

Resent Reject Regret

Chapter 41 Saving Herself for Sterling... And Sterling Only

Any other emotions Brendan could have felt had been displaced by unrelenting ire. “God, I’m going home. I’ll see her tomorrow.”

That took Steven by surprise, but he nodded nonetheless. “Shall I drive you home now?”

“No. Pass me the keys. I’ll drive.”

He checked his suit and headed to the parking garage, almost a little too frantically.

His car zipped through the road, tearing through the air like a fired bullet. When he arrived, he immediately scanned the living room. Resentment flitted past his eyes – he had thought that it would at least be lit.

Because that would mean someone was waiting for him to come home.

He checked himself. She was blind. Whether a room was

lit or not did not matter. He was sure she would be reclining on the couch, just like she used to. Waiting.

Brendan strode toward the door and pushed it open.

The living room was completely empty. Even the dining table was empty-devoid of the warm supper that was once her staple form of welcome.

The days when Deirdre would curl into herself at the edge of the couch at night, waiting for hours to see him come home, were over. Gone was the way her face used to light up gingerly, her bashful joy the moment he stepped into the house, and the way she sidled up to him sheepishly and asked if he was hungry.

An acute pang assaulted Brendan’s chest. His chest caved in, and he felt suffocated. In his mind, there was only one devil to blame.

Sterling f*cking Fuller. That son of a b*tch had replaced him in her heart, and Brendan had never been more livid in his life.

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Deirdre had sworn that she loved him with all her heart. Ha! Was this the extent of her love? Was her love so dirt – cheap that any random man could arouse her supposedly profound love?! Brendan flung his coat to the floor and stormed upstairs. He then shoved the door open,

Deirdre was already soundly asleep, but the commotion freaked her out of her slumber. Panic crawled all over her features, and she tugged her comforter even closer to herself, almost as though it would defend her against him.

She was terrified. That display of terror burned away any shred of reason Brendan had left.

He lunged for her and pinned her under him. Deirdre's face paled. "What are you doing?!"

She flailed her arms, putting up as much of a fight as she could to stop him from touching her. Enraged, Brendan locked her arms with a twist of his own, bellowing, "What now, b*tch?! I'm getting my end of the deal —what you owe me! Did you really think I brought you here just so you could leech off my goodwill?" A shrill cry was heard, along with the sound of fabric being ripped open. Deirdre's nightgown was in pieces, and she shuddered in a rage. "I owe you nothing! We're nothing! There's nothing between us-and I'm only here because you forced me to! Don't-touch-me!" "Why? So that Sterling can?" Malice filled Brendan's eyes. "Sure, let that f*cker try. I'll amputate both his arms and turn them into dog food!" Despair filled Deirdre. His tyranny left no space for reason and mercy, and tears now rolled out of her eyes. "Please, just let me go. Why can't you just let me go? I'm a monstrosity, aren't I? An affront to your eyes? Doesn't doing this to me disgust you?! Charlene is right there for you! Just screw her instead, please... Spare me!" Brendan saw red. His blood was now boiling. Had he heard her right? Had she just told him to f*ck Charlene so she could be "spared"?! He felt his chest burning. His beet-red eyes were devoid of common sense even before he held Deirdre by the jaw

with a grip closer to a chokehold. "You fighting me because you're saving yourself for that son of a b*tch? F* ck you, Deirdre. You're no Vestal Virgin-you're a wh*re, and I ran through every inch of your body a long time ago! Me!"

He castigated her mercilessly because she needed to be trampled and humiliated. She needed someone to carve the truth into her bones: He was the only man she would ever have.

His violence-the growing force crushing around Deirdre's wrist with each passing second in combination with the verbal abuse-only pushed Deirdre even more to the edge of a breakdown.

"What the f*ck do you want from me, Brendan Brighthall?!" she screamed. "What more do you f*cking want from me?!"

Chapter 42 Running Away? With Whom?

"If this is your revenge on me for stubbornly keeping my child, then shouldn't his death have pleased you enough?! I was incarcerated for a year! I've lost everything I've ever had! Everything... God... What will it take for you to be satisfied? To let me go?

"I've already regretted ever taking up the... the toxic mantle of being the fake Mrs. Brighthall, and I don't want it anymore... Let me go, I'm begging you... I don't want it anymore. I don't want to be Mrs. Brighthall anymore..."

