

## Master 691

### Chapter 691

The silence on the other end of the line was palpable before the police officer let out a sigh. "Alright, we'll pass on your message to the girl."

It wasn't that Brielle was heartless. She was simply tired of society's leniency toward criminals. Every time a heinous act was committed, the public would delve into the perpetrator's backstory.

It was always, "Look, his folks had a rocky marriage. That's why he resented society."

"He grew up too poor to afford a decent meal. That's why he despised the wealthy."

"His wife cheated on him and ran off with his dough. That's why he targeted other women."

Crime is crime. The moment the student swung that rock, nothing else mattered.

After hanging up on the police, Brielle popped an antacid, changed her clothes, and prepared to tackle the uproar online.

In no time, public opinion had exploded. The doors of Stellar Stage

Entertainment were swarmed with fans blockading the entrance. Anyone who passed was pelted with trash.

Brielle couldn't abandon Stellar Stage Entertainment. Initially, it was merely a business deal with Michael, but those hopeful faces that trusted her deserved more than her cowering at home.

Besides, it was her decision to involve John, and she had drawn this hatred upon herself.

She quickly got ready. Her car was trashed, so she had no choice but to hail a cab outside. But as she stepped out, a young girl rushed towards her and dropped to her knees. "Ms. Brielle, I'm truly sorry, please forgive me. My family really can't afford this."

Brielle frowned, not recognizing the girl at first. Then the girl began to cry. "I didn't mean to smash your car. I'm truly sorry. Please don't ruin me, okay?"

Brielle's frown deepened. After a moment of confusion, her heart grew cold. Was this her way of asking for mercy?

Brielle's expression was icy as she looked down at the girl. "Pleading with me won't help."

"Ms. Brielle! I'm only seventeen. Are you really going to watch me die? How can you be so cruel?"

Brielle took a deep breath, her lips curling into a faint smile. "If you're still a student, then I suggest you go back to your teacher and learn some manners. Had you spoken from the heart today, I wouldn't have asked for a dime for that car. But you seem to plead while you threaten, and I will not agree. If you think your death will threaten me, then I have nothing to say and certainly won't stop you."

"Brielle! You're heartless! You'll get what's coming to you!"

After Brielle disappeared around the corner, the girl's tears vanished as she turned to the car parked nearby. "Did you get it? Is it all on tape?"

"We got it, we got it. Let's edit the footage and post it online."

The girl's face was smug. "Hmph, I'll not only smash her car, but I'll also make her beg me. That's the way to avenge Amelia!"

Ten minutes later, the edited video and dialogue hit the internet, quickly racking up over a million shares. Brielle's name was trending, followed by a barrage of insults.

The video showed the girl on her knees, crying and begging Brielle. Key parts of the conversation were omitted, making it highly unfavorable to Brielle.

"Please, don't ruin me, okay?"

"Pleading with me won't help."

"Ms. Brielle I'm only seventeen. Are you really going to watch me die?"

The stark contrast between the girl's pitiful cries and Brielle's Indifference was striking. One was kneeling, the other standing, as if the dignity and life of an ordinary girl were nothing but disposable trash.

Brielle was a monster!

Upon seeing the video, the enraged public swarmed Stellar Stage Entertainment, hurling rocks inside and causing the receptionist to scream in terror. Stellar Stage Entertainment and Brielle became targets of public outrage!

In the midst of this chaos, Amelia's lawsuit arrived, Unlike Brielle's empty threats, Amelia was a woman of action. Compared to Amelia's transparent and self-reliant nature, Brielle was nothing but despicable,

"Boycott Stellar Stage Entertainment!"

"Boycott all artists from Stellar Stage Entertainment!"

"Boycott John!"

Outside Stellar Stage Entertainment, the crowd chanted slogans, furiously waving their metaphorical pitchforks, ready to sentence Stellar Stage

Entertainment to its demise.

## Chapter 692

Brielle's taxi pulled up outside the towering edifice of Stellar Stage Entertainment to find a throng of people already crowding the entrance. Reporters were broadcasting live, their cameras pointed at the chaos. It was a blockade, utterly impenetrable.

The driver, catching sight of the bedlam, couldn't help but exclaim, "This

company's the devil incarnate, I tell ya. Heard the big boss is forcing some poor girl to her demise. Utterly wicked"

Brielle, masked to avoid recognition, had now realized that the situation with Stellar Stage Entertainment had gone citywide in no time. She had the driver circle the building, but everywhere was swamped with frenzied fans, held back only by the burly security guards who were preventing what seemed like an

imminent not.

Rubbing her temples, she resignedly gave the driver Tiffanie's address. As soon as they reached Tiffanie's apartment building. Brielle's phone began to ring. It was an unfamiliar number. A sense of foreboding washed over her. She hesitated before finally answering just as it was about to disconnect.

