of scene she'll make?"

Her voice was calm, and her expression remained composed even as the adrenaline from the high-speed drive lingered.

Tessa was indeed still in surgery, and the situation was especially dire.

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Andrew just remembered he had left something at Aubree's place. It had been days since he'd seen her, so he decided to check her place. What greeted him was a stranger – a man he didn't recognize. A flurry of thoughts and a surge of anger overwhelmed him, like a knife slicing through his body.

Was Aubree keeping other men on the side? How dare she?

He shoved the man aside, storming into the bedroom. The woman inside screamed, shaking with fear.

It wasn't Aubree. Relief washed over

Andrew, but before he could process

it, the police were called, and he

NO spent his morning at the station. It was only then he learned the house had been sold.

That house was once his refuge after

late nights at work, where he would go to find Aubree. That was years ago, when he was hooked on Aubree's presence. The sounds of the wind, thunder, and rain outside, him pressing down on her inside - it was a satisfaction like no other. In his mind, Aubree was always there,

waiting for him. He never imagined the house would be sold one day.

Chapter 643

Andrew thought it was time to snuff out Brielle's life. He never dwelled on consequences-his own satisfaction was paramount.

He could even disregard that she belonged to Max. So what? To cross him was to court death.

However, a nagging feeling told him that killing Brielle would provoke more than a slap from Aubree.

His hands gripped the steering wheel with a wild edge, and his brows knitted in fierce determination. "Brielle, my business with Aubree is none of your concern. She's well aware that I plan to marry Tessa. My heart has always been with Tessa."

*Andrew, did Aubree not tell you? The moment you marry Tessa, she'll step out of the picture. She's just getting an early start. Your wedding is coming up soon, right? Tessa's relying on you more than ever. If you don't marry her, think of how pitiful she'll be."

Her face was lit up with a smile as the sunlight kissed one cheek.

Suddenly, a chilling thought struck Andrew. Brielle wasn't looking forward to his marriage with Tessa; she was anticipating pushing him and Tessa into a living hell.

That grave called marriage seemed to beckon him and Tessa to a point of no return.

But why?

He had never liked Brielle. He despised her even because he knew all too well how she had climbed the social ladder to Max's side through less-than- honorable means. He had always looked down on such women, much like his disdain for Aubree.

Women were all the same in his eyes. They either used their bodies to get ahead or threw around their beauty to seduce men.

He'd admit his treatment of Aubree over the years was far from kind. For him, she was nothing more than a convenient bed partner. She was a call away when he needed her, worth a stack of cash he would leave behind after using her. Everything was clean and uncomplicated.

Deep down, Andrew sensed that Aubree wanted more than this arrangement. And yet, all he could offer was just that.

He was the heir to the Clements family and the CEO of Clements Corporation. He could hardly announce to the world his affair with his sister in all but blood. The moment that news leaked, Clements Corporation's shares would plummet.

He'd trampled Aubree's genuine feelings until they were numb, never caring for her pain. So what was he so angry and conflicted about now?

He floored the accelerator, continuing to torment Brielle. Pain began gnawing at Brielle's stomach, her discomfort growing.

Behind them, several cars were in pursuit. She recognized one-it was Max's. He had arrived

But Andrew didn't stop, cushioning the pedal to the metal. His car was a custom sports car with the advantage of speed maintaining a tenuous distance between them.

"Andrew, are you perishing because Aubree wants to end things with you? You're even redefining Tessa's well-being. It seems you're not that fond of Tessa after all."

"Shut up!" Andrew was furious, his breath uneven. He took a sharp turn, only to confront a roadwork sign ahead.

The sports car's speed left no time for reaction, and the vehicle barreled past the sign. In a split-second decision, Andrew yanked the steering wheel narrowly avoiding a collision with an oncoming truck.

The car slammed into a roadside tree, crumpling the hood. Shards of the shattered windshield pierced Andrew's chest, while Brielle suffered only a minor cut to her arm.

He breathed a sigh of relief, then yanked the car door open. Before he could react, Max had him by the collar, landing a heavy punch on his face.

Andrew's teeth nearly rattled loose with the blow.