She swooned after that.

Brendan released her. His chest was wrangled in pain, a pain so great that he could not contain it. It pressed against his lungs, denying him any chance to breathe.

What was going on?

He had always seen himself as an ubermensch unstoppable and almost omnipotent . And yet he could not answer this one simple question. His mind was beleaguered by sheer frustration. He stood on the balcony and began to empty his cigarette pack, as though he was trying to self-medicate, however temporarily, with nicotine.

Out of all these inscrutable knots, Brendan was sure of

one thing: He wanted Deirdre to return to him and be his devout lover. She had nothing left, after all. Not her eyes or her looks, not even her mother. Sterling might claim to love her now, but Brendan was sure his love was as fleeting as an impulse. All he needed from Deirdre was docility. In exchange for her submission , he would gladly take care of her for the rest of her life. She would never want for anything.

Deirdre had no idea how much time had passed. All she knew was that her phone was ringing, and that is what woke her up. She opened her eyes and was immediately assaulted by a wave of soreness.

She inhaled sharply upon recognizing it all. Deirdre's hand felt its way to her phone. "Hello?" she asked, her voice hoarse and raspy. "Who's this?" "Dee, it's me!"

His voice made her wake up for good. "Sterry?"

Concern filled his every word. "Are you okay? Your voice sounds so... hoarse. Are you sick?"

Pieces of what that beast of a man had done to her formed in her memories, each of them ushering new chills into her bones. She clenched her fists and replied, "I'm okay. It's been raining for the past few days, and I caught a cold. What about you, though? How are your injuries?"

"We... should meet." Sterling always spoke to Deirdre

with a special kind of loving, gentle tone, but this was the first time he sounded grave and afraid. "Every time my mind drifted to the thought of you being caged by t-t that psychopath, I just... God, I couldn't help feeling anxious! I'm just glad he at least granted you the freedom to answer calls. You're not homebound too, are you? Tell me your address. We'll talk when I get there."

Deirdre wanted to tell him no. She was deadly terrified of dragging Sterling back into this nightmare. She could not –and would not-entangle herself with him anymore. But there were words yet unspoken that had to be said in person, so...

"A-Alright.

Deirdre had always known where her house was. She told Sterling the address, took some clothes out of her luggage, got changed, and left. She waited at the fork of the street.

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Ten or more minutes passed before Sterling Fuller appeared—a frantic man, his back hunched as he paced toward his destination as quickly as he could. His eyes caught a glimpse of Deirdre in the distance and he quickened his pace.

He skipped a few steps ahead and wrapped his arms around Deirdre, pulling her into him hard.

"God, oh God! I'm sorry, Dee... I'm so sorry," he

muttered, sounding guilt-ridden. "I couldn't protect you as well as I should—I should have protected you better! I wanted to go after you that day. I wanted to run out of the house, but the rest of my family... They kept me at home. I haven't been able to go outside until now! Thank God you're okay... Lord knows I will never forgive myself if anything happens to you!"

Deirdre cast her eyes to the floor. He felt so warm that she began to snifle.

Then, she remembered the depths of Brendan's cruelty.

She pushed his arms away, freeing herself from his hug. Sterling paused, dread trickling into his mind. "What's wrong?"

Deirdre took a deep breath. "Thanks for everything you've ever done for me, Sterry. Those years were really good, and I've always wanted to repay you... But so many things stood in the way," she said. "So I guess this is it. This is goodbye." Sterling's eyes narrowed in disbelief. He then gripped her shoulders. "W-What are you saying, Dee? Did he make you say it? He did, didn't he?!" Sterling demanded. "Don't believe a single thing he says! He says he's so powerful that he's the law of the land, doesn't he? Well, he can't do jacksh*t if we leave this country altogether—and that's what we'll do! I'll take you with me right now!"

Deirdre's lips parted. Before she could say anything,

though, she heard a new voice interject. "Take who?"

Chapter 43 You're Undeserving of Her Love!

Deirdre hardly had the chance to react. Brute force, seemingly out of nowhere, clamped itself around her wrist, crushing it so hard that she wondered if it was about to grind her bones. Terror then drained the color of her face.

Brendan had found them!

