

## Master 671

### Chapter 671

Tessa flung herself into Andrew's arms the moment she saw him, her voice tinged with urgency. "Andrew, let's go home. I don't want to stay here anymore."

She had been truly terrified, afraid that Andrew would vanish again, afraid he would take Aubree upstairs to some sleazy hotel room. Thankfully, he came back.

Jaired was nursing a glass of whiskey, his eyes scanning the empty space behind Andrew as he asked, "Where's your sister? Didn't Tessa say you were chatting with her?"

A tremor of rage quaked through Andrew's chest, his frustration threatening to break free. He yanked Tessa close and stormed out of the VIP lounge without a word.

Tessa tasted blood in her mouth, a bitter reminder of how quickly Andrew could discard her whenever Aubree was around. He left her alone and spent what felt like an eternity with her rival. What had they talked about?

Her teeth chattered with rage. Ever since the downfall of the Rowland family, she had been too scared to contact anyone else. Andrew was her only sanctuary from being outcast by their social circle.

She was haunted by nightmares where Andrew chose Aubree, who pitied her with those sympathetic and patronizing eyes.

Tessa forced back the metallic taste of blood. She wouldn't allow that scenario to play out, not even in death. She would be with Andrew no matter what.

Tonight was the night. Once they got home, she'd make sure to take their relationship to the next level. Then Andrew would never leave her. After all, she was untouched, while Aubree was nothing but a cast-off, someone people slept with and discarded! Andrew would surely choose Tessa.

With that thought, Tessa masked her resentment with weakness, nestling vulnerably into

Andrew's embrace.

Andrew watched their reflection in the elevator's polished metal walls. The shadows of his rage, jealousy, and anger seemed to tear at each other, burning inside him.

Four.

He scoffed. They had been apart less than a month, and she had already been with three other men. The thought disgusted him. He would never touch Aubree again.

He took a deep breath but could feel his hand, the one holding Tessa, trembling with unrestrained fury. Every muscle in his body tensed.

Tessa, wrapped in his arms, felt the storm of emotions raging within him. She bit down hard, holding him even tighter. Just one more night, and she would sleep with Andrew.

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Back in the lounge.

Jaired, feeling lost, turned to Kenzo, who appeared nonchalant on the couch, "Did I say something wrong?"

Cradling a glass of bourbon, Kenzo shook his head slowly, prompting Jaired's curiosity. "Did you see Andrew's head wound? I heard he ripped off the bandages and came straight here. His hands were stained with blood, too. I'm worried he might've run into Max, and they fought again."

Kenzo showed no concern. His jacket was discarded nearby, revealing a camel-colored sweater. He'd been completely indifferent, even as Tessa wept and wailed within these walls, not offering a single word of solace.

He was like a lone rose, untouched by the chaos around him. His tall, lean figure lounged on the sofa, exuding a lazy, gentle vibe.

Next to him, Jaired looked like a thorn, all rough edges and tension.

Jaired propped his head on his hand. "Kenzo, you seem curious about nothing. I'm talking about Andrew being back in the hospital and his injuries looking worse. Aren't you the least bit curious if Max was behind it? Andrew stormed out of the hospital tonight and must've been furious. That must've opened his wound again, right?"

Of the four, Jaired considered himself to be quite composed. But no one could outdo Kenzo's stoicism. Different from Max's coldness, Kenzo was just smoldering.

Kenzo offered a wry smile, his hands idle. "Did you invite Max?"

"No, but I saw his car. He must be somewhere around here tonight."

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Kenzo leaned back, his tone mild. "Andrew got hit by Aubree. If Max had laid a

hand on him, the whole town would've known by now."

Just like their public brawls, Andrew wasn't the type to let things slide. His silence meant it was Aubree who had struck.

Jaired chuckled, scratching at his

buzz cut, about to comment when O

Max pushed through the door. He NO

wasn't in his usual suit but wore a

different colored coat paired with a

matching scarf

Jaired let out a "damn" so loud he

nearly sprang from the sofa. He rubbed his eyes, making sure he wasn't seeing things. Max, the guy who seemed to be born in a suit, was actually dressed down, and Jaired was visibly shocked.

Kenzo's reaction was muted, his

gaze resting on the scarf. Under the dim light, the pattern was hard to discern, but it's clear that the hands that crafted that scarf were skilled, and

the pattern woven into it was exquisite.

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Kenzo's gaze lingered for a moment before he looked away.

Max was sitting next to Jaired, who couldn't resist the urge to fiddle with the scarf around Max's neck. "Have I ever seen you wear one of these things before?"

Jaired's hand hadn't even reached out before Max swatted it away. Another crisis had just been averted, and Jaired could feel the tension in the air as if another bomb was about to go off.

Max was in a foul mood, and it was as if a chilling aura surrounded him. Jaired felt as though he might be cut by the icicles emanating from Max and instinctively retracted his hand, his fingers curling up slightly.

"What's with you guys tonight, all acting like you're on edge? Just now, Andrew was outside going off at his sister, then came in looking like he was ready to commit murder, and you're not far off from that state either."

Max took off his coat, carefully placing his scarf on top of it with a deliberate gesture. Beneath the coat, he wore a suit, clearly having just finished some business negotiation. He casually unfastened his cufflinks and tossed them onto the couch.

Jaired was tempted to ask about the deal Max had been working on, but sensing his bad mood, he decided against asking and getting an earful.

Jaired's phone rang. He pressed the answer button, and his brain exploded with urgency. It was Tessa again. He grabbed Max. "To the parking lot! Something's happened to

Andrew!"

Max's eyelashes fluttered. He had known Andrew for years, and despite their differences, they never completely cut ties. Hearing that Andrew was in trouble, he followed Jaired to the parking lot without hesitation.

From a distance, they could hear Tessa's piercing screams and the sounds of a brawl. As Max and Jaired approached, they saw Andrew in the center of a scene with a dozen thugs on the ground, all groaning in pain.

Andrew's palms were dripping with blood, but he seemed oblivious to the pain.

These men had tried to harass Tessa.

It was Tessa who had called Jaired, worried that Andrew, in his current state, wouldn't be able to handle the thugs, who were skilled and ruthless, regardless of consequences.

The underground parking lot, connected to several entertainment venues, was a notorious hangout for troublemakers.

Jaired's scalp tingled with tension as he rushed forward and gave a final kick to one of the thugs. "Get lost! All of you, get lost! Are you blind or what?!"

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The thugs hadn't expected to meet such resistance and scrambled away. Both Jaired and Max could tell that Andrew was barely holding on. He had just been discharged from the hospital, his body still healing from injuries, and now he had taken down so many people. He was likely to pass out at any moment.

Sure enough, once the thugs had fled, a sweat broke out on Andrew's forehead, his eyes bloodshot as he tried to light a cigarette, hands shaking, but before he could get it lit, the cigarette was snatched away. He looked up, ready to lash out, only to find Max standing there. His irritation flared. "What are you doing here?"

Max tossed the cigarette into a nearby trash can, his brow furrowed in disapproval. "Looking for more trouble?"

Andrew couldn't help but laugh bitterly, reaching out to grab Max's collar. Max glanced at the blood on Andrew's hand with disdain and kicked him away. Andrew landed with a thud on the hood of a car behind him.

Damn Max and his high horse!

Jaired glanced at Tessa, still teary-eyed, and couldn't suppress a chuckle. "You two are getting married in a few days, and the news is already out. Do you want your bride to walk down the aisle with swollen

eyes? Doesn't Tessa have health issues? With your constant brawling, she'll end up back in the hospital worried sick about you."

Andrew's sense of reason returned, and he fell silent.

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The parking lot grew quiet. Tessa walked over and hugged him tightly. Guilt welled up Andrew's heart. Tessa was infinitely better than Aubree. At least she didn't aggravate him. He got to his feet and glanced at the security cameras, then called the police to have the thugs locked up for a few days.

Jaired noticed Andrew's bleeding hands and sighed. "Do you need to go to the hospital?"

Andrew was already getting into his car. "No need, I'll take Tessa home. You guys

go up and have a drink. Don't worry about me."

Jaired and Max stood still, noticing the bloodstains on the steering wheel, both

with furrowed brows. But the car had already driven off.

Jaired turned to see Kenzo, his

fingers pinching a cigarette, standing at a distance. He couldn't help but

throw an arm around Kenzo's

shoulders. "You're the calmest one of

us. Even Max landed a kick on

Andrew."

Kenzo rarely smoked, but now he snuffed out his cigarette. "Are we going back

up?"

No one felt like drinking anymore, but

their belongings were still in the returned to

private room. When

the room Maxon darkened

immediately. His coat, scarf, and

cufflinks were all missing. Jaired's

phone and Kenzo's coat had

vanished as well.



Jaired burst into laughter out of sheer frustration, his teeth bared in anger.

"This is Tequila Sunset, isn't it? How could someone have the nerve to steal here? They must be looking for trouble."

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The manager of Tequila Sunset was contacted, and he scrambled to pull up the surveillance footage. However, there were no cameras inside the private suites, so all they could see was a shadowy figure entering a suite and leaving with a bag in hand.

The manager felt a chill run down his spine and cursed under his breath. How could this slick thief steal from three VIPS in one go?

Tequila Sunset might require membership for entry, but they allowed all members to bring their male and female companions. Considering this place was a veritable gold mine, it's no surprise it's caught the eye of top-level thieves in the past. Loss is not a new concept here. But losing clothes? That's unheard of. And to top it off, we're not talking about any average clothing item, we're talking about a tiny, hand-knitted scarf.

Jaired was almost ready to write it off as bad luck, but Max's icy voice came through, "Find them." That meant they were going to chase this down to the end.

Jaired was puzzled. Thieves bold enough to target Tequila Sunset typically had strong anti-surveillance skills. If something were lost, the lounge would usually reimburse the original price, and no one would bother pursuing the matter, but Max seemed to take a particular interest in this.

