

Master 71

Chapter 71

Brielle shoved her head away in exasperation, flinging open the car door and stepping out. "That's enough, really."

Aubree handed her scarf back, "I'm just telling it like it is. The guy's so distant, barely talks, and it's hard to imagine him wanting

to leave all those marks on a woman's skin. It's like he's not worried at all about your affair coming to light, you know?"

As Brielle wrapped the scarf around her neck, she pondered the question. Indeed, since she started sleeping with Max, he'd

never made any effort to hide their relationship. Was he truly fearless, or just didn't care?

Aubree stepped up to her, a trace of seriousness in her eyes, "Look, fun is fun, but knowingly diving into an abyss? That's not

you, Bri. You're not like me. I fell for Andrew, and I can't get back up."

Just mentioning Andrew's name seemed to steal Aubree's breath. "Don't fall for the wrong person."

That was her advice.

Brielle didn't know what to say; she instinctively wanted to dodge the topic. Everyone knew that falling for Max was like a moth to

a flame—you could easily get burned to ashes by his allure. And yet, some people seemed to court destruction, flirting with death.

There were countless such moths, so the question was: were the moths too foolish, or was the flame too bright?

They entered the apartment, and Aubree slumped into the sofa like she had no bones.

The ladies of the Beaconsfield social circles had their own little group chats, and now the chatter was all about Andrew's watch

purchase.

Everyone thought Andrew bought it for Tessa, as he gave all his true feelings to that person.

Aubree pulled out a cigarette, lit it with a practiced flick of her lighter, and took a deep drag. After blowing a perfect smoke ring,

she touched the scar on her neck. It was a three-centimeter-long mark.

"You know I told you I got this scar from falling, right?" she said with a chuckle.

Brielle hung up her coat and grabbed a drink from the fridge, "Yeah, wasn't that it?"

"Of course not. It happened when I was eighteen, after I drunkenly confessed to Andrew. I didn't think to much. I figured after all

those years he knew me, he must have loved me. Bad luck that night, I stumbled upon Andrew confessing to Tessa in the

Clements family's backyard. He got rejected outright."

Aubree seemed to relive the scene as she took the cigarette from her mouth. "I never expected to witness that. For all the

arrogance Andrew showed every day, he too could be rejected. I feared he was heartbroken, so foolishly, I ran over to him,

declaring my love, suggesting we could be together. Andrew was still holding the rejected gift. For the first time, I saw

embarrassment and anger in his eyes. He threw the carefully wrapped present at me, and the sharp metal edge slashed my

neck like this."

Her voice was calm as she touched the scar. "That night, he still came to my room, and I didn't turn him away. He could hurt me,

then just crook his finger, and I'd forgive him. That's love for you—someone's always got to be the fool. But Bri, I don't want that

person to be you."

Max was hardly an improvement over Andrew. At least Andrew had a heart, even if it wasn't for her. But Max? Did he even have

a heart to give?

He didn't even have genuine feelings, elusive like winter snow. You thought you had caught it, but once the temperature rose, it

disappeared without a trace.

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Love not only brought bitterness but also pain. It made one lose oneself, become weak, and never be able to harden their heart

again.

"Crack." Brielle popped open a can tab, placing a Coke in front of her.

Aubree stubbed out her cigarette, unable to resist taking several large gulps, “Besides, the Dorsey family has Michael keeping watch.”

Aubree seemed especially concerned that Brielle would lose her head, especially since she’d already taken a fall for Spencer.

But Spencer, what was he anyway? Nothing but a rain puddle, easily filled and forgotten.

Aubree was about to add more when she noticed Brielle had already piled up a bunch of files, seriously sorting through work

documents. Her genuine concern seemed laughably out of place at this sight, but then she thought again and couldn’t help but

give a thumbs up.

“There you go! That’s the spirit. Keep it up. You got an orgasm and you got a promotion to boot. Hell, I’d have taken a few more

nights with him myself.”

Brielle found it amusing, but the thought of the watch Andrew had snapped up made her smile fade slightly. She knew how much

Aubree was hurting. After pining for Andrew for so many years, her heart must have bruised.

Aubree stood up, casually placing a gift box on the table. “Someone’s just finished delivering a gift to their sweetheart and must

be feeling lonely. I’ve got to go.” Her tone was indifferent as if it didn’t matter at all. “This is my apology gift to you, I shouldn’t

have kept Andrew’s thing from you, and congrats on the promotion, take it.”

Brielle was about to refuse when she caught a look from Aubree.

“After all, if someone’s willing to give a multimillion-dollar watch, why would they care about a little cash?” She spoke

nonchalantly, but Brielle still detected a deep, hidden self-loathing. Once Aubree had left, she opened the gift box. It was a

practical necklace, perfect for everyday wear. After a moment’s thought, she carefully placed the necklace in the drawer.

Returning to her computer desk, she saw new emails, mostly from her department. After dealing with a few, she leaned back on

the couch, feeling waves of darkness before her eyes.

Aubree's words were hard to ignore, and she was aware she was losing control. She had to do something to distract herself.

Her mind flashed to the boy she'd seen at the banquet who had mentioned the Beaconsfield College forum. Brielle took a deep

breath and belatedly clicked on the Beaconsfield College forum. Most of the posts were about her.

Three years after graduation, and four years in college, yet the first posts to defame her dated back seven years. For seven

years, the slander about her had never stopped.

Brielle didn't have to think hard to know whose handiwork it was. Lillian was an expert at this, leaving herself spotless, the picture

of innocence

Brielle felt sick just remembering how she had doted on Lillian like a sister, too afraid of crushing her self-esteem to tell anyone

Lillian wasn't really the Haywood family's daughter.

Brielle put down the mouse, also recalling how she had been sent to learn Taekwondo because Lillian was so delicate and easily

bullied, Miranda had said—Lillian is frail and an easy target, you learn Taekwondo, and you can protect her alongside your

brother.

Brielle agreed, feeling responsible for Lillian's future since she had brought her from the orphanage. However,

while she was sweating in the dojo, Lillian was smartly climbing into Spencer's bed.

She couldn't afford to dwell on these thoughts; they were too upsetting. At least she had stopped obsessing over Max and was

now planning how to deal with Lillian.

To defeat someone, you have to destroy what they cherish most. Lillian cared about money, status, and men. But Brielle cared

for none of these. She only wanted her career.

Especially after that auction, she yearned to stand at the pinnacle and look down. She and Lillian were not on the same path.

Chapter 73

On the other side, Lillian had been restless since she got into the car, fidgeting with the hem of her shirt, looking like she was

bursting with something to say.

Cameron couldn't resist her troubled look and gently prodded, "What's wrong?"

With a bitten lip, Lillian voiced her nagging question, "Cameron, what did you mean about Aubree and Andrew?" Curiosity was

killing her. If it was really as she thought, then what right did Aubree, the woman who hooked up with her own brother, have to

boast in front of her? Lillian was determined to spread the word, to have the prestigious Clements family drag Aubree back for a

grilling.

A sneer flickered in Lillian's eyes as she thought of Aubree – another so-called debutante who, behind closed doors, was

nothing but a slut. Just like Brielle, that shameless woman who'd throw herself at any man.

Her heart blazed with triumph, feeling like she already had them under her heel.

"Cameron, I'm just curious, please tell me?" Her voice softened, her fingers lightly tugging at Cameron's sleeve.

Cameron caved, as expected. "It was something I stumbled upon by chance. I was staying at a hotel on a business trip and

happened to see them there."

"But that doesn't necessarily mean they have that kind of relationship, right?" Lillian was a bit let down, hoping for more concrete

evidence.

Cameron lifted his hand to stroke her head, thinking she just wanted to hear some juicy gossip. "It's more than that. They booked

a single room for the night two adults in their twenties, sharing a room. Does that sound reasonable to you? Andrew isn't short

on cash, and Aubree, being a foster daughter with no blood ties to him, shared a room with him. I hardly think their relationship is

innocent.”

A gleam appeared in Lillian’s eyes, her lips curling into a slow smile. But this alone wasn’t enough – she needed more damning

evidence. She wanted to drag Brielle’s reputation through the mud and get rid of Aubree, who always seemed to cause her

trouble.

“Cameron, you should talk to Bri. These kind of friendships can lead one astray easily.”

A mocking light flickered in Cameron’s eyes. Birds of a feather flock together, no wonder Brielle had become so unruly.

Lillian looked down and sent a message to her usual contacts. [Hire a private investigator to dig into Andrew and Aubree. I

suspect an affair, and this could be a big scoop for you. Don’t worry. The pay will be generous.]

This team had been in her pocket for years, always eager to please her. So, upon receiving the message, they immediately set

two private detectives on the task. This wasn’t nearly enough. To marry into the prestigious Dorsey family, she needed to

expedite Spencer breaking off his engagement with Brielle. Or better yet, make Brielle disappear completely.

Lillian looked up Emily’s number and shot her a message. [Hey sweetie, I just heard that Brielle’s getting into that auction

somehow tied to Max.]

Emily actually didn’t hold much status in the Hatfield family, but she was never short of money and was the quintessential naïve

rich girl.

Emily’s willingness to go to Dorsey/International stemmed from Lillian’s manipulations and her own crush on Max. Even a distant

glimpse of him was enough to send her into daydreams. The thought of her least favorite woman trying to snag her secret crush

was intolerable.

Emily’s pupils shrank when she saw the message, and she stood up abruptly from her desk.

Impossible! Brielle was still engaged, and how dare she shamelessly flirt with Max!

Lillian followed up with a video, clipped to mislead. It showed Max talking and laughing with Brielle..

Emily took the bait, flooding Lillian with angry messages cursing Brielle.

[I'll get rid of her one day! I had no idea she harbored such intentions!]

[How dare she! I'll tell Alivia about this, but before that, I'll teach Brielle a lesson she won't forget.]

Lillian smirked as she turned off her phone. All she had to do now was wait for Emily to make her move. Indeed, a woman's

hatred could be the most terrifying force in the world.

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The next morning, Brielle had barely stepped into the department when she felt a glare so intense it could bore holes. She turned

and caught sight of Emily, lurking in a corner. Emily's lips were pursed, her hands clenched around her cell phone as if it were a

lifeline.

Initially, Brielle thought she was imagining things until lunch break, when Patrick sauntered onto her floor, and that feeling of

being watched intensified.

"Ms. Brielle," Patrick began, "Dorsey International will be collaborating with Hartley Group, and Mr. Flynn might drop by in

person. He specifically requested to meet with you and hopes you'll join him for the occasion."

Glancing at her planner, Brielle noted her schedule was jam-packed. Without a manager promotion yet, she was bogged down

with all the minutiae.

"When's the date?"

"In a month's time. Mr. Flynn had a message for you."

"What's the message?"

Surprised, Brielle hadn't expected Flynn to remember someone as minor as her.

"He's intrigued by your three principles of cognition and hopes to discuss certain ethical perspectives with you next time."

A small smile tugged at the corner of her mouth. How should one live their life? Was the pursuit of happiness more justifiable

than upholding duty? Was goodness an external trait one can intuitively feel?

If it were Flynn, he would probably genuinely engage in such discussions.

“Sure, I’ll be there.”

Patrick nodded and flipped through his schedule. “The president will be out of Beaconsfield for the next three days. If you need

anything, Ms. Brielle, feel free to reach out to me.”

That was as good as openly sharing Max’s private itinerary. The pen in Brielle’s fingers paused, the ink blotting the paper thickly.

“Alright.”

Three days. Hearing this, a twinge of disappointment flickered through her. She lowered her gaze and reined in her thoughts.

She worked overtime until 10 pm before leaving Dorsey International. The building was still brightly lit, casting reflections on the

giant glass screens amidst the myriad lights of the cityscape.

Suddenly, Brielle felt an overwhelming sense of solitude. In this concrete jungle, even the night lacked warmth.

She tightened her scarf around her neck and sneezed as a cold breeze hit her. Footsteps approached from behind. At this hour,

many were still burning the midnight oil.

A chill swept over her, quickly replaced by warmth as a black suit jacket was draped over her shoulders. Startled, she turned to

see Max.

He was on a call, gesturing to her while speaking to someone on the other end, then walked out with Patrick in tow. His strides

were long, and in no time, he was a dozen meters ahead, his silhouette elongated by the lights outside the glass canopy.

Brielle stood in the shadow of that silhouette.

“Stocks represent free cash flow, and the financial metrics are unclear,” his voice trailed off into the distance.

Brielle felt rooted to the spot, unable to move.

Motion and stillness, light and shadow, it was all emblematic of their relationship. Max probably never felt

loneliness; he moved through life with effortless grace. Just like now, casually draping a jacket over her shoulders without a

second thought. His steps never faltered as he signaled to Patrick to take note of the meeting details.

To him, it was a mere flick of the wrist. To her, it was a breathtaking moment.

Brielle looked down and gently tugged at the fabric of the suit. It was smooth, clearly high quality..

She stood there for ages, until her legs began to tingle, before finally moving.

Nearby, Emily watched through thick-framed glasses, seething at the scene. She couldn't believe Max would ever drape his

jacket over a woman. He was above such mundane affairs. Yet, in that moment, Emily felt as if he had fallen from his pedestal.

This realization fueled her jealousy to the brink of madness.

Her chest heaved with rage, her teeth clenched so tightly she could taste blood.

Why?

Fuming, Emily made a phone call. She wanted to ruin Brielle's reputation, to make sure Brielle could no longer deceive people

with that face. And she wanted Max to know how despicable this woman was at heart.