Michael's voice came through, terse and unamused. "It looks like you've messed up."

He was referring to her promise to skyrocket Stellar Stage Entertainment's performance within six months. The company's reputation was now in the gutter, worse than ever before.

Stellar Stage Entertainment used to be off the radar, but now it's the town pariah. Forget about profits. The stock's barely staying afloat.

"Brielle, you've lost." His tone was icy, but Brielle could detect a hint of pleasure. "I'll give you a sum of money. Leave Beaconsfield."

Already on edge from a spat with Max, Brielle's stubbornness surged at Michael's words. "Michael, the game isn't over yet."

He raised an eyebrow, his voice dripping with condescension, "Without Max, what chance do you have? Face it, Brielle, you and Max were never meant to be."

"If I were the type to accept my fate, I would've starved on the streets as a child. I've come this far because I never gave up.

Her tone was even, devoid of emotion. She paid the driver with cash from her purse and looked up at Tiffanie's residence.

"The universe hasn't settled yet, Michael. There's always uncertainty."

A chill flickered in Michael's eyes. He detested the defiance of those from the lower rungs of society. To him, the world's wealth and power belonged to the elite, and despite Brielle's tenacity, her origins were her shackles.

Economists termed the chances of social mobility as a measure of hope for the underprivileged. High mobility meant a chance for the poor, most people like Brielle clung to that hope. But in a stable, developing country, social mobility inevitably dwindled.

Beaconsfield was one such place where mobility was scarce, its resources and connections cemented within an exclusive circle. For Brielle to climb out of this quagmire was nigh impossible.

Michael had no more words to waste. "Stellar Stage Entertainment is under Dorsey International, and this mess won't leave us unscathed. We can handle the fallout if you step down now."

"I haven't lost yet, Michael." With that, Brielle hung up first.

Michael, staring into the silent phone, was shrouded in darkness. He managed to hold his composure and turned his attention back to the news on TV

When Brielle found Tiffanie, she was on her way out. Her face lit up at Brielle's arrival. "I was about to look for you. What's our next move?"

Brielle shrugged, "Give me the USB stick."

Tiffanie quickly handed it over, along

with her laptop. The video on the stick showed Arnelia, not as the iron lady she was known to be but cooing vile sweet nothings to two men clinging to her. Their conversation got more repulsive by the moment.

Brielle smirked. This footage was gold.

Tiffanie was pacing, anxious. "Do we release it now? Stellar Stage Entertainment's about to be torn apart

as it is!"

Instead of releasing it right away,

Brielle anonymously leaked a

message within Steak Stage Entertainment. [Looking to buy shares at \$50 a pop. Interested parties, get in touch.]

The number she left was foreign, free from local tracking, and untraceable to Mason. With the company's stock O plummeting, the offer was a godsend N for shareholders. Yet, some questioned the legitimacy of the deal. With Stellar Stage Entertainment in the eye of the storm, why would

anyone offer such a price for its shares? What was the buyer's angle?

Chapter 693

The offer of \$50 per share was simply irresistible Given the current

circumstances, the stocks of Stellar Stage Entertainment being held would soon become worthless paperweights. But if the current shareholders sold now, they could still pocket a tidy sum

Once the first shareholder reached out, others quickly followed.

Brielle sent a message to Mason, instructing him to get the funds ready. Mason was her most trusted ally. never one to question her choices. After all, their company had just completed a multi-billion dollar funding round. The amount Brielle needed was chump change in comparison.

In less than an hour, all shares of Stellar Stage Entertainment were snapped up by an enigmatic buyer, giving her complete control of the company.

The takeover happened so swiftly that by the time Michael wanted to intervene, it was already too late.

To call the mysterious buyer an opportunist was a stretch. They had offered a fair price, especially considering the stocks were on the brink of collapse. The timing was impeccable, leaving not a single shareholder indifferent.

With this mysterious entity holding absolute control, Dorsey International's influence over Stellar Stage Entertainment was now at the mercy of this new owner. A company wholly owned by one person didn't need to listen to anyone else's advice.

Tiffanie watched Brielle's maneuvers in stunned silence. She didn't know whether to call her bold or meticulous.

The outside world was in uproar-anyone else would've been scrambling to turn the tables by now. But not Brielle. Instead, she used this time to secure absolute control over Stellar Stage Entertainment.

Tiffanie watched her calmly making calls, arranging her next moves with a serene confidence in her eyes. For a moment, Tiffanie thought she was looking at Maxie.

If Brielle wasn't perfect for Maxie, then who was?

Maxie was the epitome of excellence in Tiffanie's eyes, beyond words. Brielle was equally outstanding. which made their relationship like a clash of titans, but even titans could have affection for one another. Even if they were to fall apart in the future, that would also be borne of affection.

Once they were together, no one else could come between them.

Tiffanie didn't interrupt Brielle's strategy session but continued to monitor the news online. She was nearly livid with anger. That girl who had kneeled to Brielle had made an account and was heaping

thanks on Amelia, claiming Amelia had covered her parents' medical bills and helped them through tough times. She was portraying Amelia as a saintly figure.

With this as a backdrop, the video circulating online made Brielle look monstrous.

That bitch! Tiffanie wished she could confront Amelia right then and there to give her a piece of her mind. She managed to contain her fury and, while Brielle wasn't looking, sneakily texted Maxie,

[Brielle's being dragged through the mud. Aren't you going to do something, Uncle?]

[Hmm.]

Tiffanie stared at the message, unsure if it meant he would intervene or not. Could they have had a fight?

But Brielle was working so hard for that so-called six-month agreement-how could Maxie fight with her HOW?

Tiffanie had to admit she was somewhat bewitched by Brielle's charm and secretly wished for such a woman to be her aunt-in-law.

[She's mad at me.] Clearly, if he intervened, Brielle might only grow angrier.

Tittanie had a whole spiel prepared to persuade him, but that message gave her pause.

People tread carefully because they care.

The online controversy was explosive, with Brielle's name

plastered all over the trending m searches. The crowd outside Stellar Stage Entertainment was growing, and the unruly among them

continued to pelt the building with stones.

The company had called the police, who were now present, but the angry mob showed no signs of dispersing

Inside, the Stellar Stage

Entertainment staff was on edge,

hoping against

Pepe that Briellem

would show up-she was their pillar,

their source of hope. But Brielle was nowhere to be seen, and the executives were out of the loop.

Some of the more timid ones had already started to cry.

"Why hasn't Ms. Haywood come yet? I...is she unaware?"

"Stop crying. Trust her. She'll have a plan," one tried to reassure.

"It's not that I don't trust her. It's just that I'm... scared."

The group was mostly young artists

who had chosen to stay with Stellar Stage Entertainment. Now, they all shared a bitter taste of fear.

They were young and unable to hide their worries. A heavy silence fell over them.

Ms. Haywood wouldn't abandon them, would she?

Chapter 694

The social media storm surrounding Stellar Stage Entertainment and

Beaconsfield College was a force to be reckoned with. Hundreds of thousands of comments bombarded the college's official Twitter page, each one screaming for the institution to revoke Brielle's degree. "A student like that is an embarrassment to Beaconsfield College!" they cried out in digital uproar.

Despite the online frenzy, Beaconsfield College, a titan in the academic rankings, remained silent, biding its time.

Behind closed doors, the college's leadership-many of whom had climbed the ranks from professorship-convened in urgent meetings. Those who had taught Brielle held a fondness for the bright and diligent student. To them, her brilliance was not simply intelligence but raw talent.

Effort determined one's lower limits, but talent set the ceiling.

Dorsey International was backing them and had insisted that the college stand by Brielle. The faculty's resolve only hardened. They would protect this exceptional pupil at all costs. So, as the Twitter feed descended into chaos, the college focused instead on compiling Brielle's impressive academic record, ready to silence the critics with cold, hard facts.

Meanwhile, at Stellar Stage Entertainment, the tension was palpable. Silence had fallen in the dance studio, where artists usually honed their craft. Donny walked among them, feeling the weight of their collective despair. He sighed and rallied them with a few choice words. "Keep practicing, folks. Put your faith in Ms. Haywood."

Donny's belief in Brielle was unshakable. Despite their brief acquaintance, he was convinced she had a plan up her sleeve, that her silence was just the calm before the storm.

"Ms. Haywood won't let Stellar Stage down. She won't abandon us."

His simple words rekindled a spark within the despondent group. A young woman wiped away her tears and stood tall, her voice breaking the silence. "Ms. Haywood got rid of that boss who used to bully me. I trust her! She'll pull us through!"

The others were inspired. They rose to their feet and resumed their routines as if the outside world's anger didn't exist. Their dreams and beliefs slowly took root once more, and Donny watched with a nod, confident in the resilience of these young talents-and Ms. Haywood's loyalty to them.

Outside, the vitriol continued unabated. Online, the hateful comments persisted. Nearly a million comments piled up beneath Brielle's social media posts, yet she remained silent.

Amelia watched the chaos unfold with a smirk barely concealed. "This is what happens when you cross me," she thought. "People like

Brielle, like John, belong at the bottom."

She let out a cold laugh. It was clear that Kenzo's script was soon to be back in her possession. Brielle desired the script, but she seemed to have forgotten to check if she even had the capability to handle it.

Beside Amelia sat a youthful male artist, her new object of fascination. Given her uplifting mood, she planned on spending some 'quality time' with him in the master bedroom.

Their clothes had barely hit the floor when shouts echoed from outside the room. "Ms. Amelia! Something is wrong!"

A wave of annoyance washed over Amelia as she slipped a robe over her body and rose from the bed. "What's wrong now?! Isn't everything going according to my plan?!"

"Check online right now!"

F. Fàs

The distress displayed by her secretary gave Amelia pause and, with a sense of apprehension, she clicked on the trending news.

Brielle had posted on social media half an hour ago.

[Amelia's portrayal of herself is intriguing. Is she really a man-phobic, hardworking woman? Everyone in the industry knows about her wild parties and explicit videos with men. Be careful, Amelia, you never know who has copies of those scandalous videos.]

Before this revelation, a video of Amelia had already made it to the trending topics. It was a video of her with a man, two men, countless men. If it were just pictures, she could have claimed they were fabricated, but the videos showed it all in high definition. The words, the faces, the gestures; it was unmistakably her.

"Amelia, did your ex-husband really cheat on you?"



"He's too dense to cheat."

"Did he really mistreat you?"

"No, but under those circumstances, if I say he's abusive, then he is."

"Amelia, you're really wicked. You're nothing like what people say about you."

Every word, every frame was  
incriminating. Her die-hard fans fell  
silent upon witnessing the  
undeniable evidence.

John hadn't cheated or abused. Then  
why did Amelia levy such Com  
accusations against him?  
After the initial status, Brielle posted again.

[We have obtained the rights for the  
m

script John is currently filming. Plagiarism would've hindered our application. Here, take a look at the  
property rights. Amelia, you claimed we stole yours, so where's your proof?]

Chapter 695

Just after Brielle posted her second update on the situation, she hit the internet with a third, this time a  
video. The clip played out the entire conversation Brielle had with the fan who had knelt before her.

The truth was as clear as day - the video that had sparked the outrage was maliciously edited.

[She wrecked my car, so she should pay for it. Is being broke suddenly an excuse? When I didn't forgive  
her, she started slinging mud online, even deliberately posting misleading videos to incite cyberbullying  
against me. I've handed all evidence to the police, and I won't give up on holding her accountable.]

The video was unambiguous about what had happened, capturing their exchange and even the moment  
when the fan asked her accomplice if they got the footage, plotting to get back at Amelia.

Three posts, three pieces of evidence, and the internet mobs were silenced, with Amelia left without a  
leg to stand on.

Amelia watched helplessly as the online world exploded, but this time, it was not at Brielle but at her. It  
was over; everything had crumbled. How could things have turned out this way?

She felt her knees buckle, dropping to the floor in despair.

Those who had exposed Brielle were now blushing with embarrassment, wishing they could just vanish into thin air.

The mob that had been hounding Stellar Stage Entertainment couldn't even look each other in the eye. They scurried away with their tails between their legs. They had been defending such a woman one with a scandalous private life who slandered her ex-husband and poached his resources. They had been unwitting pawns in her game.

The shame was unbearable!

At this pivotal moment, John logged into his Twitter for the first time in years. His feed was still flooded with new messages, the vitriolic residue from the days he had stepped away from the spotlight. Like rabid dogs, they had never let go.

Those hateful messages had haunted him, so much so that he had avoided his account for years. But now, he was ready to return with his head held high. [I'm back. Thanks to Stellar Stage Entertainment and Ms. Haywood. Grateful for the new beginnings.]

John's loyal fans, who had been waiting for his comeback, were moved to tears. They had been powerless back then, insisting John was incapable of the abuse and infidelity he was accused of. Unfortunately, their voices were drowned out by the chorus of slander. Their talented director had been forced into an ignoble retreat.

They had never lost faith, always believing John would return to filmmaking. Now, their wish had come true.

"I'm crying so hard. That wicked woman is finally getting her comeuppance!"

"John, we never left. I've watched your movies over and over."

"Thank you, Stellar Stage Entertainment. Thank you, Brielle."

Everyone noticed. John had truly returned after being absent for years. No finger-pointing and no kicking Amelia while she was down, just simple gratitude.

Only after lying in the mire did one understand how hard it was to stand again.

Gratitude was John's only sentiment.

Meanwhile, Beaconsfield College's official account stepped into the fray, addressing the public's skepticism and revealing Brielle's admission scores, her grades in each subject, and even her thesis defense video.

[At the request of the public, we are disclosing the academic records and thesis defense video of our alumna, Ms. Brielle. Throughout her time here, she maintained the top GPA in her class and represented our college as an exchange student for a year, earning excellent marks. Ms. Brielle has always been an exemplary member of our alumni.]

At the end of their statement, the college quoted a line from "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind."

[The individuals in the crowd are prone to be swayed by intense sentiment and false images, believing what they would never accept under the dominion of reason.]

If Brielle's reply to the press had

been, deemed too direct,

com

Beaconsfield College's statement

was even mor

more so. Using 'The Crowd'

to satirize irrational netizens undoubtedly hit a nerve.

3 ES = FFS I

This was Beaconsfield College – a top institution, a dream for many from a young age, and this was the first time the college had taken such a public stand to defend someone. Those who had wanted Beaconsfield to revoke Brielle's degree were instantly silenced.

The college had revealed her

entrance scores

top of the

admission exam. Her GPA top of exam. Her

the class in a highly competitive environment. Her thesis defense an

impeccable example of academic

excellence.

How could anyone demand her degree be revoked over mere dissatisfaction?

Chapter 696

The tide had turned so swiftly, and the evidence was so overwhelming it left the online crowd at a loss for words. The flood of information was just too much to process all at once.

An hour later, Amelia was being raked over the coals online, enduring the vitriol previously directed at Brielle a hundredfold.

Brielle, for her part, was unbothered by the chatter. She was touched by the official statement from Beaconsfield College, her alma mater. Without hesitation, she retweeted the post with a brief, heartfelt note-[Thank you, Beaconsfield College.]

With that done, she continued to unveil her next move by sharing a court subpoena. [As for the slander and defamation Ms. Amelia has spread about me online, I've pressed charges, and the police are on it. You said you haven't received a subpoena. Well, it's been in my hands, waiting. As you wished, it's now on its way to you.]

Brielle's series of updates came hard and fast, leaving Amelia reeling and defenseless. The evidence was irrefutable, nobody could accuse Brielle of playing dirty. And now, nobody dared to speak ill of her. After all, what was there to criticize?

She hadn't forgiven the fan who damaged her car, but her response had been reasonable-she wouldn't be morally blackmailed by someone seeking a favor.

Even Beaconsfield College stepped in to defend her, proudly displaying her stellar academic record, which left everyone in awe.

Here was an outstanding woman, unfairly maligned as a villain, a slut. A true evildoer had masqueraded as an independent woman.

The irony was not lost on anyone, and the college's use of the phrase "mob mentality" seemed particularly apt in reminding the public of their misjudgment.

What had escalated into a fierce online battle by day had fizzled out by nightfall. It had begun with a bang and ended just as dramatically.

Brielle had stayed with Tiffanie all day, not eating a thing, and was now overwhelmed by exhaustion. She rubbed her temples wearily and stood up. "It's over. I'm going to check on Stellar Stage Entertainment."

Tiffanie nodded, offering a reminder, "Take care of yourself. And while you're focusing on Stellar Stage Entertainment, don't forget about your relationship with Maxie. You came here for him, after all. Don't lose sight of what's important."

Brielle stiffened at the mention of Max, a bitter smile touching her lips. The day had brought her a resounding victory and even full control of Stellar Stage Entertainment, yet she felt no joy. The reason was precisely what Tiffanie had pointed out-success in her career but disappointment in love.

"I know," she replied.

Tiffanie didn't dwell on the subject. She trusted that Brielle, being smart, would know how to balance her priorities.

Descending to the ground floor, Brielle took a deep breath and coughed as the chilly night air caught her throat. She pulled out her phone

and dialed Max's number.

No answer.

She sent a message. No reply.

Her eyes briefly reddened, and she sniffled. It wasn't that she wanted to neglect Max. She was trying, but he was giving her the cold shoulder.

Upon returning to Stellar Stage Entertainment, her expression was still gloomy, a clear sign of her inner turmoil.

Inside the building, a janitor was sweeping up broken glass. Brielle instructed a nearby worker, "Get someone to replace the window. Anything else that's broken should be replaced, too. Just get the budget from the finance department."

The name Brielle had become synonymous with resilience.

"Will do, Ms. Haywood," came the prompt response.

Brielle nodded and made her way to the top floor. Donny's eyes lit up at her arrival. "Ms. Haywood!"

But after noticing Brielle's somber mood, he quickly subdued his excitement. "Ms. Haywood, thank you."

She entered her office and inquired about everyone else.

"They're good. Everyone was scared at first, but they've settled down now."

"It's been tough," she acknowledged.

"You've had it the toughest, Ms.

Haywood. Oh, and there's one more thing. The director I've contacted has agreed to take on our project. He's willing to cast from our pool of talent at Stellar Stage Entertainment for all roles except the lead actor. He's got someone in mind for that and won't budge on it."

Brielle massaged her temples,

knowing Donny wouldn't stress over a director unless he was truly talented. Now that the director had made a request, Stellar Stage

Entertainment ought to

accommodate it as much as

possible.

"Donny, go ahead and firm up the other leads and supporting roles. As for the male lead, let's hold off on that. I need some time to think of a solution."

Donny's eyes brimmed with

m

excitement, finding comfort in Brielle's words. Stellar Stage Entertainment had weathered the storm. And soon, they would be

soaring to new heights. With John's movie paving the way and this new project in the wings, it wouldn't be long before their doubters were silenced.

"Okay, okay, Ms. Haywood. You rest, and I'll get right on the casting."

Chapter 697

Donny was practically bouncing off the walls with excitement, his energy infectious as he handpicked the best candidates in less than half an hour. He pushed open the door and found Brielle lost in thought, staring blankly at the computer screen. He called out softly,

hesitant to startle her

"Ms. Haywood?"

It was puzzling. The crisis at Stellar Stage Entertainment had been resolved, and the company's reputation was on the mend. Why, then, did Ms. Haywood seem so downcast?

Brielle glanced up, quickly composing herself, and resumed her cool, collected demeanor.

"Something on your mind, Ms. Haywood?"

Rubbing the bridge of her nose, Brielle shook her head. "No, have you finished the casting?"

"Yeah, these are the actors I've chosen-the ones who stuck around. They're all top-notch, clear-headed folk."

Brielle skimmed the files and was pleased. These faces could stand up to the scrutiny of the big screen.

"Donny, have them each play a part, then send me the footage. I'll review it when I can."

After all, the final say still rested in Brielle's hands.

Relief washed over Donny as he registered Brielle's engagement. He bit his lip, barely containing his enthusiasm.

"I'll get right on it."

Brielle waved him off, eager to get back to work, but then Donny posed a new question.

"Ms. Haywood, who should we send to Dorsey International to deliver Stellar Stage Entertainment's annual report?"

Despite being a small subsidiary, Stellar Stage Entertainment had protocols to follow, especially with the new year rolling in, which included presenting the year's plans to the Dorsey International headquarters.

Previous managers had treated this task with indifference and sent digital reports, while Dorsey International had taken a laissez-faire approach to its subsidiary, but times had changed. After a day of battling public scorn and achieving a miraculous turnaround, Stellar Stage Entertainment undoubtedly caught the attention of Dorsey International's executives. A slipshod report might now provoke their dissatisfaction.

While Donny knew Brielle had powerful connections at Dorsey International, the extent of those connections was unclear to him, prompting his cautious reminder.

Brielle's hand, which had been massaging her forehead, paused at Donny's words. In truth, Stellar Stage Entertainment could now operate independently of Dorsey International, with the majority of shares in Brielle's possession. Brielle's overseas companies could fund Stellar Stage Entertainment if necessary.

But to do so would sever ties with Dorsey International—a move Brielle was not yet ready to make. Even if the connection with Max was as tenuous as a spider's thread, Brielle clung to it, wary of letting it snap.

The executives, who had been eagerly awaiting their moment outside, burst into the room as though on cue. They were thrilled, barely containing their excitement, certain that Stellar Stage Entertainment was destined for greatness.

"Ms. Haywood, I could personally deliver the report to Dorsey International." "Yes, Ms. Haywood, there's no need for you to be bothered with trivial matters."

These were the same executives who had once tried to expose Brielle at Dorsey International, only to learn of her stronghold, which was none other than the CEO of Dorsey International himself.

Max, known for his stoic exterior, had shown Brielle an unexpected tenderness, wrapping her in his arms. There were even rumors of a passionate morning encounter in the company corridor.

The executives, barely containing their glee, saw this as a golden opportunity to curry favor with Max. A few well-placed compliments could mean promotions, raises, and a fast-track to the top of their careers.

They were each lost in their daydreams when Brielle stood up. "I'll go myself."

The executives hesitated, then rationalized that perhaps she just wanted to see Max. After all, young love was imp

atient. They nodded understandingly, no longer vying for the assignment.

After Brielle's departure, Donny eyed

the sycophantic executives with disdain. Since being rebuffed by Brielle and voluntarily offering financial penance to appease her, their behavior had been acceptable, but their fawning was difficult to stomach.

"What's all this about?" Donny

inquired, curious despite his distaste for their fair-weather loyalty. He was eager to understand what had understahyalty. transpired during their visit to Dorsey International that had caused such a drastic shift in their attitudes. Their expressions were smug, as if privy to a secret wisdom.

"Donny, my friend, you wouldn't understand. When you reach our level, it all becomes clear. Just stick with Ms. Haywood, and you'll reap the benefits."

"Yes, we've picked the right side. What a day of vindication! Stellar Stage Entertainment is on the rise, no doubt about it."

Of course, with the wife of the CEO at the helm, how dim could the future of Stellar Stage Entertainment possibly be?

Chapter 698

Despite not being fond of the group, Donny couldn't help but agree with their sentiment. He believed Stellar Stage Entertainment was set for stardom under Ms. Haywood's guidance.

A smile crept onto his face unbidden. "Ms. Haywood's got game, for sure. If anyone can turn the tide, it's her. Plus, she's got a heart for the crew. I'm all in on trusting her."

The others eyed Donny's expression and let out a knowing sigh.

"It's not just that, kid. You don't get it, do you? Well, we do. From now on, if Ms. Haywood says jump, we won't even think about sitting."

In Brielle's absence, their loyalties blew as freely as dandelion seeds in the wind. Feeling out of place among them, Donny excused himself and left.

The remaining group shared a look, their faces alight with aspiration. They had contacts at Dorsey International, which was how they received the photo of Mr. Dorsey kissing Brielle so promptly.

Although they were aware of Mr. Dorsey's special treatment of Brielle, they couldn't gauge the depth of their relationship. After all, despite her talents and looks, Brielle wasn't born with a silver spoon - a significant disadvantage when mingling with high society. While there were tales of stars bridging the class divide, their marriages often seemed less than joyful once the novelty wore off. The young heirs would eventually replace their starry-eyed brides with fresher faces, leaving their wives to suffer in silence, bound by pride and the absence of a powerful lineage.

But Max and the Dorsey family weren't your run-of-the-mill elites, and he was far from ordinary. Despite the liberal overseas tabloid culture, he had remained scandal-free without so much as a girlfriend. And while there had been whispers about him and Miss Alivia, nothing concrete had ever surfaced.

However, with Brielle, the public displays of affection were undeniable. They were convinced she was destined to be Max's wife, and they were eager to ride her coattails to glory.



Unaware of their scheming, Brielle had gathered the necessary documents. It was time to see Max. His silence over text, his refusal to answer calls - even Patrick's - and his absence from Dorsey International left her with no choice but to avoid the Premier Palace.

Brielle entered her car with a heavy heart and drove to Dorsey International, parking an hour later. She ascended to the top floor, but she ran into Annie as the elevator doors opened.

Annie, clutching a stack of documents, looked surprised to see Brielle. "Looking for Max? He's not here. We're about to head out for a business lunch with the CEO of InnovTech Solutions. Dorsey International is looking to partner up. Max is down in the parking garage, ready to leave. I just came to grab some papers."

The timing couldn't have been worse for Brielle.

"Ms. Brielle, maybe give Max a call? Or you can come with me to the garage." "No, I'll wait in his office," she replied, masking the bitterness of being avoided.

"Alright, I'll let Max know about it. Given that today's gathering is rather important, you might want to give him a call if it gets late,"

Brielle couldn't tell Annie that Max was declining her calls, so she only replied with a "Thank you."

Annie and Ricardo were natural

actors, effortlessly slipping into

character. There was an eerie conviction with which they carried

e

their performances. So much so, they would often blur the lines between actor and character.

Annie smiled at Brielle before excusing herself, "I'll head out first then."

Brielle responded with a nod, then shifted her gaze away. She made her way to Max's office it was done up in monochrome tones, an aesthetic that conveyed a bleak loneliness.

To avoid the disappointment of not finding him there again, Brielle found herself dialing Wesley's number for some assurance Wesley confirmed that Max had been keeping late hours at the office recently, often working well into the night. This reassured Brielle, and she eased herself onto the sofa, much more relaxed now.

Chapter 699

Max was indeed heading out to schmooze that evening, with Patrick behind the wheel and Annie perched in the passenger seat. Annie had initially planned to sit in the back with Max, but after Patrick coughed subtly, she took the hint and gracefully slid into the shotgun position.

Max settled into the backseat alone, quietly flipping through the documents needed for InnovTech Solutions. His phone lay beside him as if in wait for a message.

After the day's events, he even had Patrick set him up with a Twitter account. It was his first foray into the world of social media, and while he had meant to defend Brielle in a tweet, Patrick had advised against it. The chaos of the day was too much, and those vile Tweets were attacking Brielle's personal life. If he stepped into the fray, it would only tarnish her further.

His account wasn't verified, so no one knew he was the CEO of Dorsey International. Even his username was a jumble of characters.

After reviewing the documents for a while, Max checked his Twitter.

Upon signing up, the platform auto-followed a bunch of accounts. Frowning slightly, he unfollowed each one meticulously, and then he found Brielle's profile and hit follow.

Seeing that '1' in his following list lifted his spirits, but then, a wave of inexplicable melancholy washed over him. He suppressed the feeling, returning his attention to the documents in his hands and setting his phone aside.

Patrick, driving up front, wasn't entirely used to having a female secretary around, as Max's entourage had always been exclusively male.

But Annie was discreet and never tried to seduce the boss like some other women. She was competent, often quietly working on her doctoral thesis as if soaking up real-world experience from the job.

Besides, the professor had personally recommended Annie to Max, and she performed flawlessly, leaving not even the slightest error for Patrick to pick at. He had grown accustomed to her presence. Especially with what happened just now, he coughed, and Annie promptly moved upfront, clearly not interested in any extracurricular relationship with Max. Patrick found that agreeable.

The car was silent, save for the sound of Max's fingers turning the pages of his documents. The dinner with InnovTech Solutions went smoothly. As they were wrapping up, the CEO of InnovTech received a call from his wife. He quickly excused himself with an apologetic smile. "Mr. Dorsey, I need to take this call. My apologies."

4

Max nodded, distant but polite, watching as the man stepped away to whisper, "I'm out for dinner with Mr. Dorsey from Dorsey International. What would you like? Alright, I'll bring it home later. You're not getting fat. How could you possibly get fat?"

After hanging up, the CEO seemed somewhat sheepish. "Ten years of marriage, and I get an earful every time I'm home late. Mr. Dorsey, being single like you has its perks, doesn't it?"

Patrick sat beside Max and didn't miss the deep envy in his gaze, as restrained as the man himself. It seemed that even someone as distinguished as Max could harbor envy for others. Perhaps this was his first real taste of sour and bitter envy. It was impossible to hide it in his eyes.

Tech C50

The dinner ended with Max having a few drinks, just enough to feel a light buzz. The InnovTech CEO took m another call from his wife, explaining and laughing helplessly. "I'll be home soon, just another half hour. It's just finished. The same flavor as last time, right?"

Max stood still, the night breeze cool

against his skin. He pulled out his phone and scrolled to Brielle's number, contemplating a call but fearing she might still not answer.

The prospect of another rejection seemed even more disheartening than his current state of solitude. He felt an itch in his throat, the old urge to smoke creeping back.

Chapter 700

"Max, are you heading home?" Annie asked her eyes gleaming with a subtle light as she stood behind Patrick and Max

Patrick, observing Max's slightly flushed cheeks and the drunken warmth in his eyes, knew that any more work at the office was out of the question tonight. Despite not being completely wasted, Max definitely needed some rest.

Annie, ever so considerate, slung her purse over her shoulder and stepped aside to hail a cab.

"Patrick, why don't you take the boss home to sleep it off? I'll grab a cab back. After you drop him off, remember to fix him some food for the hangover," she said, turning to leave.

Patrick was pleased with her initiative. He opened the passenger door of the car so Max could climb in.

Just as Max was about to get in, a yellow object rolled to his feet. A little girl, bundled up in a white puffy jacket with a butterfly bow on her head, rushed over to pick it up. It was an orange that had rolled right to Max's feet. He bent down to pick it up and handed it to her. The girl, barely reaching above his knee, looked up at him with big, grape-like eyes that blinked innocently. Those eyes reminded him so much of Brielle.

He vividly remembered the first morning he woke up in Brielle's bed, consumed with initial panic as he grabbed her by the throat, demanding to know if she had a death wish. Those same pure, pained, yet defiant eyes met his gaze. That kind of look had a way of disarming him, even to the extent of making him want to gift her the world she should desire it. So he knelt down, his long fingers picked up the orange, and handed it to the little friend.

The girl took the orange with careful hands, blinked her watery eyes, and then ran back to a man not far away, hugging his knees tightly. "Daddy, Daddy, I saw an actor!" she exclaimed.

The man lifted her up and perched her on his shoulders. "Really?" He said.

"It's true, He is so pretty."

By now, Max had entered the car and was watching the playful father and daughter through the window. The man hoisted her up, twirling her around, and the girl laughed and pointed ahead, prompting him to charge forward.

Max mused that if he ever had a daughter, she'd probably be just as adorable. He watched them for a moment longer before turning his

gaze away.

The air conditioning was on in the car, but Max felt suffocated and asked Patrick to turn it off. He then rolled down the window, letting in the chilly outside air, hoping it would help sober him up. "Take me to Pearl Estate," he instructed, unbuttoning a few buttons on his collar and leaning back, falling into silence.

Patrick felt a tightness in his chest, knowing that Max was inevitably heading to see Ms. Brielle. He could only hope that Ms. Brielle was worth Max's affection.

But Brielle wasn't at Pearl Estate. Instead, she was sitting in the CEO's office at Dorsey International, occasionally glancing out at the city lights and feeling oddly comforted by Max's presence in the room despite his physical absence.

As time ticked by, her nerves began to fray. What would she say to Max if he showed up?

I

to his desk, only to notice a delicate

hairpin lying there,

which was ac

com

diamond-studded

Rubbing her temples, Brielle stood

and

and walked over to the accessory, glistening under the office lights.

Just as she reached out to touch it, the

office door swung open. Her

fingertips retracted quickly, and she pulled her hand back. Her heart.

started racing, and she mustered all her courage to look towards the door.