"Max, your coat, scarf, and cufflinks, all together, are worth what, a few million?" Jaired tried to reason.

A cold glint passed through Max's eyes as he insisted to the manager, "Find them."

The manager jumped, feeling as if a mountain was crushing down on his head, and quickly acknowledged the order. "Don't worry, Max, we'll notify all the staff right away."

Max's eyelashes fell. He was silent for a moment before he spoke in a hoarse whisper, "I don't care about the rest. Get the scarf back to me."

The manager bowed even lower, assuming the scarf was studded with hundreds of diamonds or some other rare collectible. He wasted no time in alerting the staff to find it.

Brielle's suite was notified that an important guest had lost a valuable collectible. They were asked to remain in their rooms to avoid any misunderstanding. Brielle's eyebrow arched at the commotion Tequila Sunset was making. This important guest must've been quite significant.

Aubree still hadn't returned/Brielle frowned and was about to call when Dustin stood up, taking a gift box from the side.

"Bri, I'm stepping out for a smoke, and while I'm at it, I'll bring your friend back. With your status, you should stay here with him," Dustin offered.

As the CEO of Infinity Brilliance, Dustin could wander around without raising suspicion of

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being a thief, but Brielle's status might not afford her the same luxury, especially since the missing item was a top-tier collectible, supposedly priceless. She couldn't afford to cross swords with Tequila Sunset just yet.

Dustin grabbed the gift box, a cigarette between his fingers, and stepped out. He intended to find a smoking area, but as he passed by the suite at the end of the hallway, he spied through the small window in the door and saw Aubree sitting alone. Raising an eyebrow, he opened the door and walked in.

The suite was dimly lit, and he heard the sound of sobbing.

Dustin's initial teasing words caught in his throat as he sat down beside her. "Hiding out here to lick your wounds? Or did you run into your heartbreaker and get wounded by a few harsh words?"

He hit the nail on the head, noticing Aubree's stiff, trembling posture. Dustin's eyes narrowed, recalling Ricardo's mention of a desensitization test. Was Aubree always this fearful of men?

When Andrew had pushed her towards him before, she had managed to kiss him with composure, hadn't she? What on earth had happened in such a short time?

"Bri's worried about you. Let's go back."

Aubree was barely able to stand, but then she saw a gift box placed before her. "Maybe a gift will cheer you up?"

Aubree looked down, wiping the tears from her face, and rasped, "Thanks, Mr. Lynch, but you should take it back."

Dustin raised an eyebrow and

opened the gift box. Inside was a

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giant diamond, just like the one he'd

given to Brielle. He was honestly just tossing these things around like - playthings.

"Seriously? Is there a woman out there who could refuse a diamond?"

His words were genuine. Usually, such gifts brought joy, screams, and

a night of passion with his

companions.

Aubree broke into laughter at his

words, but as she laughed, her face turned pale once more. The diamond was pristine and pure, and she felt undeserving.

She thought someone like her was only fit to receive wildflowers as gifts.

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She lowered her eyes and pushed the gift box across the table. "Thanks, Mr. Lynch, but! don't have any use for this."

Rising to her feet, a wave of dizziness swirled through her head, nearly sending her crashing to the ground. Dustin caught her, his instinct to call Brielle, but Aubree stopped him, "Don't bother Bri with this. Let's not add to her troubles."

As she spoke, a sour sting pricked the tip of her nose, and tears threatened to fall

once

more.

"I haven't done anything wrong, and I just don't understand why things turned out this way. Maybe I was too greedy and always believed that if I just waited, he would notice me. That when he got tired, he would come back."

Maybe Andrew wasn't tired yet and still had the energy to tangle with her, but she had grown weary first. She really didn't want to see Andrew again. His words were like poison, and she refused to endure his cutting remarks any longer. Aubree pushed away the hand Dustin offered, her tone self-deprecating, "Mr. Lynch, I'll be able to walk on my own. There's no need to dirty your hands."

Dustin stood still, his eyes losing their luster at her words. "I'll call Bri. I won't mention you're upset and just say that I'm seeing you home."

In her current state, Aubree might collapse halfway and get took advantage of.

"Thanks, Mr. Lynch." Aubree leaned against the nearby wall, covering her face with her hands, her whole being exuding utter defeat.

When Brielle got the call, she was ready to leave, but just then, the door to the private room swung open, revealing an employee from Tequila Sunset.

First, with utmost politeness, they explained the situation. Tonight's drinks were on the house, but they needed to conduct a thorough search of the VIP room because a guest had lost something very valuable.

The clientele of Tequila Sunset were usually rich or famous, and this incident tonight was bound to offend many. To compel Tequila Sunset to risk such offense in search of an item indicated its immense value.

Brielle wasn't offended by the intrusion. After the search was over, they brought in a bottle of wine worth tens of thousands as compensation.

Staring at the bottle on the coffee table, Brielle chuckled. "Ricardo, who lost their stuff? They're making such a fuss. What did they lose, the royal seal?"

Tequila Sunset was comping drinks for every private room and even providing a bottle of expensive wine as compensation. The loss must be in the millions. Yet Tequila Sunset's

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staff carried out their task without flinching, clearly under the orders of some very

Important guest.

Brielle's room had been searched, and they were free to go. Brielle was at Tequila Sunset to accompany Aubree. With her gone, there was no reason to stay. She handed the bottle to Ricardo. "Take it home and enjoy."

Ricardo was stunned. "Is it okay to take this?"

Seeing his surprised expression, Brielle sighed. This kid probably hadn't been to such places before nor sipped such fine wine. "This is worth a pretty penny. It'd be a waste not to drink it. Take it. There's no rule against taking the drinks home."

Ricardo nodded, and a genuine smile was on his face. "Thank you, Ms. Haywood."

His smile was pure, and it lifted Brielle's spirits. She ruffled his hair affectionately

- he was like a little brother to her.

Following the staff's directions, they made their way to the first floor. As Brielle was about to get into her car, she caught a glimpse of Max's new secretary. She was wrapped in a scarf and busy on a phone call. "I don't want to stay here as a secretary either. I'll find a way back soon and explain everything to Max. He doesn't want me to leave for now, and I don't

know why, but I will handle it as quickly as I can

Brielle's gaze fixed on the scarf

around Annie's neck. She knew it well because she had knitted it herself. Even the iris at the end of the scarf

was identical to the one she had

made for Max.

Max had given away the scarf she had made.

A chill settled in Brielle's eyes as she

watched the woman get into a car, her voice light and airy, seemingly E unaware of Brielle's presence.

Brielle stood motionless, feeling the night's chill creeping up from the soles of her

feet, spreading coldly to the crown of her head.

She hoped she was mistaken.

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Ricardo stood behind her, watching as she seemed lost in thought. He couldn't help but ask, "Ms. Haywood, are you worried about something you saw online?" Brielle shook her head, her complexion a bit off. "I'll take you home."

"It's okay. You don't have to. Someone's coming for me."

With no choice but to feign composure, Brielle flashed him a weak smile. "Alright, then I'm off."

Ricardo nodded at her, cradling the bottle of wine in his arms as if it were a precious treasure.

After Brielle left, the car that Annie had been sitting in mysteriously reappeared, pulling up in front of Ricardo. As soon as Ricardo got in, Annie engulfed him in a bear hug. "Ricky, I've missed you so much!"

He gently pushed her away, his brow furrowed in annoyance. "Miss Annie, what do you want with that scarf?"

Annie took off the scarf, placed it aside, and let out a sigh. "I'm on a little mission, which is way more fun than offing someone. Ricky, why are you hanging around Brielle?"

Wrapping an arm around his, her eyes sparkled with excitement. "How about we go out and have some fun?"

Ricardo stared at her face, scrutinizing it for a long while. "It's been ten years, Miss Annie. You and Ms. Haywood could be twins."

Annoyed by the repeated comparison, Annie waved it off. "Forget about her. It's because of this face that I could strike a deal with Michael. Ricky, your skills are as sharp as ever. There's no mission you can't complete, no prize you can't nab. Heh."

Resting against the car seat, Ricardo frowned impatiently. Annie was just as noisy as a child, and that hadn't changed.



Noticing his silence, Annie stopped talking and carefully tugged at his sleeve. Ricardo just held the wine bottle, and ignored her.

Annie sighed and pulled out candy from her purse, popping it into her mouth.

"You're still like a kid, Miss Annie."

Her face lit up when he finally spoke. "Why are you with Brielle? Come with me instead."

"I'll come back when I'm bored." He stepped out of the car, still holding the wine bottle. Annie was reluctant to let him go and tried to follow him, but Ricardo pushed her back. She put the window down, her eyes pleading. "Ricky, if I take care of Brielle for you, will you come back then?"

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Murray was driving the car and tensed up, wary of Ricardo's potential reaction. But Ricardo just stood there, his tone casual. "Are you trying to take my toy?"

Annie's face darkened. She settled back into her seat, her eyes downturned in disappointment. "I get it. I'll wait for you."

After the window closed, Murray consoled her, "Miss, he's always been like that. Don't be

sad.

Annie crossed her arms, gazing outside with a heavy look. Glancing at the scarf, she grabbed it in a fit of anger and tore it apart before setting it on fire with a lighter. The car filled with flames, but neither of

them seemed to care. When the fire grew larger, Murray stopped the car amidst the gasps of bystanders.

Annie seemed amused. "This is fun."

"Miss, I'm glad you had fun, but let's go before we draw Max's attention. Michael wouldn't want you to reveal your true nature so soon. Better to be careful."

Annie pouted. "I hate Brielle. One day, I'll get rid of her!"

"Miss, when Ricky's done with her, I'll deliver her to you as a pet."

"You're the best."

Their conversation was always so chillingly straightforward, referring to Brielle as nothing more than a plaything.

Meanwhile, Brielle's car was parked in the courtyard of the Premier Palace.

Wesley heard the engine and stepped outside, and his face lit up at the sight of

her. "Ms. Brielle."

She looked a bit pale but managed a smile.

"Ms. Brielle, I've made some soup."

"Wesley, it's not necessary. I'm just tired and want to sleep."

Wesley sighed, instructing someone to bring her a soothing glass of warm milk.

Brielle retreated to her bedroom, lying

in bed, haunted by the scenes she'd witnessed last night and the scann from this evening. She tried to comfort herself, believing it was all her imagination, just drunken hallucinations. She resolved to ask Max directly when he returned.

But then she had lost the rosary, and her lips twisted into a bitter smile.

She waited until 3 a.m., dark circles

but

forming under her eyes, but Maxm bbey came A bill swept over her

body, and she couldn't shake the

feeling of dread.

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At six in the morning, she left the Premier Palace and made her way to Stellar Stage Entertainment. There were paparazzi camped out at the entrance of Stellar Stage Entertainment. Catching sight of her, they shouldered their cameras and moved in.

"Brielle, word has it you're the new head honcho at Stellar Stage Entertainment. How'd you land the top spot?"

"Is it true you've got a little something-something going on with Director John?" "Did you know Director Amelia blasted you on social media last night?"

This was Brielle's first close-up with the entertainment industry's hounds, and she was out of her comfort zone. Despite running on no sleep and with a head full of clutter, she faced these questions with a stoic expression, addressing the cameras. "Director Amelia might want to keep her phone lines clear because she'll soon be receiving a subpoena for spreading rumors. I'd advise some caution in her statements as she is a public figure."

With that, she pushed past the microphones and headed inside.

"Brielle, cut the act! You've been trending before! When you were a director at Dorsey International, rumors swirled that you climbed the ladder by cozying up to a string of men, and that's why you got demoted to Stellar Stage Entertainment."

Brielle stopped in her tracks and turned to face the male reporter who had spoken. He had a weaselly look about him, the type who thrived on stirring the pot.

"Who says I cozied up to a bunch of men? Got any proof?" She crossed her arms, her

brow firm with confidence.

"Or is it because of my looks that people think that's the only way I could gel to where I am? My track record at Dorsey International is crystal clear. Since I started there, I've handled at least thirty major mergers and acquisitions involving billions of dollars. I've been at the top of the performance reviews every year. As for cozying up to men, do you care to give specifics? Or do you mean to say that an attractive and competent woman can only have gotten ahead on her looks?"

Brielle deftly shifted the focus, turning the question into an issue of gender bias, which immediately stirred the female reporters.

"Wasn't there a report that said she aced her college entrance exams and was top of her class at Beaconsfield College?"

"That's right, and she represented Dorsey International at international auctions abroad while she was still quite young, rubbing shoulders with the North American moguls. Everyone saw that live broadcast. She was quite self-assured."

The female reporters exchanged glances, their demeanor softening.

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"Ms. Brielle, are you really going to sue Amelia?"

By now, Brielle had entered the lobby and glanced at her phone. "Sorry, folks, if you're

looking for an interview, please schedule a time. I'm not a celebrity. I've got a

meeting to attend. Any other questions can be directed to our PR department, who will arrange a press conference. Also, I've just secured a collaboration with Mr. Kenzo, and Stellar Stage Entertainment is looking to bring even better content to our audience soon, so stay tuned."

The mere mention of Kenzo made the crowd seem as though they'd been struck dumb. Stellar Stage had snagged the rights to a Kenzo script?

That was unbelievable. Countless

companies had been shut out trying to collaborate with Kenzo, Kenzo, who m

penned more than two scripts a year. His latest project had been fiercely coveted. Yet, Stellar Stage Entertainment had quietly secured the rights.

Brielle offered a warm smile, her aloof aura melting away. "See you next time."

Those who'd come with an agenda to smear her felt a sudden warmth at her smile. Everyone loved to see cute girls.

By the time they snapped out of it, Brielle was already ascending in the elevator. As the elevator doors closed, the smile faded from Brielle's

face, and she listened in silence to the sound of its ascent.

As soon as she reached the top floor, she received a call from Mason. The company, Book, had thrown down the gauntlet. They had to come up with a counterstrategy this month.

Brielle felt a wave of irritation. "I'm

aware. Book's project is being spear who probably wants to take a big bite out of us with a major news sto

they're stirring up trouble." The

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"Hey Brielle, are you tight with the folks over at Dorsey International?"

Mason, a tech wiz through and through, didn't bother with online gossip and was even less interested in Brielle's personal life. He'd only reach out to Brielle for work-related matters, spending most of his time at the company's overseas branches.

"Yeah, send the latest updates to my computer, and let's set up a meeting for later."

Mason didn't hang up, and Brielle thought he had something more to say. He then asked, "How's Tiffanie doing? Is she busy?"

Brielle paused, "When's the last time you saw her?"

Mason's face turned a shade of crimson, and he awkwardly ruffled his hair. "Well, she came over to see me, and, uh, after we... you know... she left. That was about ten days ago."

His stammering made it clear that he found the topic rather embarrassing. Brielle fell silent. She had never disclosed the relationship between the two, and now it was even harder to speak up.