Brielle, with only a scratch, opened the now-broken car door and stepped out, clutching her injured arm. Max saw the red on her limb and delivered a kick to Andrew's chest.

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Surrounding drivers had stopped, all taking out their phones to capture the scene.

James and Patrick who were

following close behind, sensed trouble.

In a moment of trouble, Patrick reached Brielle first, draping his jacket over her head. "Ms. Brielle, please get in our car."

She nodded, aware that this scene would cause an uproar if it went viral.

Glass was embedded in Andrew's chest, and Max's punches had him teetering

on the edge of

life

Jared attempted to stop Max his expression grave. "Brielle's fine, but Andrew's badly hurt. Do you want to kill him?"

Max's expression was icy, but thoughts of Brielle made him stride back to his car.

Jared helped Andrew off the ground, sighing at the smartphones poking out of car windows, knowing it was too late to stop the spread.

"Can you walk?" He supported Andrew, who clutched at his chest,

for

each breath a stab of pain. Jared ushered him into his car, urgently instructing the driver to head for the hospital. The glass shard couldn't wait. If Andrew died, all of

Beaconsfield would be thrown into

chaos.

Chapter 644

The accident had already been captured on camera by passing motorists.

Max and Andrew's faces were familiar to anyone who flipped through the business section of the daily paper. They were celebrities in their own right, with Max commanding even more attention than Hollywood's leading men.

However, before the video could go viral, it was forcefully suppressed. It was pulled from the internet and remained unseen by the general public.

Meanwhile, within the elite circles, rumors were spreading like wildfire.

Max and Andrew had come to blows. It was not just a scuffle-it was a brutal fight to the bitter end.

At that moment, Brielle was sitting in Max's car, noticing the bloodstains on his knuckles beneath the coat he'd worn since morning. She quickly reached for the first aid kit stashed under the seat.

A chill seemed to radiate from Max, so Patrick tactfully lowered the privacy

screen.

Brielle knew that her and Andrew's near-miss with the truck had shaken Max. It had scared her, too, to the point where she thought she and Andrew might've actually died.

She took out the first aid kit and gently cleaned the blood from his knuckles with a cotton swab. He just had a scratch from the glass, thankfully not too deep. As she was about to blow on the wound, Max took the swab and started to remove her jacket.

"Don't move," he said, his voice icy.

Brielle shivered. "I'm really okay, it doesn't hurt."

Although it was a minor cut, it was still bleeding. It hadn't hurt at first, but under Max's intense gaze, she became acutely aware of the pain.

The car pulled up at the hospital, with Jaired's vehicle not far behind. There was no interaction between them.

Max led Brielle to the ER without so much as a sideways glance.

Her arm throbbed, her stomach ached, and the violent car surge left her head buzzing.

"A mild concussion, nothing serious. The cut just needs to be disinfected," the doctor said after a brief examination.

After treating Brielle's wound and warning her to keep it dry, the doctor was ready to send her on her way, but Max insisted she stay at the hospital for observation for a couple of days, concerned about potential complications from the concussion. Brielle had no choice but to

agree.

Meanwhile, in the operating room down the hall, the surgeons had successfully removed the

glass shards from Andrew's chest.

Lucky guy." they remarked with "If it had been just a tad off, it would've pierced his heart.

Indeed, he was lucky.

a sigh of relief.

When Andrew regained consciousness, he was surrounded by the Clements family members, all wearing grim expressions. It was obvious to everyone that this brawl with Max was serious. Both sides definitely needed to sit down and hash it out. Andrew's injury wasn't exactly a scratch, while Max appeared to be in the pink of health. No matter which way you cut it, Andrew seemed to have drawn the short end of the stick.

The chatter from Andrew's relatives was giving him a headache. "I need to rest," he grumbled.

Marissa ushered the others out, leaving them alone.

"Is Tessa here?" he asked once they'd left.

Marissa's expression soured. "Yeah, she's here. Crying to see you and causing a scene."

Andrew, annoyed by her sardonic tone, chided her. "Mom, you used to be so good to her. Why the sudden change?"

Before Marissa could reply, the door swung open, and Tessa appeared, looking pitiful with swollen eyes. "Andrew," she gasped, clutching his hand as if it took all her strength.