Chapter 75

Brielle slipped out of her office, the sleek tailored blazer draped over her arm. Her car had inconveniently hit warranty just days

ago and was towed to the dealership for the fourth time. Without her usual ride, she was relegated to hailing cabs for her

commute.

She hailed a cab, and as she bent to get in, she was concerned about the blazer getting dirty. Therefore, she took it off, neatly

folded it, and placed it on her lap before entering. As the cab approached her apartment complex, a place chosen more for its

price than its neighborhood, she handed the driver his fare and stepped out onto the curb.

The area was a cultural mishmash, a stark contrast to the polished corporate world she navigated daily. Public housing units

crowded around her building, and the streets were a melting pot of characters.

A group of young men loitered by the entrance, each with a cigarette in hand, enveloping themselves in clouds of smoke. The

security booth had long been abandoned, and any guard who might have been on duty would turn a blind eye to the scene

unfolding before them.

Brielle frowned, her gaze fixed on the ground as she quickened her pace. But the ringleader of the group flicked his cigarette butt

away and sauntered over with hands buried in his pockets. His cronies followed, their laughter echoing through the night air.

Clearly, they'd been waiting here for a while.

"Stop right there," the leader commanded, reaching out to block her path, his other hand clamping around her throat.

The strong scent of tobacco invaded Brielle's nostrils. Instinctively, she stomped on his foot and jerked back.

"Ow!" the man yelped. His patience gone, he grabbed Brielle's head and slammed it against the railing.

Despite Brielle's self-defense training, the disparity in strength between her and the six men was too great. Her blazer was

yanked from her grip, and rough hands shoved her to the ground like discarded trash. Brielle sputtered, struggling to find her

footing.

The men whistled and closed in, smirks plastered on their faces. "Didn't expect you to be so strong," one taunted.

Brielle edged backward. "You've got the wrong person," she insisted.

"You want a little fight from you," one

The leader, a scar tracing down his cheek, crouched before her and yanked her head back by her hair, scrutinizing her features.

"No mistake here, Brielle, right? Someone paid us to teach you a lesson."

The stench of his breath was nauseating. Should she scream for help? No, it was late and the streets were deserted. It would

only provoke them further.

“How much did they pay you? I’ll double it,” she offered, her voice steady despite the fear.

The man lit another cigarette, blew smoke in her face, and sneered, “We have principles, Ms. Brielle. Blame your own bad luck

for crossing people you shouldn’t have.”

Retreating further, she felt the sharp pain in her ankle. Her phone, pre-dialed to emergency services, was concealed in her

sleeve. The police station was less than two miles away; they could arrive in under ten minutes.

She forced a smile, buying time, “You know, there are many Brielle’s out there. Maybe you’ve got the wrong one?”

The man scoffed, flicking his spent cigarette to the ground. “Enough crap. I’ve seen your picture. Pretty face, but

you shouldn’t have messed with the wrong girl’s man. The orders were clear—to ruin your beauty.”

He pulled out a switchblade, the glint of malice flashing in his eyes. “Ms. Brielle, the price for that face of yours is quite high.”

Brielle backed away, her hands finding dirt. She kept her expression calm as he raised the blade.

In a split-second move, she threw the dirt in his face and kicked off her heels, sprinting away. The man cursed, spitting out dirt,

and ordered the others to give chase.

Halfway to safety, her foot was sliced by shattered glass. She fell hard to the pavement, and the men slowed, twirling their knives

with sinister intent.

“Keep running, why don’t you?” one jeered.

“You’re pretty clever, buying time like that,” another said. “Too bad no one’s coming to save you tonight.”

As they spoke, the distant wail of sirens filled the air. Police cruisers appeared on the horizon.

Brielle barely had time to feel relief before the leader stepped forward, tossing the switchblade into the bushes and clamping a

hand over her mouth. The others scattered, grabbing the blade before disappearing.

Brielle struggled against her captor’s grip as two officers approached.

“Just playing around with my girlfriend,” the man lied smoothly as Brielle elbowed him in the chest. He staggered back, feigning

surrender as the officers stepped in to shield her.

“I’m not his girlfriend. He attacked me,” Brielle clarified.

To her astonishment, the man took a phone from his pocket, displaying a gallery of cozy photos with Brielle—embraces, kisses,

all manner of intimacy.

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Brielle felt a chill creeping through her bones, her eyes widening in disbelief as she watched the two officers flip through the

photos.

The man remained maddeningly unflappable, “She’s my girlfriend. Just a little tiff we’re having. She’s denying me now, but

officers, this is just a lovers’ spat, isn’t it? No need to drag us down to the station, right?”

His face was all smiles, but his eyes were full of malice. Clearly, he had planned this all along.

Brielle pressed her lips together, knowing all too well how domestic disputes tended to be downplayed by the police when the

word “relationship” was mentioned. Her face darkened as her gaze fixed on the suit jacket clutched in the man’s hand.

With a sleazy grin, the man said, “Honey, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have treated you like that tonight. Come on over here, and we’ll

sort everything out back at home.”

The photos he provided were damningly realistic, and even though Brielle knew they were falsified, she couldn’t immediately

prove it otherwise.

The officers looked a bit shaken, and finally, they sighed. “Why can’t you young lovebirds just sit down and talk things out without

making a scene and calling us?”

The man, with a roguish sneer, hands in his pockets, replied, “Ah, well, you know how emotional women can get. Sorry to bother

you officers, I'll just take her and we'll be on our way."

He made a move to approach, but Brielle stepped back, her gaze sharp. "Officers, there should be a camera at the entrance of

the apartment complex."

No sooner had she spoken than one of the officer's phones rang, indicating some directive from the higher-ups. This guy was

bold in this part of town because he had someone backing him.

The call was from someone with the Hatfield family.

The officers exchanged glances, then waved their hands dismissively, "Alright, no need to make a scene out of a lovers' quarrel."

Brielle knew someone had intervened. The night's events were orchestrated.

But who could she turn to? The Haywood family?

The Haywoods wouldn't stick their necks out for her, and going back to them, hat in hand, would probably just amuse them. She

couldn't be left here. With this guy's methods, he might actually disfigure her.

Brielle's eyes reddened, but against the backdrop of those photos, any defense she offered would seem like emotional

desperation.

She got into the police cruiser first, giving the address for the Premier Palace. She couldn't go back to her apartment or to the

Haywood family, and she couldn't drag Aubree into this mess. Premier Palace seemed to be the only temporary shelter

available.

The man didn't expect Brielle to make such a move and furrowed his brow, but ultimately, he didn't dare follow her into the car.

The young officers, thinking Brielle was just unwilling to reconcile with her boyfriend, sighed. "Miss, are you really not planning to

talk things out with your boyfriend?"

"It will hurt your relationship. You're both so young. Why can't you discuss this calmly?"

No amount of words from Brielle would help. She stared out the window at the suit in the man's hands, feeling a tightness in her

chest. "Just take me to Premier Palace, please."

The officers didn't refuse. Besides, Premier Palace was much more than a mere haunt of the wealthy and powerful.

The police cruiser couldn't enter the premises, stopping about two hundred meters from Premier Palace's gates. Brielle, barefoot

and forlorn, stepped out of the car.

The officers watched her retreating figure, shaking their heads. "Young folks these days are just too fragile."

The man had provided too many photos for anyone to believe that someone who had attacked another person. would fabricate

such evidence. And with the Hatfield Inc. people vouching, they truly believed it was just a lovers' spat gone wrong.

Brielle walked barefoot for a while, feeling the cold sting on her face. The pain in her feet grew more pronounced until she

stopped, gazing at the grand entrance of Premier Palace and let out a self-deprecating laugh.

What good would coming here do?

She limped to a bench at the roadside, pulling out the shards of glass embedded in her foot. Blood gushed forth, and the sharp

pain drove back her tears.

She took out her phone again. "Officer, my name is Brielle. Someone has stolen corporate secrets from Dorsey International,

and I'd like to report it. Yes, it's him. The suit he's holding belongs to the CEO of Dorsey International, and there's a tiny USB

drive inside with Dorsey's confidential files. Please take this matter seriously."

Everyone in Beaconsfield knew about Dorsey International. Any case involving Dorsey International couldn't be taken lightly.

Half an hour later, Brielle and the man were brought to the police station. The man hadn't expected to end up there. Seeing

Brielle, he feigned deep concern. "Sweetheart, I said we could talk about our issues privately. What's this all about now?"

Brielle sat in the chair, her bare feet still bleeding, her toes tensed as if immune to the pain. She didn't look at the man

confronting her. "The stolen suit belongs to Max Dorsey, the CEO of Dorsey International. Don't believe me? Call him now. And

here's my business card."

She handed over a sleek card that confirmed her identity: Director of Mergers and Acquisitions at Dorsey International.

"The USB drive in the suit pocket is related to a massive merger we've been negotiating, valued at over ten billion dollars. The

drive is missing. Who's going to answer for Dorsey International's loss?"

Her voice was calm, her lashes lowered as if in thought, "This man has been manipulated. You might want to check the recent

transactions in his accounts. Someone's using him to snatch Dorsey International's trade secrets. I don't need to tell you how

grave this is, do I?"

Dorsey International. Trade secrets. CEO of Dorsey International. Each term was a siren call to urgency. This was no lovers'

quarrel to be brushed off.

The man was taken aback, his cavalier demeanor vanishing instantly. "Brielle, what are you implying? When did I rob anyone?

And when did I take a USB drive? Stop slinging mud!"

Brielle remained composed, the pain in her soles sharpening her mind. "Are you claiming the suit is yours? It's a high-end

custom piece, each with a unique serial number and owner. If the officer doubts my word, you can verify the brand and trace its

origin."

The man panicked. He had only grabbed the suit on a whim, never imagining it held a story.

Brielle's presence was overwhelming, swiftly commanding the situation. "I intend to uncover whoever's behind him, endangering

Dorsey International."

A potential billion-dollar trade secret theft could be dubbed the case of the year. Investigators were already tracking the man's

financial activities and found an unexplained deposit of a million dollars in his account just hours earlier. The evidence was

damning.

The man's palms sweated as he clenched his jaw. Stealing trade secrets, with over ten billion dollars at stake- that kind of

accusation could mean a minimum of ten years in prison.

Brielle was out to ruin him and, by the looks of it, take down whoever was behind him as well.

She seemed so harmless, yet how quickly her venomous plan had unfolded!

The police had already escalated the situation to their superiors and had managed to get in touch with Patrick. Patrick glanced at

Max, who was resting his eyes, and spoke softly, "The suit? Yes, it was indeed for Ms. Brielle. The USB drive?"

Confusion flickered in his eyes. He had no idea what might be in the CEO's suit pocket and quickly asked with respect, "Sir, it's a

call from the police station."

They were en route to a business trip, about to leave Beaconsfield. Max took the phone, his gaze icy. The person on the other

end, realizing they were speaking to Max himself, hastily explained the situation, wiping sweat from their forehead.

"Mr. Dorsey, that's the situation. If he's indeed guilty of stealing Dorsey International's trade secrets, the repercussions will be

dire. Even with someone to vouch for him, I'm afraid..."

Max's wrist dropped, the black beads around it seemingly radiating a chill. "And her?"

The officer glanced at Brielle, saying cautiously, "Ms. Brielle is still here. It isn't her fault, and we'll recover the USB drive as soon

as possible."

He was defending Brielle. Even if the loss wasn't intentional, the drive was still missing. If Dorsey International sought

accountability, not only would the thief face jail time, but Brielle herself would surely be implicated.

"Hand her the phone." His tone was indifferent, the cold seemingly traveling through the phone line.

Brielle, head lowered, knew they were speaking with Max himself. The thought of reaching out to him in her moment of

helplessness made her smile involuntarily.

She was fortunate not to have gone to him. That foolish yearning was best buried deep, never to see the light of day.

“Ms. Brielle, Mr. Dorsey would

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“Ms. Brielle, Mr. Dorsey would like a word with you.”

The staff member handed over the phone, and Brielle worked hard to keep her composure, but the moment she heard his voice,

her eyes began to sting with the threat of tears. She pushed back that hint of vulnerability, striving not to let her tone betray

anything.

“Mr. Dorsey.” She called out, then bit her lip hard, the taste of iron filling her mouth.

“A ten-billion-dollar corporate secret?” The man’s voice was cool, waiting for her reply.

Brielle wiped the blood from her lip with the back of her hand, managing a smile, “Yes, Mr. Dorsey, no need to worry. I will work

with the police to recover the thumb drive.”

The so-called business secrets out of thin air only needed Max’s admission to become a nailed-down case. However, if he

refused to admit, Brielle could be detained on charges of obstructing official duties.

Heaven and hell hung on his next words.

Max didn’t speak immediately. After a long pause, he asked softly, “Are you hurt?”

Brielle felt a sharp jab in her heart, the burning sensation was unbearable. “Mr. Dorsey, about that thumb drive-”

“Leave it to the cops. I’m sending Brent to pick you up.”

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His implication was clear. The thumb drive issue was legitimate. The staff members eavesdropping on the conversation no

longer dared to delay, pressing the man about the location of the drive.

The man was already panicking, his mind racing to the caller behind the scene. “I really don’t know anything about a thumb

drive, I was just paid to disfigure Brielle, that's all."

Compared to attempted grievous bodily harm, the other allegation was significantly more severe. He sat rigid in his chair, his

gaze fixed maliciously on Brielle.

The police finally understood that the so-called lovers' tiff was a ruse, and in their fury, they whipped out handcuffs and secured

the man in place. "Spill it! Who's behind this?"

Meanwhile, Emily was anxiously awaiting news. Pacing back and forth nervously, she was like a cat on a hot tin roof.

The thought of Brielle's face being ruined sent a thrill of excitement through her. That bitch was so bold as to flirt with Max. This

was her just deserts.

Her phone rang, excitement flashing in her eyes as she quickly answered. "How did it go?! Did everything work out?"

But the anxious, tearful voice on the other end took her by surprise. "Emily, did you set me up on purpose? The police just called

me. They said this is suspected to be a theft of Dorsey International's corporate secrets. This was your trap, wasn't it?"

Emily was taken aback, her voice filled with panic, "What's going on? Weren't you supposed to have someone scratch Brielle's

face? What corporate secret?"

"How should I know! That's what the police said. Emily, I did this favor for you, got that thug involved, and now he's been caught

by the cops. If they trace the money back to me, I'm done for. You better come up with a solution. If the other members of the

Rowland family find out about this, I'm screwed."

Emily clenched her phone, at a loss for words. She and Sophia were good friends, and Sophia was a Rowland, although her

status was just as awkward as hers. The darling of the Rowland family was their frail legitimate, daughter, doted on by everyone,

especially with Andrew in her corner, showering her with attention.

"Sophia, try not to panic-

“How can I not panic! It’s not you who they’ll trace it back to. If it wasn’t for your vendetta against Brielle, I wouldn’t have gotten

involved. Are you doing this on purpose? Have you been against me all along? We’ve been trashing Brielle together in the group

chats with Lillian, all gung—ho, and when it comes to taking action, you use me as a pawn! Are we even friends?”

Emily didn’t expect Sophia to be so blunt, and she was starting to get impatient. She had no clue what was happening. “Sophia,

maybe you should talk to Tessa? Since this involves Dorsey International, if she talks to Andrew, he’ll surely speak with Max.

They’re on good terms, and Max won’t hold you accountable out of respect for Andrew.”

Sophia, seething with anger and frustration, hung up the phone with a click.

Chapter 79

She considered Emily a friend, and yet this was how Emily had betrayed her. She couldn’t help but shoot a text to Lillian, spilling

the beans about the evening’s debacle.

Lillian replied in no time. [So, how’s Brielle holding up now?]

A smirk played on Lillian’s lips. She hadn’t expected Emily to make her move so soon. She was indeed too impulsive.

Sophia and Lillian were tight, part of the same clique. [Heard she got hurt. I’m livid, Emily that backstabber must’ve set me up on

purpose. I treated her like a friend, and she pulls this stunt on me. What am I supposed to do if the cops come knocking?]

Sophia was fiery, preferring to play dirty rather than play the naïve card like Emily. This time, the stakes were high, and she was

genuinely freaking out.

[I’ll have a word with Bri, try to make her drop it. Hang in there, Sophia. No matter how much she gets on my nerves, I’ll bear it

for you.] Adversity shows true friendship, and Sophia felt a wave of gratitude. Lillian seemed like a sincere friend.

After hanging up, Lillian was in a whirl of emotions. As long as Brielle was down on her luck, she was thrilled. She had no real

intention of helping Sophia out, but she knew she'd need Sophia down the line, so the show must go on.

After finding out which police station Brielle was at, a gleeful glint crossed her eyes. To make the act more convincing, she had to

be there in person. And for a drama like this, there had to be an audience. Her acts of loyalty were no good if no one knew about

them. Cameron immediately came to mind, followed by a call to Miranda.

Miranda and Cameron arrived promptly, especially agitated upon hearing Brielle was at the police station.

How much trouble can Brielle stir up?!

This time she'd even dragged in the Hatfields and the Rowlands, as if she wouldn't rest until she'd crossed every power player in

Beaconsfield.

On the way to the police station, Lillian, with reddened eyes, comforted Miranda. "Miranda, don't take it to heart. Bri surely didn't

mean any harm. We need to see the situation for ourselves. The call I got was all muddled. Maybe Bri's been framed."

Miranda looked livid, as if she wished she could teleport to the station.

Cameron, sitting beside them, let out a scoff. "She didn't mean to? Is the mess she's made not enough? She doesn't even care

about the Dorseys, thinks she's above it all."

"Cameron, come on, we should at least check things out before jumping to conclusions."

They made it there in less than twenty minutes. Inside, Brielle sat refusing any bandages, blood staining the slippers someone

had offered her.

Pain has a way of snapping you to attention.

Brielle lowered her eyes and saw several police officers investigating the source of funds, mentioning both the Rowland family

and the Hatfield family.

The thug being grilled had lost his swagger, casting panicked glances at Brielle. "Brielle, maybe we should just let this one go,

huh? You heard them, the Rowlands and the Hatfields are involved. You really want to make enemies of both families at once?"

He had made a name for himself in this generation by doing dirty work for Sophia, who had introduced him to the right people,

turning him into a professional enforcer.

Tonight's events had taken him by surprise.

He was known for being ruthless, but he hadn't anticipated a fall from grace, and even his connections seemed shaky now.

Damn it! How did it come to this?

Chapter 80

Brielle's legs tensed subtly as if she couldn't hear the commotion outside the hall. It wasn't until a disordered flurry of footsteps

approached that she looked up to see three figures at the door, her brow crinkling in an instant.

Miranda was the first to speak, trembling with fury. "What on earth is going on?! A young lady like you causing a scene that ends

up with the police? If word gets out about some scandal, how are you going to find a decent marriage?"

Lillian, standing beside Miranda, reached out to gently pat her back. "Miranda, calm down. Let's get the details first."

Taking a deep breath, Miranda turned to the handcuffed man. His eyes shifted, especially when he caught sight of Lillian—she

seemed familiar, as if he'd seen her around Sophia.

A sly grin spread across his face, sensing an opportunity. "So you must be my mother-in-law. Look, Brielle and I just had a

lovers' quarrel. Please, talk some sense into her. This isn't a good look for either of us."

He whipped out his phone and started flipping through a series of intimate photos. "We're actually quite close. She's just a bit

headstrong and called the cops in a huff."

Miranda, unaware of the full story, now faced a stranger flaunting a plethora of intimate pictures and looking every bit the part of

a street thug. Her blood boiled, and she raised a hand to strike Brielle.

Brielle dodged slightly, seizing her wrist with one hand, "Enough."

Her tone was calm, her gaze drifting past the group to settle on the man. "I hope you'll still be this tough when sentencing time

comes around."

His face stiffened, the glimmer of hope fading slowly. Was Brielle actually dismissive of her own mother's

words?

Cameron, who had been standing behind Miranda, stepped forward to pull Brielle's hand away, "I thought your past escapades

were bad enough, but to end up at the police station over some guy? You've dragged the Haywood name through the mud. You

better settle this quietly before Spencer finds out."

If the social circle caught wind of this, Brielle's chances of marrying into the Dorsey family would plummet, especially since Faith

had already taken a dim view of her.

Brielle's wrist throbbed under Cameron's grip, her face turning pale.

Disgusted, Cameron released her hand, "Look at yourself. You're no different from those prostitutes."

Brielle's neck was still wrapped in a scarf, her clothes in disarray, her feet shod in slippers—but none of them

noticed the bloodstains on the slippers.

The officers, seeing the three of them, hurried over, "Ms. Haywood, this isn't Ms. Brielle's fault. This isn't just a lovers' spat that

can be brushed aside. The Dorsey family is involved this time."

They explained the situation and sighed, "We've traced the source of the missing million dollars to the Rowland family. We'll have

someone call on the Rowland estate shortly, and we've also contacted Mr. Dorsey. The USB drive indeed contains Dorsey

International's trade secrets."

Miranda was taken aback by the complexity of the issue, especially when she heard that Ms. Rowland would be summoned,

nearly fainting with shock. She had assumed it was a minor conflict between young people, but it turned out to involve Dorsey

International's trade secrets.

Lillian, already briefed by Sophia, cautiously spoke up, "If Ms. Rowland is brought in, this will spread like wildfire. Could the

Haywood family end up feuding with the Rowland family? Not to mention, the Rowland's are closely tied to the Clement's family.

If this blows up..."

She looked at Brielle with concern, edging closer, "Bri, maybe we should settle this quietly. You work for Dorsey

International, so losing a USB drive isn't the end of the world. There should be backups on the computer. As for Ms. Rowland,

I'm friends with her. I'll talk to her, and they'll let it go."

Even though none of this was Brielle's fault, Lillian made it sound like she was the one cleaning up the mess. Brielle gave Lillian

a half-smile, "What, did the Rowland family send you to plead their case?"

"I'm just looking out for you. The Rowland family isn't someone we can afford to mess with."

After speaking, Lillian clutched Cameron's arm in fear, "Besides, Ms. Faith just made a scene at home. Our family is trying to

sever business ties with both sides. If the Rowland family puts pressure on the Haywood family, we won't hold up, especially with

the Clements family in the mix. Bri, you can't be so reckless."

Her words struck a chord with Miranda and Cameron. The Rowland family was not to be trifled with!

Brielle, looking at the three of them, felt a stabbing pain in her eyes, a pain that spread to her heart.