Mason took a deep breath, ready to face the embarrassment. "I don't know if I did something wrong. She's not been answering my calls lately. Could you call her and check. in when you're free?"

"Sure, I'll check up on her." After hanging up, Brielle rubbed her temples and walked into her office, feeling exhausted. She called Donny in and set herself up with an online public account, listing her position as President of Stellar Stage Entertainment.

The account was quickly approved, and most artists from Stellar Stage Entertainment followed her promptly.

Brielle found Amelia's tweet, which blatantly criticized her for her lack of decorum. She retweeted it with a comment. [Don't delete this. Wait for the court summons.]

The night before, Brielle hadn't paid any mind to the news online or checked her phone. She was preoccupied with the memory of Annie wearing the scarf and the fact that Max hadn't come home, leaving her feeling anxious and unsettled.

And now, she had to deal with a challenge from her opponent so early in the morning. Her features sharpened with determination, and she took the opportunity to arrange a meeting with Tiffanie to discuss both Amelia and Mason.

Once Brielle's account was verified and she retweeted Amelia's post, she instantly drew the attention of many online users.

"Is that the real Brielle? This a new account, right?"

"That's a verified tag: the CEO of Stellar Stage Entertainment. The media was hounding her earlier, so it must be her."

"Talk about bold. Amelia's fans are gonna have a field day with this."

Indeed, Brielle was lambasted by the public. Firstly, she wasn't a celebrity with a massive fanbase, and the artists from Stellar Stage Entertainment who followed her didn't pack much punch. Secondly, Amelia was well-connected with numerous stars whose fans numbered in the millions. So, Brielle's blunt response led to her trending online amid a barrage of insults.

After posting, Brielle let her lawyers handle the legal side of things and moved

on.



By noon, Tiffanie showed up, still sporting her trendy look, complete with sleeve tattoos. Chewing gum, she looked around Brielle's office and commented, "This place is way less fancy than Dorsey International."

Brielle put down her pen and asked, "Why aren't you taking Mason's calls?"

Tiffanie stopped her chewing for a moment, sensing a tone in Brielle's voice that eerily resembled Maxie's. It must've been her imagination.

"It's just, once you've had your fun, the thrill's gone."

What a heartbreaker!

"I hear you're planning to push Aubree into showbiz. How aboutn me?" Tiffanie seerned to have brushed off Mason as she eagerly awaited Brielle's opinion.

Brielle took a moment before frowning. "Are you playing with his feelings?"

"He's too serious. It's boring." Tiffanie looked down. She was slightly afraid of people who

were too earnest.

"Tiffanie," Brielle called her out, "not everyone is an Everett or Victoria."

But Tiffanie steered clear of that

topic, shifting the conversation. "You didn't call me here just for this did

you? Is it about that Amelia thing? I E have friends who know her. She's quite the party animal for her age. She was in a friend's VIP room and took home two guys in one night."

Brielle rubbed her forehead, allowing Tiffanie to dodge the Mason issue. "Got any

proof?"

Tiffanie leaned in, her smile growing.

"Maxie's been down lately, and m

didn't get a chance to shake him down for some cash. You're gonna help me out, right?"

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Max's name made the strained smile on Brielle's face faded. She picked up a check. "I'm not rolling in cash like he is-there's only ten million here."

"That's plenty." With a flick of her wrist, Tiffanie toyed with the USB drive in her hand, her expression cocky. "Don't worry, that old hag's news will blow up the trending searches. soon enough."

She referred to Amelia as an "old hag," though in truth, Amelia was quite well- preserved and was the only female director of note who had won awards. She had her fair share of aspiring male actors willing to hook up with her to advance their careers.

As John had once revealed, it was Amelia's promiscuity that was her downfall. When John caught her red-handed, she worried he would go public with the news, so she preemptively concocted a story of John being abusive and unfaithful, casting herself entirely as the victim.

Over the years, Amelia had crafted a successful public persona. Society had a soft spot for strong, independent women. In the public eye, Amelia was a woman who had been dealt a bad hand in love,

but had risen from the ashes of her divorce to carve out her own successful path. She'd even become a vocal advocate for women's issues on social media, preaching about financial independence, independent thought, education, and more. She'd even boldly claimed that she was done with men for life.

If Amelia hadn't built up a public image of fearing men, then the video wouldn't have fazed her. As a single, wealthy woman, a fling with a handsome man would have been merely a private indiscretion. But she had built this image, and was claiming to be done with men while secretly calling in not one but two male escorts for the night. It was the height of hypocrisy.

Brielle knew she could trust Tiffanie with this matter, as she had connected in all sorts of places and always managed to unearth something surprising.

As Tiffanie stood to leave, Brielle couldn't help but think of Mason and gave her a gentle reminder. "Mason's serious about you."

Mason was a tech geek who had spent most of his life buried in books and technology, hardly ever interacting with women. A naive soul like him was no match for Tiffanie's charms, and he'd fallen for her quickly. But Tiffanie's upbringing had been so different from Mason's that she couldn't bring herself to trust men, let alone believe in love. The more serious Mason got, the more Tiffanie pulled away.

A complex look flickered in Tiffanie's eyes, and she pulled out a cigarette, lighting it up right there. "Brielle, don't worry about me and Mason," she said.

Brielle knew Tiffanie smoked. Her form was practiced and effortless-a clear sign of years of habit.

1/2

11:38

I'm off then. By the afternoon, Amelia's scandal will be all over the news. Later.

Tiffanie's cigarette wasn't the harsh kind. It had a sweet, fruity aroma. She took a few puffs and then tossed it in the trash. Brielle shook her head resignedly.

After finishing up with Stellar Stage Entertainment's paperwork, she called over Donny and handed him Kenzo's script. "Take a look at this, and pick out some suitable actors from Stellar Stage. Remember, they have to be a good fit. This is a solid script, and we can't afford any casting mistakes."

Donny's hands trembled with excitement, his eyes even misting over. This was Kenzo's work. Anyone in showbiz knew his name. His scripts were typically reserved for top-tier directors, and now Donny had the chance to handle one, maybe even cast one of his talents in it. This was no pie in the sky-it was the whole bakery!

"But Ms. Haywood," Donny interjected. "John's tied up with his own projects. Who's going to direct this one?"

Brielle's brow furrowed. "Doesn't Stellar Stage have any directors?"

"There are a few, but they're a bit... peculiar. Still, with Kenzo's script, I'm sure they'll want to take charge. It's just that they might not be too keen on casting a newcomer as the lead."

After all, a movie's cast was a guarantee of its box office potential. John's situation was unique. He had to work with two newcomers.

Brielle massaged her temples. "Just make sure I review the performance of whoever lands the lead role."

Donny's face lit up. "I'll go talk to the director right now!"

After wrapping up her morning tasks,

Brielle found herself with some downtime, idly checking her phone.

The busyness of Stellar Stage had filled her thoughts, but now, the scarf incident lingered in her mind. After much deliberation, she decided to visit Dorsey International at lunch.

Meanwhile, at Tequila Sunset...

The staff were pale, avoiding glances

with the icy figure within. Max sat

quietly in the VIP lounge with an unconscious Jaired beside him. Kenzo had already left for the day.

Chapter 679

A scarf had led to an all-night manhunt, but the thief might as well have vanished into thin air. Despite turning every private lounge inside out, there was no trace to be found. Moreover, there was a concurrent cyber attack on the surrounding security systems. This job was so slick it had to be the work of someone on the international most-wanted list.

The staff couldn't fathom what was so special about Mr. Dorsey's scarf that warranted such a massive uproar from the thieves. Could it possibly bear the secrets of Dorsey International's business strategies?

Everyone was baffled and on edge.

Max had been sitting on that couch all night, his eyes now half-closed, his thoughts a mystery to all. The rest of the room remained silent, not daring to speak.

"Go on. Get out," he said, his voice barely above a whisper, likely having given up on the scarf.

Those present felt a wave of relief wash over them as they shuffled out of the lounge, their bodies heavy with exhaustion.

The commotion stirred Jaired, who had been dozing off to the side. He stretched languidly and rubbed the sleep from his eyes. "Did you find it?" His voice was still rough with sleep.

Max was irritated and yanked at the tie around his neck, his usually impeccable composure now visibly disturbed.

"No."

Jaired was now fully awake. "It's just a scarf, right? Why all this fuss? You must've lost at least a hundred million just shooing away the guests last night. What kind of scarf costs that much? I heard the staff gossiping about it being covered in Dorsey International's business secrets."

Jaired was jesting, of course, knowing full well that no trade secrets would be woven into a scarf. But he was just as curious about what made this particular scarf so valuable.

Max was in a foul mood. He had taken such care of that scarf, having it cleaned and maintained daily, never expecting it to disappear after just a week of wear. His lips pressed into a thin line, but his expression softened slightly at the thought. "Brielle made it."

Jaired thought he'd misheard and froze, then dug a finger into his ear. "Say that again?"

A loss of a hundred million, alienating numerous guests, and having the staff at Tequila Sunset scour the place all night all came down to a scarf that was hand-knitted by Brielle.

Wasn't it just an ordinary scarf?

Jaired was in disbelief! He wanted to curse out loud but didn't know where to direct his anger, so he managed to blurt out, "Damn! Love is a real piece of work!"

Life seemed to be one foolish move after another, and love was a folly chased by two fools.

Utterly pointless.

After his outburst, Jaired kicked a table, regretting the wasted night in the lounge. Kenzo was right to have left early. He was likely enjoying a good night's sleep by

now.

Max said nothing, feeling the weight of several restless days, and as the lounge quieted down, he leaned back on the sofa and fell asleep.

Patrick entered, intending to report on a charred car that had been found with the remains of the scarf inside. Barely anything was left of it, unrecognizable from its original form. It might have been better if it hadn't been found at all.

The previous night's citywide electrical issues and surveillance interference meant no footage captured the thief's exit. Clearly, whoever was behind this had a strong motive, but Patrick couldn't puzzle out what they truly intended to steal. Was the scarf just a secondary prize, and had they stolen something far more valuable from someone else?

Seeing Max asleep, Patrick thought of exiting quietly but heard a hoarse voice ask, "Did you find it?"

"Yeah, it went up in flames with the car. Just a pile of ash left. It's no use to anyone now." Patrick thought Max had been sleeping, but he

was wide awake.

"Hmm." Max grunted, a pang of tightness/spreading across his chest.

"Why don't you go up to the penthouse suite to rest, sir?"

Rest was the last thing on Max's mind, as there was an unexplained silent treatment between him and Brielle; and now the missing scarf was left unaccounted for.

"Did you track the hacker from last night?" Which faction was it?

"We did, but they set up a dummy ID. We almost had them in less than ten seconds, but they retreated fast. All We know is they were in

Beaconsfield."

10:18

Keep digging:

Will do

Max rose, an icy aura enveloping him. Patrick followed, unsure of his next move. Orice in the car, he meant. to inquire further but instead

noted how Max leaned back, his neck arching slightly to reveal a stark Adam's



apple.

He looked aloof and unreachable, yet now tinged with a hint of desolation.

Chapter 680

Patrick's heart soured inexplicably as he thought about the possibility of a spat between the CEO and Ms. Brielle. The last thing he wanted was for them to be at odds.

Even in sleep, Max's brow was furrowed as if worries plagued his dreams.

Patrick was supposed to drive to

to Dorsey International, given that Max was a workaholic and would most likely want to head to the office at this hour. But seeing the dark circles under Max's eyes, Patrick took the liberty of steering the car towards Premier Palace instead.

Max was tall, and even though the car was spacious, it still seemed a snug fit for him as he dozed off.

"Sir, you should hit the hay on a proper bed," Patrick suggested.

Max slowly opened his eyes to the sight of Premier Palace, said nothing, and got out of the car.

Wesley approached, ready to mention Ms. Brielle's visit the previous evening. But noticing the chill surrounding Max and catching warning shake of the head from Patrick behind him, he promptly shut his mouth, sensing trouble.

Max went straight to his room, took a shower, and then lay down to rest. It was probably the first time since taking the helm at Dorsey International that he skipped a workday to sleep in the bedroom during broad daylight.

The bed still held Brielle's scent, as if she had just laid there the night before. Though exhausted, Max's sleep was elusive as her scent tickled his nose, making his eyelashes flutter.

He got up and went back into the bathroom, showering in cold water for an hour. It was winter, and the cold water was a stark awakening for his senses.

After the shower, he didn't leave the room but instead pondered when he might fall ill.

Max's constitution was robust. Despite a recent fever and a relentless work schedule, two hours under cold water didn't seem to induce sickness. His already pale complexion looked even worse. His aura was so icy it seemed it could lance those around him.

Meanwhile, Brielle had arrived at the top floor of Dorsey International. Stepping out of the elevator, she encountered Annie carrying a stack of papers. Annie did not recognize her and merely nodded politely.

For Brielle, stepping onto the top floor required a bit of courage, especially after the office had buzzed about her last encounter with

Max.

From the moment she entered Dorsey International, everyone, even the receptionist, recognized her face. As she entered the top floor, her colleagues cast curious glances. Those who had been slouching quickly straightened up as if the CEO's wife was inspecting them.

Oblivious to these subtleties, Brielle was about to enter Max's office when she saw Annie step in ahead of her.

Annie placed a cup of coffee on Max's desk and began arranging his papers. On seeing Brielle, surprise flickered through Annie's eyes. "Are you here for Mr. Dorsey? He's taking a nap and asked not to be disturbed," Annie said while continuing to tidy the desk.

Brielle watched Annie's practiced motions as she opened Max's drawers. This prompted Brielle to say, "his drawers." Even Patrick needed permission before delving into them.

esn't like others touching

Annie looked up with a smile. "I asked him, and he allowed me to. That's why I'm doing it."

Brielle felt a wave of discomfort, as anyone might when speaking to someone who looked so much like themselves. Although strictly speaking, Annie's face only bore a fifty percent resemblance to Brielle's.

As Brielle stood by the desk, she watched Annie continue to clean. Her fingertips were tense as if she were caressing a lover's body.

Annie, noting Brielle's continued presence, got irritated slightly. "Pa you need me to wake Mr. Dorsey? He didn't sleep last night and has just now laid down."

Her words implied that Max was in the resting room.

Annie's tone held no provocation. She was simply doing what a secretary should, leaving Brielle unable to act as she might with prying journalist.

Brielle wanted to say she'd wait, but

just then, the cleaning lady entered, apparently ready to disinfect Max's office. Max had a mild case of germaphobia, and his office was routinely disinfected every other day. Under these circumstances, Brielle couldn't stay and had to step out.

Annie followed her and couldn't help but ask, "I don't mean to offend, but may I

ask about your relationship with Max? You and I sort of

resemble each other."