The man fixed her with eyes like daggers. "Not bad, Deirdre! You've really perfected the art of being a wh*re. Last I checked, you were lying on my bed. But now? Suddenly, here you are, eagerly spreading your legs wide and crying to be banged! Well, well. The two of you would have gone to town if I had been just two seconds too late

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Sterling gave Brendan barely enough time to finish his sentence before throwing a furious punch right on his nose. "F*ck you, Brighthall! God, the kind of sh*t you say -what the hell is wrong with you? How dare you humiliate Dee like this?!"

The force knocked Brendan's face aside. A stream of blood trickled out of the corner of his lips, but instead of returning the blow, he simply snickered. "So. Your previous lesson hasn't been drilled into your skull yet, Fuller? Still think you can survive in Neve, do you?"

Deirdre's face paled. "No. No, don't!" she cried out. Her

voice was audibly trembling. "You've got this all wrong, Brendan. I came here to tell him it was over! It was the only reason I came-"

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"Shut up!" Brendan erupted. Fury blazed in his eyes, and Sterling would have been a corpse already if manslaughter was not illegal. "I'm not f*cking blind or deaf, b*tch! I know you just wanna run away with him! Everything I've told you has fallen on deaf ears, hasn't it?!"

If he had been even a minute too late, these two would have eloped to god-knows-which foreign country

already. This b*tch... was a f*cking ingrate!

And ingrates did not deserve to be shown mercy!

"No! I didn't plan to run away at all!" Deirdre screamed.

"No? No?! You're standing here, talking to that son of a b *tch, and telling me 'no'?! I didn't mess you up hard enough last night, did I? Didn't destroy you enough since you threw yourself at another man's crotch because you're still sooo00000 horny! Christ. Don't the marks I left on you repulse him even in the slightest?!"

Brendan ripped her collar open, exposing the telltale red spots on her skin-colored canvas. He complimented the display with a mocking smirk, looking at Sterling, "Look! Take it in! She was under me last night, in my bed! God, Sterling Fuller. You can't be so thirsty for p*ssy that you'd take my leftovers just to have a taste, right? Cheer

up, man! You can't die by not f*cking a woman!" he jeered.

The hickeys on her neck were a damning indictment. Deirdre's face turned ghastly pale as she slapped her hands around her neck in a desperate attempt to cover it. "Stop! Let go, Brendan!"

She was having a breakdown. Why did he have to humiliate her like this in front of Sterling?! When would he stop treating her as a sub-human?!

Sterling's eyes turned beet-red from anger. "Stop this, you f*cking psycho! Can't you see how much she hates this?! This is why you don't deserve her! You'll never f*cking deserve her, you madman!"

He lurched, throwing a punch at Brendan while the latter returned the favor.

Brendan's lips were chaffed. He tasted metal in his mouth, and yet pain had no place among his rage. "Okay! Sure! I don't deserve her love, unlike Mr. White Knight here!" He wiped the blood off and smirked. "News flash: I don't give a flying f*ck. She doesn't love me? Big f*cking deal! All this sanctimonious talk about love doesn't change the fact that you can't have her at all. All you can do, you pathetic c*ck, is watch her follow me around and obey my every order!" Obey him?

Deirdre wanted to puke. It felt as though someone had

swung a bat right at her chest. Her heart was mangled; torn up. Tears of anguish burst out of her eyes, and there was nothing she could do to stop them.

He kept doing this to her. He kept dehumanizing her. In his mind, she was literally a b*tch fit to be kicked or stomped out of the way whenever he pleased. He abused her the way one abused an animal, and yet the thought of her wagging her tail at anyone other than him drove the man into a crazy fit. No possessive man alive could be sicker than Brendan Brighthall!

'You're cruel, Brendan...'

Pain had robbed Deirdre of her words. Sterling watched the agony strewn all over her features and was seized by equal amounts of panic. He wanted to rush toward her and help her, but two bodyguards suddenly materialized from the shadows and stood in his way.

Two more appeared. They stood by, awaiting Brendan's orders.

The man glared at Deirdre coldly. "Take her to the car and watch her like hawks! Do not give her a chance to escape!"

Chapter 44 What a Pair of Star-Crossed Lovers! Brendan turned back to Sterling. "I've got some unfinished business with this *sshole over here," he snarled. "I'm itching to see if I can beat a man's lust for another man's woman out of him!" Deirdre's heart missed a beat. Panic possessed her, and she immediately clawed at Brendan's arm. "No, what are you planning to do, Brendan?! This is between the two of us! You can shout and throw punches, but please... don't drag an outsider into this!"

Her instinct to defend Sterling made Brendan's eyes grow colder. "An outsider?" he parroted mockingly, smirking. "I don't think any woman would happily elope with an outsider, do you? And now he's suddenly just some random what's-his-name to you? Oh my God, Deirdre McKinnon, aren't you a callous b*tch! You could murder Sterling with heartache alone, my dear."

Deirdre's eyes watered again. Her-heartless? Who was the heartless one among them? What had happened to the man who had appeared at that charity event all those years ago? The man with the kindest smile ever?

Had she hallucinated that? Or had she fallen in love with an impostor?

How could he feel absolutely nothing for her-not even a smidge of compassion-despite what they had shared throughout those two years? "I was wrong, okay? I was wrong, Brendan! I won't ever see him or talk to him again! I just want you to let him go!" she shrieked before falling to the floor, groveling in tears, her dowdy appearance long forgotten. Sterling's eyes were red with tears. He would have dived for her if it were not for the muscular bodyguards in his way. "Don't do this, Dee!" he cried. "Don't debase yourself like this before this Devil's spawn! He's below

you!"

Brendan watched the histrionics unfold with cool, uncaring eyes. God, these two almost deserved a standing ovation! "Ngawww, would you look at these star-crossed lovers! I have got to be the villain for trying to separate Romeo and Juliet like this!"

His response sent chills down Deirdre's spine. She knew he was broiling now-she could hear his teeth grinding against each other as he spoke.

"Brendan! Brendan, please!" she tried again, begging.

"When the f*ck are you two going to get her into the car?! Or am I supposed to do this myself?"

"No! Don't – Brendan! Don't hurt him! It's against the law! Don't hurt him!" Deirdre shrieked whatever came

into her mind as she struggled to no avail. Her strength was laughable compared to that of a professional bodyguard. To Brendan's men, she was almost insultingly easy to manhandle.

They opened the door to the car and tossed her inside as easily as one chucked garbage.

Deirdre was locked inside the car. She could not hear anything from a distance, so she punched the window, screaming, "Please, let me out! I'm begging you! You know battery is illegal, don't you? Your inaction will make all of you complicit in the eyes of the law! Let me out!"

The bodyguards stared at her as though they were looking at an inmate in a mental asylum. Complicit? So what if they were complicit? Not a soul in the entire city could remotely shake Brendan. He was untouchable!

And this hideous thing-Christ, talk about low self awareness. She had actually managed to charm Brendan with that sorry face of hers and she somehow still thought she was hot enough to have a tryst with another guy... in broad daylight!

"Enough already, princess. We ain't letting you out no matter how many times you beg us to," one of them finally said. "Honestly, aren't you the one who's at fault here? If that poor bastard dies, it's on you. You should at least have the sense to obey Mr. Brighthall, right? But no! B*tch gotta scratch that itch, and now she dragged that

guy into this and she's crying as though she has no idea why this is happening!" "Hey, I wouldn't be talking sh*t about Mr. Brighthall's babydoll if I were you. All it would take is a suggestion from her while she's sliding up and down his crotch and you'd be a goner!"

"Really? This b*tch?" The first bodyguard snorted. "If you ask me, it's f*cking voodoo. She probably used some love potion to make him fall in love with her, but the way I see it, she's just a glorified sex doll. He won't ever tell anyone he knows her, man, let alone care if she's dead." Even as the bodyguards chatted between themselves, they bashed and mocked Deirdre, sending chills down her spine.

She felt colder than someone left in a river in the bitter winter.

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Chapter 45 Who Do You Think You Are?

Strewn into their mockery was a thinly-veiled accusation: It was all Deirdre's fault.

How could they be so cruel? She was just as much of a human as they were. She was not an emotionless plaything ! Why must she obey Brendan's every whim? Because she had been unfortunate enough to become the Devil's object of obsession ? Because she deserved to be punished for saying yes to becoming Mrs. Brighthall?

Deirdre's pain was consuming her from within. She seemed to have depleted her entire supply of tears, and now all there was left in her eyes was a bottomless void threatening to swallow her sense of self.

Then, she remembered. Sterling was about to be beaten by a violent mob.

Fingers trembling, she thought of Brendan's habit and felt her way to the bottom of the driver's seat. Then, she pulled out a knife.

She turned its pointy edge toward her neck.

The bodyguards jumped and panicked. "What the hell are you doing?! Get that thing away from you!" They cried, yanking the car door open.

"Get away from me!" Deirdre shouted, digging it close to

her skin. She drew a line, and blood poured like a drawn curtain. She might have lost her sight, but her hollow

eyes managed to conjure the ferocity of cornered prey she looked as though she would sever her own throat if they came any closer.

The car was too small for two burly men to snatch the knife from her before she could act.

Gritting her teeth, Deirdre snarled, "Tell them to stop, now. And tell Brendan to come back here."

The bodyguards' faces turned white. If they f*cked this up ... God, there would not be any corpses in the caskets during their eventual funerals! "Alright, princess! You stay right here and don't let that knife slip the wrong way, you hear me? I'm gonna get Mr. Brighthall now! Don't move!"

He bolted away to summon his boss immediately. Brendan practically rushed to the car, and it did not take him long to see Deirdre holding a knife to her neck, her collar stained red.

Rage possessed him. "What the f*ck, McKinnon?! How suicidal are you?!" he shrieked, his body trembling. The cut she had made was deep-and yet she looked like she did not give a damn about herself. All she cared about was weaponizing her life against him!

Deirdre's lips were devoid of color, and her eyes were red. "Let Sterling go, Brendan. The thing between us is long

over. You let him go and I'll go with you. And then, if it pleases you, I'll die at your command!" The knife quivered as her lips moved, deepening the cut. Brendan's eyes were beet -red, but finally, he howled, "Fine! Fine!" He clenched his fists, gritted his teeth, and

turned to one of his bodyguards. "Stop f*cking standing there like an idiot and tell them to release that bastard! Then tell that piece of sh*t to get the f*ck out of here!"

The bodyguard ran away. Deirdre's eyelashes fluttered.

Suddenly, she felt her strength fading away from her fingers. The knife fell out of her hands. It had barely landed on the seat when Brendan lurched into the car, his hands gripping her collar, and bellowed hysterically, "You want to die so much, Deirdre McKinnon?! If that's what you want, I'll make sure you die! You'll die for that f *cking Sterling – that's how worthless and cheap your life is, isn't it?! How dare you threaten me with your life? How dare you?!"

Deirdre's eyes watered. Her body had been tense throughout the standoff, but now that it was over, she relaxed and realized how much her neck hurt.

It was bad. It was as if her blood was too happy to leave her and would do so in droves if she sighed. Every drop of the outpouring blood was taking away a little bit of her life, and dying was a far more excruciating process than she had imagined.

Deirdre regretted nothing. It was the only thing she could have done. She knew that, given Brendan's proclivity for extremities, Sterling would have ended up bedridden for more than a month and still would not be able to get up.

"You don't u-nderstand a t-thing, Brendan," she whispered raspily. "I can't ... cause him more pain. He's. lost so much... because of me... over one year alone. I... I owe him my life. I will... gladly die... for your a amusement if it means you... won't harm h-him anymore

It hurt so much that her face was white as a sheet.

"Shut the f*ck up! Shut up, shut up, shut up!" Brendan yelled. He pressed his hand against her neck, fumbling to stop the flow, and bellowed at the bodyguard to just drive already. The bodyguard was taken aback. He had never seen his boss so apoplectic before. There was no time to dawdle. He got into the driving seat and took them to the nearest hospital.

Chapter 46 It's All Because of Her

Deirdre's situation was critical. It took the emergency staff hours of grueling effort and focus to operate on her. Everyone was working with bated breath, and no one dared to relax. When it was finally over, they breathed a collective sigh of relief.

She was sent back to the mansion after that. Or to be more accurate, she was quarantined. Brendan hired more watchers to mind her, and now, she was a blind woman who had lost even the privilege to walk outside.

Brendan himself seemed to have vanished from her life.

She asked one of the bodyguards where he was, and all she received was a dismissive, "No idea."

A few days later, while Deirdre was on her way down the stairs, she overheard the bodyguards chatting among themselves. "No kidding. This sh*t is still boggling to me -why

is Mr. Brighthall keeping Mrs. Quasimodo in his bell tower, man? I almost think he's planning to have her replace Miss McKinney as his babe!... If it weren't for the fact that he's been on these non-stop vacations abroad with Miss McKinney, that is."

"Are you tripping? That's the most preposterous theory I've ever heard! You know Mr. Brighthall loves Miss McKinney the most, right? How else would you explain him casting his business aside and taking her on

extravagant trips just because the lady said she's feeling a little bit 'unwell'?"

So Brendan's absence was not out of spite or fury for her. It was because Charlene had been sick lately, prompting him to drop everything just to keep the girl company.

The mystery was solved-and yet Deirdre could not bring herself to smile at all. Still, Charlene must have redirected all the focus Brendan would have dedicated to making Sterling miserable, right? Not that she could call him to confirm this. Her phone was gone-Brendan had smashed it in a fit of rage. For a moment, Deirdre stood in the same spot, lost in her stupor.

Footsteps. Then, a voice said, "Miss McKinnon?"

It was the doctor, who was on one of his scheduled visits. Her bandage, the doctor had said, needed to be redressed every three days so it would not leave a nasty scar on her neck. The injury had not been lethal, but its position on her body was... unappealing.

Deirdre found the concern amusing. Why would someone whose face was already ruined care about a little scar on her neck?

"Alright. We'll do it downstairs on the couch this time," she answered. She could not opt out of it anyway. "I don't want to do it in my room."

She felt for the handrail and descended the stairs before feeling around for the couch. She then took a seat gingerly.

The doctor began the procedure with practiced ease. Halfway through, his phone vibrated, and he looked down and snickered nonchalantly. "Another one got exposed. It's like a rite of passage to do something dirty before you become a star entrepreneur at this age, yeah?" he began. "She even had the identity of her bastard son exposed." Deirdre's heart skipped a beat. "What did you say? Whose bastard son?"

"The founder of some famous fashion brand here. All her nasty deeds got exposed-including her bastard son's picture. Honestly, the kid looks pretty alright, but the stink of his mother, who committed manslaughter? Brr. Heard the kid's a doctor, too, but that career's crashed and burned now. No hospital in this area would want such a controversial man in their establishment, I can tell you that."

Deirdre's mind went blank. She grabbed the doctor's arm, her voice rising. "W-Which family is this? What is the name of the son?" The doctor jerked. "Uh, the Fuller family? The son is named Sterling or something." Deirdre felt a force crashing against her chest, turning her entrails into mincemeat. Her brain went blank, and

her eyes reddened. Trembling, she cried, "This can't be true! It can't be-look again! You gotta look again and tell me what his name really is!"

Her denial was sudden and unnatural. Anxious, the doctor leaped from his seat and tried to pacify her. "Hey, calm down, please! Your wound has barely closed. You could tear it open if you're not careful!"

Calm down? Tears began to roll down Deirdre's face. How was she supposed to calm down? Sterling had been dragged through the mud and maligned by the public because of her. He had barely gotten out of that hell-and now more things about him had been exposed?!

His future was ruined! He was a talented doctor, for Christ's sake! Yet there was nothing he could do because nobody would ever let him practice again!

And it was all because of her.

Because she had pissed Brendan off.

Chapter 47 I Want to See Brendan Brighthall!

Deirdre was on the verge of breaking down. She shoved the doctor away, but being blind, she tripped over the table leg and fell forward.

Her bandage turned a deep shade of red. The doctor hurried toward her, alarmed, but Deirdre scrambled to her feet and hurtled again, her pain forgotten.

The bodyguard quickly realized something was amiss. Yanking her by the arm, he cried, "What now?!"

Deirdre shrieked, "Let me go! Let me go right now! I want to go out!" "No way, princess!" came the thundering reply. The bodyguard did not even frown, nor did he see the need to be gentler. "Mr. Brighthall has explicitly forbidden you to step outside the house!" His force against Deirdre caused the wound on her neck to tear open again. Blood was pouring out... again. The doctor panicked. "Pin her down and don't let her move any more! If this keeps up, she's gonna have to return to the operating table!"

The bodyguards were immediately mobilized. One yanked her by the hair and pressed her against the table, pinning her arms with his arm as though he was apprehending a criminal. It did not matter if her dignity was compromised.

The force was so great that Deirdre thought her face was flattened. The doctor did not seem to care if she was in pain either; all he cared about was how he would finally address her wound and stop the bleeding.

Her shoulders trembled, and she keened.

She could not understand why this was happening. He had stripped off so many of her human rights that she was living without dignity. Even after quarantining her at home like

livestock in a coop, Brendan still could not find it in him to spare Sterling any more trouble?!

That man's life was over! His dreams? His future? All gone! He would never be able to live in Neve without people looking down on him. Nobody would trust him as a doctor anymore.

Her heart ached at the thought. She wished she could jump off a building right now. She wished she had died sooner. She wished she had died in prison! Sterling would have never met her if she had. His life would have been fine!

"He promised! He promised he wouldn't harm Sterling anymore! He promiseeeeeeeed!" she shrieked.

"Oy, shut the f*ck up!" one of the bodyguards finally erupted. God, this woman was exhausting – especially when he had to look at that sorry excuse of a face.

"Are you brain dead or what? If suicide is your goal,

princess, then jump in front of Mr. Brighthall! No one will have to stop you then! But now? Goddamn it, we're all gonna die because of your endless drama, ma'am! If Mr. Brighthall knew your wound had just reopened, do you think he'd let us get away with it with just one scar? Hell, he would f*cking kill us!"

"For f*ck's sake, it's infuriating that an ugly dumb b*tch like you keeps causing all this drama. Honestly, what else can you do other than be a pain in our *sses?!"

"Yo, we better stop! Remember last time? She played with a knife and cut her neck, and we lost half of our annual pay! If we piss the princess off again, maybe she will really kill herself this time!"

The two continued their back-and-forth, their voices dripping with sarcasm and mockery. Any spirit she had in her eyes died, and she cast her eyes down as her heart sank. The medical procedure was painful, but she felt numb.

She stopped struggling. "I want to see Brendan."

"No way, damn it!" the bodyguard retorted as usual. "Mr. Brighthall is busy as hell, okay? He doesn't have the luxury of time to see you."

Deirdre stared at him unseeingly. Busy as hell? Busy keeping Charlene's company, maybe. Busy cuddling with her, even!

Sure. Why would a man known for his cavalier, devil-may-care attitude even give a damn about the innocent man whose life he was ruining?

She closed her eyes, her eyelashes trembling. "I want to see him. If you don't let me, then... you will be watching me for 24 hours, because I am going on a hunger strike. I don't care if it kills me. You are welcome to try me."

Brendan did return. He came two days after Deirdre stopped eating

She had refused any drips or supplements too. By the time Brendan saw her by the door, he noticed how gaunt she had become within a month. Her sleeves were billowing, and her cheekbones were visible. She was curled into herself by the edge of the bed, completely silent.

Pathetic.

And infuriating.

Chapter 48 It's All Your Fault Brendan had an abrupt heartache. He couldn't understand why Deirdre would harm herself. He then strode toward Deirdre, held her wrist, and demanded, "Come with me to get something to eat!" Smelling the familiar scent only made Deirdre feel disgusted. "Don't touch me!" Biting her lip, Deirdre struggled to withdraw her hand. However, because she was starving, she was feeble. Without much effort, Brendan pulled Deirdre into his embrace, grabbed her chin, and snapped her head up. "What the hell are you doing! Do you think you can do as you please because you managed to threaten me the other day?"

Deirdre felt a sharp pain in her chin. Eyes red, she lifted her head and said, "You promised you wouldn't disturb Sterry! You made a promise! So why has he turned out to be so miserable?"

Brendan was startled for a moment before bellowing angrily, "So you starved yourself to get me here just for this f*cking reason?" Deirdre was hurt and disappointed. Emotions couldn't be shared between two people indeed. How could an apathetic man know how miserable someone else could

be?

"I just wanted to ask why you haven't kept your promise? Why did you destroy his life? Brendan Brighthall, are you going to hound everyone to death? You're such a liar!"

Deirdre was shivering. She was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

Brendan, on the other hand, was filled with rage. When he had learned that Deirdre was starving herself just to meet him, he had left Charlene and rushed back from Lionisle. In fact, he had been irritated for a while due to the bad weather, which had stopped him from departing immediately.

Now that Brendan had managed to rush over to Deirdre, the fact that she only had Sterling in her mind further ignited the rage within him.

"Who'd have the time to deal with such a small fry? I don't even see him as a match for me. How would I know what's happened to him!" