

## Master 711

### Chapter 711

Brielle was blissfully unaware of Alivia's machinations as she quietly drove the car, noticing Aubree's silence beside her. Aubree sat in the passenger seat, gazing at the world passing by, wrapped in her own thoughts.

Sometimes, Brielle considered silence to be the best companion.

The road to Radiant Light Church was familiar territory for Brielle. Having driven it once before, she pressed a bit heavier on the gas pedal. Still, the church was a good distance from the heart of Beaconsfield, and it was three in the morning by the time they arrived.

At this hour, the doors were closed. The priests would be asleep, so the two women made do with what they had and spent the night in

the car.

At five o'clock, Brielle woke Aubree. "Can you hear the bells echoing from the hills? Come on, let's go up. We'll catch the sunrise just in time."

Aubree followed her lead, and together they ventured toward the church. Before them, the landscape unfolded into endless rolling hills. As the sun crested the horizon, Aubree felt an overwhelming urge to cry.

The world was vast and beautiful, and she had wasted so much time fixated on just one person. It seemed so shortsighted now.

The first time she met Andrew was when he descended from the Clements family's grand spiral staircase, like a prince looking down upon her from his lofty perch. Perhaps their ending was written in that first encounter—they were never meant to walk the same path.

Even now, she felt cursed as she witnessed the sunset, climbed mountains, or imagined herself beside a meadow's lake under a galaxy of stars. Her heart was tethered to Andrew, destined never to break free.

Maybe, just maybe, if she could retrieve the wish she had tied to that tree, this chapter of her life could finally close and be free from the burden of hope.

The predawn sky was still tinged with darkness, making the rising sun all the more brilliant.

The priests were surprised to learn that the women had come to collect a wish-pledge and offered their counsel.

Brielle took the ladder offered to her with a gracious smile. "Perhaps some of us need these rituals to find peace."

The priests clasped his hands and sighed. "Love brings worry. Love brings fear. Those free from love are free from both."

Brielle nodded in acknowledgment but offered no argument. It had not been long since she had left her own pledge among the many, and though she remembered where she had placed it, finding it now proved difficult.

She and Aubree began their search at the lowest branches and worked their way up. After an hour, they had yet to find it

Brielle was drenched in sweat, but when she looked at Aubree, her friend's face was a picture of calm resolve. By now, Andrew and Tessa would be on their way to the chapel in a wedding limousine. The irony of the situation left her speechless, and she continued her search without a word.

Two hours later, Andrew and Tessa had exchanged their vows in the chapel amidst the well-wishes of their guests.

Tears of joy sparkled in Tessa's eyes as she reveled in the envious gazes of the other women. This was how it should be-she was born a Rowland, destined to be the center of attention. She thanked Andrew silently for reinstating her to this coveted circle.

Yet for all her visible happiness, Andrew's demeanor remained detached, even as he placed the ring on Tessa's finger. Tessa was too immersed in her bliss to notice.

After the ceremony, Tessa clutched their marriage certificate, and couldn't resist embracing Andrew. "Andrew, I'm so happy. We're finally married."

It was clear to everyone that the wedding wasn't well-received, many of Andrew's friends, including Kenzo

and Max, had not attended. Andrew returned her embrace yet felt a hollow ache in his chest as if something vital had been consumed. He dropped his gaze and responded with a soft "Hmm," then released her.

Marissa appeared at the periphery, gesturing Tessa toward an empty room, indicating a need for a private word. Tessa's lips curled into a smile as she called out, "Hello, Marissa"

Marissa's face remained impassive

at the address, giving no response. Tessa didn't mind whether Marissa

was genuinely happy or not the marriage was sealed, and the

Cléments family's reputation would surely discourage any whispers of marital discord. That was exactly why she had worked so hard to marry Andrew

Tonight was their first night as man and wife. Their bridal suite was gorgeously adorned Tessa's heart N raced in anticipation of their wedding night, and her smile deepened at the thought.

## Chapter 712

After entering the room, Tessa shut the door firmly behind her "You wanted to see me

Marissa lifted her hand in imitation, brushing away a few stray strands of hair

from her forehead. "The wedding's done and dusted, and you know the Clements family won't take kindly to divorce gossip, so you need to wipe that video clean off the face of the earth. Don't say I didn't warn you, Tessa. Aubree's been a Clements since she was knee high to a grasshopper, and not a soul in the family wants to catch even a whiff of that video. Keeping it around is like sitting on a ticking time bomb. If it ever sees the light of day not only will Aubree get dragged through the mud, but you'll face a backlash ten times worse. You've got what you wanted, and now there's no need to keep a landmine under your bed. Just settle down and live a good life with Andrew. He won't shortchange you."

Her tone was dismissive, clearly unimpressed with Tessa

Tessa's face was all smiles. Her cheeks flushed with joy despite her frailty. Even her carefully applied makeup couldn't hide her glee.

She pulled out her phone and, right in front of Marissa, deleted the video without a trace. The video was only on a hidden file on my phone. Now that I've deleted it, it's gone for good. You can rest easy. No one's going to see that video again."

Just as she finished speaking, Andrew's voice came from outside the door. What video?"

Andrew walked in, his expression darkening

Tessa's heart skipped a beat, but then she heard Marissa's calm reply. Just a video from your wedding. I was toying with the idea of sending copies to other members of the Clements family, but that's settled now. Off you go. Tonight's your wedding night"

With that. Marissa didn't wait to gauge their reaction; she headed straight for the door. But before she left, she dropped a bombshell. "By the way, I've transferred my five percent shareholding to Aubree. It's worth a few billion. She can do whatever she wants with it, and the Clements family will soon find her a match that's fit for her status."

Hearing this, Andrew felt a chill run down his spine, his irritation growing. But he was married now. What could he say? Would Aubree agree if he wanted to keep things going with her?

Besides, she had been sullied, who knows by how many men. Just the thought made Andrew's skin crawl with disgust

At that moment, Tessa wrapped her arms around his waist, her voice dripping with seduction,

"Marissa's right, it's our wedding night. I heard the bed linen in the honeymoon suite was hand-embroidered, stitch by stitch, by the finest artisans. Shall we go check it out?"

Night had fallen, and since it was their wedding night, they were expected to have sex.

Tessa's cheeks were tinged with shyness. "Andrew, I'm ready for you to make love to me."

Andrew felt a surge of desire, remembering how he had taken matters into his own hands at the hotel and how that fire had been smoldering within him ever since. He looked down at Tessa, her eyes full of ripples, bashful yet pleading.

More importantly, Tessa was untouched, not tainted like Aubree, perfect to quench his burning lust.

He nodded, and they were about to leave the church when his phone buzzed. It was Aubree, asking about her phone, which he had taken. Andrew paused, not expecting Aubree to call. Everything felt off-kilter. Where had she been today, and why hadn't she attended the wedding? He even wanted to angrily confront her, to ask which lover she had taken to the hotel. If she could possibly sink any lower, could she not live without a man?

However, the last shred of his sanity told him that if he asked now, Aubree would likely hang up.

"It's with me."

"I need it now. Can you bring it over?"

Andrew couldn't help but smile at

Aubree's request, though he didn't!

realize it himself. "Sure, I'll be right there."

After hanging up, he turned to Tessa

Right on cue, the videographer came over, wanting to discuss the wedding video plans. He suggested it would be best if both the bride and groom were present. After all, a wedding video was a once-in-a-lifetime affair that needed a heart-to-heart with the newlyweds.

"Wait here and talk to them about it. I've got to deliver something. I'll be back to pick you up in half an hour"

Tessa felt an uneasy premonition.

"Andrew, who are you delivering something to? It couldn't possibly be would it?

and Aubree, could it? This was

that trape

their wedding video discussion, and

they needed to decide which moments to cherish and which guests to feature. But now Andrew was walking out.

"Kenzo. He left something very important at my place. I'll be back in thirty minutes."

## Chapter 713

Relief flooded Tessa as she realized it was Kenzo on the line-not Aubree. That was a bullet dodged. A playful smile graced her lips, and a blush crept onto her cheeks. "Mmmm, don't forget tonight is our wedding night," she teased

She tiptoed up and planted a soft kiss on Andrew's lips, lingering and deepening the embrace with a growing passion. They shared a ten-minute kiss in front of the photographer, a marathon of affection before finally parting

Kissing women was not something Andrew was averse to, especially kissing Tessa. They had been fiancés for so long, so kissing had become second nature to them. However, he had felt a distinct lack of engagement at that particular moment and had compensated by pulling her closer and employing some instinctual techniques

Once he released her, he was eager to head out. His mind was preoccupied with whether Aubree wanted to see him or if it was truly just about a trivial thing like a cellphone. Their relationship had hit a rough patch, and Aubree's demeanor towards him had turned odd. Almost as if he was some sort of predator. It used to be that a simple beckoning from him would have had Aubree coming to him meekly; now, he found himself having to approach her

As soon as he got into his car, his phone rang again. "No need to come to the hotel. I'm outside your honeymoon villa. Just come out and hand me the phone. I need it urgently. Her voice wavered slightly as if she'd had a little drink

A crease formed between Andrew's brows, puzzled by her intentions, but he agreed. I'm not at the honeymoon villa. Just wait there. III

be ten minutes."

Aubree leaned back in her car seat, silently gazing out at the world. Five hours earlier she and Brielle had finally found the wish card Brielle had left hanging heavily among many others.

It read-May Andrew and Aubree be bound together for a lifetime.

She had made that wish, and now she personally took down the card, tossed it into the burning pot, and watched as it slowly caught fire and turned to ash.

Love, it seemed, was just like that-intense and fiery in its prime, leaving not even a pitiful echo in its wake. When it came, it was like waves crashing over her, when it left, it was like mist fading away.

Twenty years of her life, her entire youth had burned away in that small, bright flame.

On the way to the Radiant Light Church, she couldn't help but cry. On her return, she felt a chilling indifference.

It was as if the version of Aubree who had loved Andrew, had taken a leap off the cliff outside the Radiant Light Church and was now dead.

Her lips curled into a cold smirk as she opened the sunroof, framing the moon above. This small window to the sky perfectly captured the lunar orb.

Ten minutes later, she heard a car approach. Andrew appeared, walking up to her vehicle and leaning down to knock on her window.

Aubree slowly rolled down the glass, facing Andrew outside,

Andrew handed her the phone, his gaze fixed intently on her. "Where were you today?" he asked.

"Went to light some candles, did you?"

"Hopeful for Tessa and me to split up?"

"Yeah, that would give me a chance, wouldn't it?"

Their banter was as disjointed as ever. Aubree had humbled herself with such probes countless times before, hopeful and cautious in her gaze, but the response was always the same.

"Don't kid yourself. Tessa will always be the one I end up with"

The night air was cold, and Andrew

within

had been feeling a fire burning within him these past days probably the aftereffects of some concoction Tessa had given him. Seeing Aubree now, his eyes darkened instantly

His gaze swept over Aubree inch by inch. She was dressed beautifully today as if she had made a special effort. Despite the cold, she wore a low-cut gray knit dress that showcased her figure to perfection.

At this close distance, he could smell

her scent-the magnolia fragrance that he favored. He had once complimented that scent for its clean

e

and elegant notes, and since then,

Aubree had often worn that particular

fragrance.

Andrew's mind wrestled with itself. On one hand, he resented Aubree, considering her touched by others, possibly fresh from a lover's bed. Yet, he couldn't resist her allure.

Aubree's body couldn't resist him, and his body couldn't resist Aubree

Chapter 714

Aubree's hands gripped the steering wheel of Max's car, feeling the familiar leather beneath her palms. Upon returning from their brief jaunt, Brielle received a call from Max, who nonchalantly announced that the car was now here, insisting she should not bother purchasing one herself. Brielle accepted the gift from her boyfriend with open arms and a carefree smile

Aubree had driven straight from Pearl Estate, eager to make the most of the time she had. She glanced at Andrew's hand resting on the window sill.

Aubree reached out covered his hand with her own, and playfully lifted his fingertips before bringing her lips close and biting down gently

A tingling sensation nished through his body, a mix of pain and pleasure.

Andrew's eyes flashed red with a mix of anger and something more primal. In a moment void of reason, he flung open the car door, yanked her out, and camed her towards the villa behind them. "Slut!" he hissed, his grip firm as he strode towards the building

He seemed to have forgotten that the villa was meant to be his and Tessa's love nest. It was Tessa who should've been entering those doors tonight.

Once inside the master bedroom, Aubree eyed the swathes of decor with raised eyebrows. Her fingers traced lightly across Andrew's

chest.

"In the honeymoon suite?" she mused

Without another word, Andrew pressed her into the sea of sheets, the stark contrast taking his breath away. In a frenzy, he tore at Aubree's clothes, his kisses growing more fierce by the second.

Tessa's scent lingered on his lips, her presence on his skin. Aubree felt a wave of revulsion, yet her legs wrapped tighter around his waist, her breath teasing his ear. "Can we turn on the TV? It might be fun," she whispered suggestively.

Andrew was beyond the point of caring about her whims.

The bedroom door remained ajar and within the room, a hidden television was embedded into the wall - one of Andrew's favorite features. Without a second thought, he grabbed the remote and turned it on. His hands ripped away the last of Aubree's intimate apparel

Aubree struggled for breath under his fervent kisses, nearly suffocating. It was supposed to be Tessa in this bed on their wedding night, yet here was Aubree, willingly defiling herself beyond caring for her own purity.

Andrew's eyes clouded over with an intoxicating mixture of desire and something darker. "You like this, don't you? Are you watching that kind of stuff now?" he growled.

"It makes it more exciting doesn't it?" Aubree repl

Aubree replied with a teasing smile, wrapping her arms around his neck.

"Whore!" he cursed again, only to hear a voice from the video.

"Make it sound good. This one's for your brother."

"Did you fight back like this with Andrew?"

"Please, stop..

"Stop

what? Ha, you really are desperate."

Andrew stiffened, slowly turning his head to the screen. All the heat in his veins turned to ice.

The video showed Aubree's

struggles, tears, pleas, and then her resignation. And there on the bed, amidst the sheets, lay Aubree with a smile blossoming on her face.

Her legs still clung to Andrew's waist, her eyes sultry. "Aren't we continuing?" she purred

Andrew shook, his complexion pale,

speechless from the shock. But Aubree was relentless her hands pulling his face down to meet her lips. She was like a peach ripening to the point of decay in an oil painting, her colors a blend of beauty and rot.

She was indeed a peach gone bad.

Andrew remained silent,

overwhelmed by the scene before him. His retinas were painted with the color of blood. His heart cracked, and his bones felt crushed to dust.

Chapter 716



Andrew's head was buried in Aubree's neck, and he felt as if his whole body were floating, empty of substance.

His eyes blazed with a searing agony.

"Aubree."

I'm sorry.

His arms encircled Aubree, his knobby hands loosened their grip feebly, his throat was choked up, and tears fell onto her skin.

Aubree just stood there, motionless, on his wedding night. With his wife's horrified gaze upon them, he begged Aubree humbly to stay. It struck Aubree as funny, but she couldn't muster a single laugh.

She remembered the day and moment her gaze first landed on him. Back then, she hadn't realized this man would become her greatest joy and her deepest despair,

Maybe that was just life, spending ages in confusion, investing in the wrong things, only to grow in a few fleeting moments. "Happy wedding day" She said calmly, then pushed past him and walked toward the door.

Tessa, clad in her bridal gown, felt icy cold and a buzzing in her ears. She wanted to scream in terror and slap Aubree across the face. but she was drained of all strength, like a clown excluded from the show, watching Andrew clutch at Aubree with earnest eyes.

"Aubree, I'm sorry, please don't do this.

Andrew's tears flowed so fiercely that he could barely see what was in front of him. He was panicked and afraid. He was afraid she might actually step back into the sister role for good.

It was Aubree who had crossed the line first and came to him. Now, she wanted to retreat unscathed. How could she?

Andrew clutched at her sleeve like a dog about to be abandoned. Aubree pried his fingers off one by one, but he embraced her tightly from behind. "Don't go."

Aubree felt the wetness on her neck, probably soaking through her clothes. She never knew Andrew's tears could be so plentiful. Suddenly, Aubree felt like crying too, though she probably ran out of tears because nothing came. She only felt a heavy, oppressive

sadness

Taking a deep breath, she felt as if she were about to break Andrew's fingers to push him away. She said nothing, just walked past Tessa and descended the stairs.

Tessa stood frozen against the wall, unable to move, as if all her senses had been stripped away, offering no reaction at all. Perhaps when one was utterly hopeless, that was the expression they wore.

The sound of Andrew's sorrowful crying reached her ears like a knife carving at her heart. Andrew had never cried for her, and she had never seen this side of him

With Aubree gone, Andrew slowly sank to the floor, hands covering his face, shoulders shaking, and ragged sobs escaping through his fingers.

Tessa felt an immense pain so acute she thought she might die. It was her wedding night, she was married to the man she wanted most, and it should have been a joyous return to spend the evening. She even prepared her body meticulously, but what she returned to was this scene.

Now Aubree was gone, not even sparing her a glance.

ly pitied her, allowing her to have this marriage.

Tessa felt a deep sense of humiliation, as if Aubree had merely

No, she couldn't believe it! Andrew had to love her!

She slowly knelt down against the wall in her bridal dress, crawling towards Andrew to might realize how good she was if she showed a little

care now.

embrace him. This heartbroken, pitiful man

But as she reached out, Andrew

stood up and kicked her over. Tessa couldn't withstand the blow, and she collapsed, breathing unevenly.

"Andrew?" She stared at Him in

disbelief, thinking the whole ordeal

must have been an illusion.

How could it be? How could Andrew bear to treat her like this?

Andrew stood there, crying and

laughing, feeling his heart ache so intensely he wanted to rip it out.

Chapter 717

"Andrew, I'm so scared," Tessa sobbed and collapsed on the floor. Fear had consumed her. How had their lives spiraled into this nightmare? And on their wedding night, no less. Andrew her Andrew, would never normally lay a finger on her. Something was temblly

wrong

She prayed for a return to normalcy, but Andrew advanced toward her with a predatory step.

Panic-stricken, Tessa scrambled back until she was cornered, her back pressed against the cold wall. The murderous intent emanating from Andrew was unmistakable, and she felt a chilling certainty that she wouldn't survive the night.

Her cheeks were streaked with tears, her fingernails digging painfully into her palms. "Andrew, please stop, please. I'm really scared," she cried, shaking her head, curling into a ball in the corner, her eyes wide with terror.

Andrew's hand shot out, fingers wrapping around her delicate throat.

Did Aubree not feel fear when the assault happened? How could Tessa do that to Aubree?

Echoing in Andrew's mind were Aubree's words- "I thought you were behind it." His eyes, bloodshot with rage and sorrow, spilled over with tears. Even as he hurt Tessa, the pain in his own heart was insurmountable.

Andrew wanted to end Tessa, but his fingers lacked the strength. Overwhelmed by grief, his hand trembled and fell away as a sob broke from his throat, a sound akin to a wounded beast at the height of its anguish.

He wanted to roar to tear the room asunder, but he could not muster the strength. All his energy seemed to have been sapped the moment he saw that damning video.

As he tried to wipe the tears from his cheeks, they only seemed to multiply. A sickly sweet taste filled his throat. He yearned to pass out, to escape into unconsciousness, but he remained agonizingly awake and utterly powerless.

Feeling his grip loosen, Tessa opened her eyes through her tears and wrapped her arms around him, seeking some semblance of warmth. "Andrew..."

Every part of him ached, especially where Tessa clung to him. He wished he could tear off that patch of skin. Pushing her away, he used the wall for support to stand, his crimson gaze sweeping the room.

He pulled out a lighter and set the curtain aflame.

"No, no! Andrew, I'm begging you, stop! This is our honeymoon suite!" Tessa's voice was hoarse with desperation. She clung to his legs, pleading, tears streaming down her face. The embroidery on their bedding, the stitches on her bridal gown—all handcrafted, all burning before her eyes.

"Andrew, what's happened to you?" she cried, her voice a raw, anguished rasp.

Her wedding night was in ruins, the room choking with smoke as the flames took hold, but Andrew just stood in silence, watching it all.

burn.

"Andrew..." Tessa clung to his legs, trying to stand. He kicked her away. His upbringing never taught him not to strike a woman. His shoe landed on Tessa's

chest, and he felt nothing but calm as she writhed in agony.

Aubree was right-Andrew and Tessa were the ones who deserved hell.

In the end, Tessa's tears ran dry, replaced by a hoarse, painful wail. She watched as her cherished decor turned to ash. If she didn't escape, both she and Andrew would be consumed by the blaze.

Andrew gave her one last look before

walking away. She begged him to om take her with him; she was too weak to escape on her own. But he left

without a backward glance, his departure resolute and cold.

As he disappeared, Tessa found a

reserve of strength fueled by resentment. She dragged herselfn

towards safety, her fingernails En

snapping, trailing blood behind her.

When she reached the ground floor,

she saw Andrew outside, smoking

against the backdrop of a fiery

inferno, their silhouettes aglow

Tessa collapsed on the ground, now free from the flames. She cried bitterly, her

body wracked with pain

The wedding night she had longed for ended in tragic disarray. The man she loved had abandoned her to save himself.

Chapter 718

She screamed in me her voice hoarse, at the beautiful bridal gown the wore was charred at the hem, dirt smudging its once pristine whiteness

Gritting her teeth, the wanted to confront Andrew, to demand why he would treat her this way, but Andrew was just standing a short distance away, silently smoking

His lips trembled slightly, his fingers holding the cigarette until it burned down to the nuh, oblivious to the pain

Tears spilled from his eyes again, trailing down his chin to the cold, unforgiving ground. Had it not been for the night's events, he would never have known he was capable of so many tears. His eyes were like a broken faucet.

He dared not think of the name Aubree. The very thought was a stab of pain so intense he felt like doubling over.

The cigarette was now finished, and he got into his car parked nearby and drove away without a word.

"Andrew!"

Andrew

Tessa shouted in panic, trying to rise and chase after him, but exhaustion pinned her down, forcing her to watch his car leave a trail of exhaust in its wake.

She was so cold, so hungry, and so very frightened. Andrew had abandoned her. Was she to spend the entire night shivering in her thin dress on the icy ground?

She would die, she really would,

quiet

"Andrew, please come back," she sobbed, her voice raw. But the night around her grew quiet.

Instead of Andrew, the fire brigade came to extinguish the flames, and the next morning, she was sent back to the Clements family

estate.

News of the fire at Andrew's honeymoon suite spread among their social circle. Some called it an ill omen, and others accused Tessa of bringing bad luck.

Tessa had hoped this misfortune would restore her social status, now, she was shunned even more, labeled a jinx not only to the Rowland family but to Andrew himself.

When Brielle heard of the fire, she was surprised. Last night, Aubree had come back to Pearl Estate very late, and after having some drinks and watching a variety show, they had fallen asleep. Aubree hadn't even woken up yet.

Brielle didn't want to disturb her. Seeing the news about the fire, she felt a sense of vindictive satisfaction. Serves them right! Why couldn't that damned couple have burned in the blaze?

She was unaware that Aubree had visited that villa last night. She was too tired to keep track and had slept deeply and soundly. Brielle had intended to share the good news with Aubree, but she opened the guest room door and saw Aubree still sleeping soundly. Brielle simply closed it again and went to the supermarket to buy ingredients for breakfast.

It had been a while since she had made breakfast at her place. She simmered soup and stir-fried a few dishes, then received a message from Max [Are you coming over?]

they stayed at the Pearl Estate

She and Aubree had returned to Beaconsfield late last night, so they

Soon, I'll bring breakfast. Made it myself.]

She made three portions and bought a beautiful thermos to keep the food warm.

[Okay!

Brielle didn't reply further and focused on preparing the breakfast

Aubree got out of bed and went to the bathroom, relieved to see her eyes weren't too swollen. After washing up quickly, she walked into the living room to find the table laden with steaming dishes, which warmed her heart.

Brielle was just serving the last dish. "You're awake. You have a shoot today, so eat up, and we'll head out together"

Aubree nodded, and they sat down to breakfast in silence.

Aubree noticed Brielle carefully packing another portion into the thermos and teased, "Oh, delivering breakfast to our esteemed CEO, Max, are we?"

This was the first time Brielle was doing something like this, especially in front of her best friend, and she couldn't help but blush. Aubree clicked her tongue in amusement and circled Brielle, "I mean, you and Max have sex enough times, and you still blush like a schoolgirl at the slightest tease,"

Brielle had enough, grabbin Aubree's arm. "Cut it out. Let's go, the crew is waiting for you."

In the car, Brielle still felt her cheeks burning with embarrassment. She drove to Dorsey International and asked Aubree to wait while she

delivered the breakfast upstairs

Aubree chuckled, "Go on, but remember, it's just breakfast - don't get sidetracked."

Brielle's face grew hotter, and she quickly took the elevator up.

Aubree sat in the car, watching Brielle's figure disappear before she allowed her smile to fade and turned on the radio. The news was about Andrew. His honeymoon suite had been set on fire in the middle of the night.

Aubree thought she had steeled her

heart against anything related to Andrew Still, after heaking his name unexpectedly, she felt her composure

crumbling, leaving her feeling like a ruin in an instant.

It seemed the softest part of her heart was still reserved for Andrew. But no longer was she filled with hope.

People really couldn't be persuaded. Brielle had tried to warn her, but she always thought she could hold on. Now, the pain had been her wake-up call. She wanted to see a bigger sky and venture into it with Brielle by her side.

## Chapter 719

Brielle arrived at the top floor of Dorsey International, and, as usual, Annie was the first person she ran into. However, Annie seemed to be in a sour mood today. She barely acknowledged Brielle's greeting before resuming whatever she was busily tending to at her desk. With a lunchbox in hand, Brielle didn't linger and entered Max's office without knocking a privilege she had always enjoyed.

As the door swung open and she caught sight of five or six executives withiri, her face instantly stiffened. Some were standing others sitting, but all quickly overtred their gaze when Brielle entered.

"The presentation is ready for you, boss, one of them said, noting the lunchtime interruption. "We'll circle back after you've eaten." The executives, avoiding any further eye contact, filed out one by one.

Frozen at the doorway, Brielle felt the lunchbox burning in her grip.

Max closed his laptop and raised an eyebrow at her lingering presence. With nervous energy, Brielle marched forward, her heart pounding like a drum solo as embarrassment washed over her. "Made you breakfast," she said, attempting a casual tone

Max wrapped an arm around her waist, leaning in for a kiss, but Brielle dodged his advance. "Aubree's waiting for me downstairs."

She dreaded the teasing she'd endure from Aubree if she showed up looking too... glowing.

Max sighed and withdrew his arm. At his gesture of disappointment, Brielle's heart twinged with reluctance. "Tll be back at Premier Palace tonight."

Hearing this, Max's Adam's apple bobbed. His gaze raked over her, and his voice roughened. "I'll make it home early, too."

Her cheeks flushed with understanding. They'd both been so busy tangled in- miscommunications, and now was their chance to

reconnect

The usually solemn office seemed to bloom with romantic bubbles at her arrival, but with the executives due to return, Brielle didn't dare stay long.

"I should go." she said, turning to leave, but Max called out, "Brielle."

She looked back to see him touch his lips - the message clear

Amused, Brielle wrapped her arms around his neck and planted a quick kiss on his lips. The moment, however, quickly escalated, and their kiss deepened.

"I wanted to discuss the project further, I think... The door burst open, revealing one of the previously departed executives, who, upon realizing the situation, clamped the door shut again. "Sorry for the interruption."

Brielle's face blazed with embarrassment, frustration boiling over. She wished she could disappear from the planet. Blaming herself for succumbing to temptation, she stormed out, avoiding any eye contact as she headed straight for the private elevator, jabbing the button more than necessary.

Still feeling overheated, she found Aubree's eyes on her as she slid into the car. "Your lipstick is smeared."

Wishing for a crevice to swallow her whole, Brielle touched her lips, realizing the light color had bled beyond their edges. Aubree, with a smirk, handed her a tissue. "Mr. Dorsey must get a kick out of seeing you all flustered like that. What a perv."

□ □ □ □ □ □

Brielle wiped her mouth clean, avoiding a response, and drove them to Stellar Stage Entertainment in silence.

Today's shoot was still at Stellar Stage, and Aubree's scenes were up soon. They parted ways in the parking lot-Brielle to her office, Aubree to the set.

Walking through the hallway, Brielle greeted young artists from Stellar Stage, all beaming and shyly calling out, "Ms. Haywood."

"Ms. Haywood, you're even more stunning in person."

"Ms. Haywood, I've been dying to meet you."

Brielle responded politely until she reached her office, where she found Dustin already waiting, his presence a surprise. "Mr. Lynch?" Dustin Peyes were lined with

With evident fatigue. Seeing her arrive, he massaged his temples. "BrL was everything okay last night?" She didn't mind Dustin's impromptu visit or that he was in her office. To her, he was always one to follow his whims

She asked Donny to bring in some tea.

"Still troubled about your sister's situation, Mr. Lynch?"



His expression darkened. "We checked out Mark. His background is clean. His wife's whereabouts) m though remain a mystery. No trace

of her. And with the Sunflower Children's Home records destroyed, it's impossible to track all the kids adopted over the years."

Dustin stood, ceding the main chair  
to her and settling onto the couch

with a heavy sigh like he wasom confiding in a close friend. "My grandmother doesn't have much time left. The doctors issued another critical notice."

Chapter 720

Brielle couldn't help but empathize with Dustin, as she was without family ties

"Mr. Lynch, why don't you head back and keep your grandma company? The Lynch clan's power plays are so convoluted, and you've talked about the resistance you're up against. Finding what you're looking for won't happen overnight"

Dustin closed his eyes, fighting back the warmth welling up inside. "I know, which is why I won't be coming back to Beaconsfield anytime soon. I'm going to stay by my grandma's side."

Brielle felt a twinge of emotion. He had made a special trip just to see her before he left. She also considered Dustin a friend.

"Oh, and when I met with Mark, he asked me to bring something for you" Dustin nodded towards the table.

Brielle spotted the wooden box and furrowed her brow in curiosity. What could Mark possibly have for her?

When she opened it in front of Dustin, her eyes flickered with surprise. She never expected to find a paternity test inside.

Just seeing the words "paternity test on the cover was enough for Brielle; she didn't need to look any further. So Mark had been searching for her biological parents all this time, and at last, he had a successful match with one of them.

The confusion between her and Lillian's information had clouded the truth, but with Lillian gone and no one else left, this test was likely legitimate.

Yet Brielle couldn't muster any joy. Her face tightened, a forced smile struggling to appear

Dustin didn't peek inside but sensed her mood darken and stepped closer out of curiosity. Brielle had already closed the box, the weight of it heavy in her heart.

"Bri, what's wrong?"

She shook her head, the smile on her face belying her true feelings. "It's nothing. Thank you for bringing this, Mr. Lynch. How about I treat you to dinner?"

Dustin's gaze was soft and warm. There was something about being with Brielle that just felt right. He couldn't resist ruffling her hair gently.

"My cars waiting downstairs, and I'm off to the airport. Bri, I count you as my friend here in Beaconsfield, better than anyone. If you ever find yourself in a bind, give me a call, okay? No matter what, I'll come help you."

His words might have sounded like a confession to some women. But to Dustin, Brielle was just genuinely likable-in looks, personality, and capability. In some ways, she reminded Dustin of his mother. His mother was a celebrated beauty in North American circles, a formidable businesswoman who'd stepped back from the limelight after her sister's disappearance.

Had her sister not gone missing, his mother might have been one of the most influential women in the world two decades ago. But when her sister vanished, she lost interest in accolades, becoming reclusive and forlorn

That loss ended his mother's career and left a scar in Dustin's heart. As the eldest son, it was his duty to pick up the mantle. Now, Infinity Brilliance was more successful than ever, and with that success came more adversaries.

His promise to Brielle was sincere. From the moment he met her, he knew they clicked.

"Mr. Lynch, I remember that."

Brielle was touched, she escorted him to his car and watched him drive away. Only after standing there for a moment did she realize how reluctant she was to see him go. Feeling a sense of loss, she returned upstairs and stared at the wooden box, massaging her temples.

Mark called at that moment. "Bri, did you get the thing Mr. Lynch brought you?"

"I did, thanks, Mark. I thought you'd given up looking."

"How could I? If the Haywood family wasn't your destiny, I had to try something else. I'm sorry for the trouble the Haywoods gave you and how they mistreated you. I did my best this time. The paternity test results just came in. I wanted to bring them myself but worried my visit might cause you problems"

Brielle didn't respond, her mind eerily

calm'in the face of the paternity test. She had always wanted to om

understand why she was left at an orphanage doorstep, why her parents

had abandoned her. But after the

ordeal with the Haywoods, she found

a new sense of acceptance. What mattered most was living well in the present.

I've included your father's current address in the documents. Whether you decide to see him is up to you"

Brielle's lips pressed into a thin line.

She was still not ready to confront the paternity test report. She no longer needed it, letting each other be was perhaps for the best

She planned to drive to Premier Palace after wrapping up at the im company, but the reception called with unexpected news-a TV crew

from Beaconsfield's "Life Focus" had shown up in force.

Just two hours earlier, the show had received a plea from a man claiming to have

lost his daughter over twenty years ago. Now that she

was a public figure, a wealthy CEO, he was demanding a hundred million for support.