Her reaction was genuine. She was devastated remembering how Andrew had instinctively protected Aubree, the woman she loathed.

"Stop crying," Andrew said, his frown deepening.

Marissa, tired of their melodrama, got

up to leave. "The wedding is set for next week. Your grandfather and Michael are already dealing with the situation between you and Max. We need a bigger story to distract the public. It's the perfect time to announce your marriage. The

Rowland family's reputation might be shaky, but our PR will spin you as the

devoted fiancé. It'll shield us from backlash. Get ready."

She paused, turning to Tessa with a pointed look. "I've kept my word. Make sure

you keep yours."

Tessa's grip tightened, feeling faint from frustration and anger. She began to cough, dabbing her mouth with a tissue that quickly spotted with blood. Her body was too frail,

and she was far from accepting it.

She made sure Andrew saw the

blood, her voice tinged with desperation. "Andrew, do you agree? Shall we get married next week? Marissa is about to release the news.

Is that okay?"

Chapter 645

Andrew's Adam's apple bobbed as he eyed the stark red ink on the pristine

tissue. He squinted, almost wishing Max would knock him out cold so he wouldn't have to face such a dilemma.

And something about Marissa's demeanor seemed off. If she was so repulsed, why hadn't she put a stop to this wedding? Wasn't she always so concerned about the Clements family's reputation?

Andrew just couldn't figure it out. Moreover, he couldn't find any excuse to turn down Tessa. Wasn't this marriage what he had been aiming for all along?

He dropped his gaze, trying to ignore the twinge of pain in his heart. "Yeah."

Ecstasy flitted across Tessa's eyes as she pressed her pale lips together. "I'll cooperate with the doctor and get well soon, Andrew. How about we go pick out a wedding dress in a few days?"

Andrew's irritation grew, but then he thought, if he were to get married, Aubree might come back, right?

With a firm answer from Andrew, Tessa left the hospital room on cloud nine. As she passed by Brielle's room, she paused, tempted to go in and gloat. However, before she could step in, the sight of the man standing by the window sucked the bravado right out of her.

She thought about retreating, but it was too late. Brielle had seen her, and so had Max, his brow furrowed.

Tessa's face paled even further. "Andrew and I are getting married next week. We'll send you an invitation."

Her words weren't meant for Brielle—they were aimed at Max.

"Max, you'll come, won't you?"

Max's expression darkened. He was about to speak when Brielle cut in. "How do you know the wedding will even happen? Do you know why Andrew got hurt? He was pushing me for Aubree's whereabouts, He's hunting her down like a rabid dog. I doubt he truly wants to marry you."

Tessa's carefully crafted façade shattered, her face twisting as she stared at Brielle.

Brielle remained serene, her eyes untroubled. Tessa knew that if she stayed, she'd be the one losing her cool. She was going to marry Andrew anyway. Brielle's words must've been out of desperation. That bitch could see just how blissful she and Andrew would be. Tessa scoffed and turned on her heel.

Once she was gone, Brielle pressed her lips together and fell silent. Max closed the door, shutting out any further unpleasantness.

Brielle's phone rang-It was John.

"Ms. Haywood, we thought we'd be here for two months for the shoot, but there are only a few usable locations. I've thought it over, and I'd rather shoot at my old stomping ground. You've been there. It's the perfect mix of cityscape and back alleys, a stark contrast. As for the small-town scenes, we've got a few segments that work, so I'm here asking for permission to head back tomorrow."

Brielle's heart skipped. This development caught her off guard, her irritation flaring, but she couldn't really force John to stay.

Rubbing her temples, she sighed. "Have the phones been distributed yet?"

They all had signed NDAS, and their phones were confiscated.

"Not yet. We'll hand them out after the shoot."

Brielle was about to breathe a sigh of relief when John's tone shifted. "However, Miss Aubree took her phone. I didn't stop her. You said she's a friend, and she assured me

she'd fulfill her duties."

Brielle's heart sank. No smile could be coaxed forth now, and she simply agreed to their return.

Max's phone buzzed too-it was Michael.

The mess he and Andrew had created needed a solution. Otherwise, the entire social circle would think the families were at odds.

"Max, come back for a bit."

At the Dorsey family estate, not only Dorsey folks were present, but m Clements elders too. Both parties had been negotiating politely for over ten minutes.

Michael had made concessions, and they decided to announce a big joint venture after the Clements family NO released news of the wedding. This would quell any rumors of a rift. between the families.

The Dorsey and Clements families had too much shared history to resort to

public mud-slinging.

In less than twenty minutes, the talks

concluded. The butler courteously escorted the Clements guests out, only to return to find Michael smashing a glass in anger.

"Damn fool!"

In all the years, Michael had used those words for others in the Dorsey clan but

never for Max. Now, his chest heaved with fury, a testament to his rage.

The butler hurried over with a sedative, only to have it slapped away.

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.

Chapter 646

In the hospital, Brielle watched as Max's expression darkened after he took a call. She suspected it had something to do with the Dorsey and Clements families.

The incident had been witnessed by too many, and although Michael had managed to suppress the news, the word had definitely spread within their circles. The bad publicity meant the two families would have to sit down and hash things out.

"Max, maybe keep your hands to yourself next time."

Those punches he had thrown at Andrew had even hurt her to watch. Andrew hadn't been knocked out by the glass shards but had nearly been floored by Max's fists. Though, if she was being honest, it had felt pretty satisfying. After all, she had long wanted to give Andrew a piece of her mind.

Tessa's audacity to treat Aubree that way was a direct result of Andrew's years of indulgence. Why could he still live so carefree?

Max sat at the edge of her hospital bed with a light chuckle, "It's nothing."

How could it be nothing? Michael already wasn't fond of her, and now he probably detested her completely.

"Aren't you going back to the Dorseys?"

"No need. Whatever they had to discuss, they've surely sorted it out by now."

"I don't want to stay in the hospital."

Brielle tugged gently at his shirt, looking up at him, "I'm really okay. Can we just go home. tonight?" Just the thought of Andrew and Tessa being in the same hospital made her feel nauseated.

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Max remained unmoved, sitting by her bedside, "We'll leave in the morning."

That was as much of a compromise as he was willing to make. Brielle sighed, resigned, "Okay."

Meanwhile, Tessa was fighting the urge to vomit blood in another room. She replayed the video of Aubree, finding relief as she watched her pitiful state and tears. She had promised Marissa not to leak the video, but she hadn't said anything about not sending it directly to Aubree herself.

Did Aubree know she was being filmed? Did she know the video was now in Tessa's hands? If she didn't, the video would probably drive her insane.

Tessa's mood lifted, her lips curving into a smile as she felt less pain in her body. She tapped on Aubree's contact and sent the video. [Bitch, look at how all these men fucked you. And just so you know, Andrew and I are getting married soon.]

After sending that, still feeling unsatisfied, she sent another message. [Oh, and your probably don't know, but today, Andrew nearly killed Brielle.]

Having sent those messages, Tessa finally felt a bit of relief from the pent-up rage.

Coughing and clutching her chest, she lay back on the bed, exhausted from the recent turmoil. All she needed was for Andrew to marry her. Then, she could survive anything.

She closed her eyes.

Elsewhere, Aubree and her crew were packing up for the night. They were about to shoot the last scene, where she had to embrace Ricardo.

In this movie, they were siblings living at the bottom of society. The word 'siblings' instantly reminded her of her relationship with Andrew, making her stomach churn.

Ricardo noticed her discomfort and patted her back. "Aubree, you need a break?"

Aubree didn't feel the usual aversion towards Ricardo, probably because he had seen her at her worst. There was no need to pretend.

She shook her head, pushing through the last scene before stepping away to vomit out of sight. She had lost count of how many times she had thrown up recently. The presence of strange men triggered her body to react.

Ricardo came over with a bottle of

water and handed it to her as he m

noticed her significant weightloss. "We're heading back to Beaconsfield tomorrow, Aubree. Maybe you should see a therapist."

"It's okay

Aubree rinsed her mouth and wiped her tears, then her phone buzzed. Only she

and John had phones on set. The rest were turned in.

She picked up the phone and saw

Tessa's messages. As she watched

the video, reliving the ardeat, the de

men's insults, her own terror, she

thought she'd scream or be too sick to sleep.

But she was calm..

Ricardo leaned in to peek and

frowned. He didn't like the cattym drama between women. He reached for her phone to delete the video.

"Don't," Aubree said, her voice hoarse. She closed her eyes and opened the

second message, feeling anger ignite within her.

Taking a deep breath, she dialed Brielle's number. Was Brielle hurt because of

Andrew?

Chapter 647

Brielle wasn't at all surprised when her phone lit up with Aubree's name. The last thing she wanted was for Aubree to bring up Andrew and Tessa's wedding.

"Bri, are you hurt?"

Brielle was taken aback. She hadn't told anyone about her injury, and it wasn't circulating online. How did Aubree find out?

"Yeah."

'Did Andrew do it?'

Brielle really wanted to downplay it, to say it was just a minor concussion, something a couple of days' rest could fix. But suddenly, she felt a pang of cunning. She didn't want to explain. Maybe this would push Aubree to distance herself from Andrew. Between her safety and her love for Andrew, Aubree would surely choose the former..

"Yeah, Aubree, you coming back?"

The turmoil in Aubree's eyes roiled like a stormy sea upon hearing Brielle's confirmation. She wished she could teleport back to Beaconsfield.

Those assholes!

Taking a deep breath to steady herself, Aubree replied, "Yeah, I'll be back by morning to see you."

"I'll be at the Premier Palace tomorrow. You focus on your shoot. Don't worry about me."

After a few more exchanges, Brielle hung up, still concerned about Aubree's mental state. With the news of Andrew's marriage spreading online, Aubree likely knew about it, but she showed no reaction.

Brielle breathed a sigh of relief. She put down the phone just as the bathroom door in the private hospital room swung open, and Max emerged. The room was a luxury suite, complete with a small kitchenette but only one bed.

Brielle noticed Max's phone had been ringing off the hook, but he hadn't picked up once. His hair was damp as he sat on the edge of the bed.

It was late, eleven at night, time to sleep, but thoughts of Aubree's return kept Brielle awake. Plus, Michael had been pressuring Max to return to the family estate, adding to her restlessness.

She snuggled into bed beside him, finding solace in his arms, and couldn't help asking, "Is Michael trying to replace you because of the fight?" As the heir to the Dorsey family, his public outburst was a disgrace. Worrying about both Aubree and Max made Brielle feel like her heart was being fried.

Max, in his pajamas, patted her back soothingly. "I hold fifty-one percent of Dorsey International's shares. No one can replace me."

But Brielle's unease persisted, sensing Michael had something up his sleeve.

"Don't worry. Sleep," Max murmured, kissing her forehead.

Brielle's anxiety was amplified, and she suddenly propped herself up on his lap. "Max, you're not going to break up with me, are you?"

Max's voice turned hoarse. They'd been too busy for sex lately, and her move had ignited a fire within him. He closed his eyes, his Adam's apple bobbing. "No, I'll go to the estate tomorrow and have a talk with my father."

Relieved, Brielle lay back down on his chest. "I can't think of what Michael would do to you, so I'm worried."

Darkness flickered in Max's eyes, his fingertips tracing her waist. "Don't worry."

Finally feeling sleepy, Brielle slid down beside him, her worries easing. She thought they'd return to Premier Palace together the next day, but when she awoke, Max was gone.

Patrick was waiting to take her back.

When she arrived in Premier Palace, she tried to call Max, but he didn't answer.

Sensing her concern, Patrick offered her a book. "Ms. Brielle, the CEO will be back soon."

Brielle's mind wasn't on reading. Then her phone rang. Aubree had arrived in Beaconsfield Their@rew had taken up residence in the same run-down neighborhood John used to live in. They had rented several clean, spacious rooms.

She texted Max about visiting Aubree, but he didn't look at his vibrating phone.

In front of Max was his father, practicing his calligraphy in silence, a priceless painting hanging behind.

The study, crafted from solid wood and furnished with Michael's favorite pearwood chairs, was filled with the faint scent of coffee.

Neither spoke, a silent contest of patience.

Seasoned in life's battles, Michael

continued to write with a steady, forceful hand, as ruthless as his business tactics. Brielle had been right. Under Michael, the Dorsey family had seen many disappearances. He was the most ruthless of them all.

Max might have been sharp in business, but he had never turned his hands

against his

own family. In certain situations, Michael might have lost his conscience, and Max simply disdained petty fights.

Chapter 648

Michael knew better than to try to outlast Max in a game of patience. He had watched his youngest son grow into a man who could keep his lips sealed just as tightly as his father, if not more so.

Having finished the last stroke of his calligraphy, Michael set down the brush and

accepted a handkerchief from the butler to clean his hands. "What's your plan with the Clements family?"

"Haven't you already done everything that needs to be done?"

A chill flickered in Michael's eyes. He finished wiping his fingers and handed the handkerchief back to the butler. "I've spoken with the Clements family and made some concessions. The damages are around a billion dollars."

Max considered this for a few seconds before responding. "It can be deducted from my personal account."

"Max!"

Michael's anger flared, and he slapped the desk. It was the first time he'd ever lashed out at Max like this, a hint of frost in his glare. "All this for a woman. You seem pretty content to be the butt of the joke."

It was a harsh accusation. After all, any random chapter from Max's life thus far had been nothing but highlight reels. He was never the topic of ridicule.

"Father, having Brielle by my side is icing on the cake."

Michael's breathing grew labored; it was the first time he'd been this incensed. His chest heaved in silent laughter, though it was anything but humorous. "I've heard Martha's condition has worsened. The

sanatorium has called you several times, and you've been ignoring them, even going as far as instructing the doctors to take drastic measures."

"Mother's emotional state was too agitated. I did what I felt was best for her."

"Absurd!"

A cup shattered at Max's feet.

Michael's brow furrowed deeper, his tone ice-cold. "I remember that wager with Brielle well. I won't make things difficult for her for at least half a year. But if you continue with this outrageous behavior, don't blame me for breaking our agreement. Max, I won't touch you, but I can't make the same promise for Brielle. She has too many vulnerabilities. Do you think you can protect everyone involved?"

It was a blatant threat. His most prized son was brawling in the streets - it was an affront to everything Michael stood for. Moreover, it was with the heir to the Clements family, a brother who had grown up beside Max.

1/3

Michael was a seasoned businessman, and he knew when to hold back. "I'll have Alivia spend more time with your mother. Consider how you might make it up to her. Jose enjoys collecting art. I happen to have a piece he would appreciate, 'The Twelve Scenes of Landscape.'"

The recompense wasn't for Alivia but for the Barnes family.

Michael added, "You know Alivia wants more than that."

"Father, that's all I'm prepared to offer." Max's words were blunt, typical of his nature, and not prone to deception.

Feeling the conversation would only serve to aggravate him further, Michael waved Max away.

Before leaving, Max instructed the servants to clean up the broken glass. Then he stepped into his car parked outside. He was about to reply to Brielle's message on his phone when the car window was tapped. It was the butler.

The butler spoke with due respect. "Sir, Mr. Michael recently assigned someone new to Dorsey International to be your assistant. He forgot to mention it earlier and sent me here to inform you. Also, he insisted that you are not to dismiss this person."

Who could this new person be that required Michael's personal attention?

Max nodded slightly. When he drove to Dorsey International and saw the woman who appeared on the top floor, his brow furrowed ever so slightly.

His new assistant was a woman with a passing resemblance to Brielle. If Sydney had merely copied Brielle's dress sense, then this woman had captured Brielle's essence. Her every gesture, combined with the resemblance, could easily be mistaken for Brielle's under the dim lighting.

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She was Michael's plant. Michael had not explicitly stated it, but Max understood the implication. As part of the deal to settle the brawl with Andrew, this woman had to be by Max's side as his secretary.

remain

Max was not one to be provoked by such tactics. His gaze lingered on her for a moment before he entered his office.

The woman respectfully stood at the entrance, not following in, but consulting with the people about the other procedures here.

These people all knew Brielle, but

Brielle had been fired. Before, there was a Sydney, who deliberately came to the top level to wander around, but she has recently disappeared. It was said that her family had reported to the police and Dorsey International had also helped to find her, but they had not been able to find her.

Now there's another one who looked so much like Brielle and had a similar

temperament to Brielle, which seemed a little aloof.

People who were used to the genuine

were not fond of the counterfeit, and they initially, thought this womann was like Sydney, just an Imitator. However, after spending just two hours with her, everyone found that her abilities were very strong, even far surpassing. others.

Upon asking, it turned out that she was a Harvard graduate and a master's degree holder at a young age.

Chapter 650

She felt the wound on her arm twinge again. It had been hastily bandaged, but the news she received first thing in the morning soured her mood. Still, she didn't head into Dorsey International, opting instead to call Max.

At that moment, Max was in the middle of a meeting, with Annie and Patrick standing just behind him. One was an assistant and the other a secretary. Both were there to keep a pulse on his schedule.

When Brielle's personalized ringtone sounded, the frost in Max's brows softened, a hint of warmth flickering in his eyes. He gestured for a pause in the meeting and stepped out onto a small balcony with his phone in hand.

The executives refrained from gossip, instead whispering among themselves about the current project.

Annie glanced curiously at Max's retreating figure, unable to resist asking Patrick, "Who's Max on the phone with?"

Patrick's expression remained unchanged, his response strictly professional, "It's the Mr. Dorsey's girlfriend."

He didn't know whether Michael had given Annie any special assignments or if she was just that good at playing her role so far, she hadn't slipped up

"Max has a girlfriend now?" Surprise flickered in Annie's eyes, followed by a light chuckle, "That explains it."

Max was only away for a few minutes. When he returned, his face was once again a mask of indifference, and he signaled for the executives to continue their reports.

Annie saw Max reach for a document and moved forward respectfully to help him. Max had never interacted with Patrick in such a manner during a meeting, so he was taken aback when her hand brushed against his. Their hands met awkwardly as both reached for the same paper.

Annie quickly withdrew her hand. "I apologize, Max. I was out of line."

If it had been any other woman, such close contact with Max would have surely elicited excitement. But Annie's reaction was calm, an accidental touch, nothing

more.

Annie and Brielle were too similar. Even the other executives at the table were momentarily taken aback. This new assistant bore an uncanny resemblance to Brielle.

Max's expression darkened, feeling as if the skin Annie touched was now tainted. In the silence, a disinfectant wipe was offered to him. Annie's demeanor was still respectful. "I've heard you're a bit of a germaphobe, Max. I'm sorry for that, and I'll be more careful

next time."

With her apology so plainly stated, what could Max say in response? He frowned but didn't take the wipe, instead allowing the executives to continue their report.

When he didn't accept it, Annie tossed the disinfectant wipe into the nearby trash can and resumed her position behind him.

After the meeting, Max retreated to his office and meticulously cleaned his hands with disinfectant wipes.

Patrick watched from the side, feeling a bit queasy himself. But the truth was, Annie hadn't done anything wrong, so there was no ground for reprimand. She was simply performing her secretarial duties with due diligence.

As Max almost scrubbed his hand raw, Patrick cautiously interjected, "The project team is waiting for the afternoon files. They need your signature."

Max paused his cleaning and opened the nearby folder with a heavy brow. Once he finished reviewing the documents, the HR Director walked in to report on this quarter's personnel movements. But as soon as he opened the door, the chill inside made him shiver. With no choice but to enter, he braced himself and stepped in.

The HR Director was among the first to know about Max and Brielle's relationship, often seizing opportunities to sing Brielle's praises in front of Max. As someone skilled in interpersonal dealings, his insights were sharper than a sieve.

He caught sight of the iris flower at the end of the scarf around Max's neck and quickly offered a smile, asking, Where did you get that scarf? My wife tasked me with buying her a scarf as a gift, but she hasn't been pleased with any of my choices. Do you know if the women's version of your scarf is also sold?"

Patrick overheard from the side and thought to himself, "Clever as always, old

fox!"

Sure enough, the gloomy cloud on Max's face broke, a smile shining through. They don't

sell these in stores."

His voice was filled with tenderness. He had the scarf washed and cared

for daily. With spring on the horizon, it seemed he would be wearing it for some time to come.

"So someone made it for you? They must be quite the craftsperson."

With a subtle turn of phrase, the HR Director steered the compliment back to

Brielle.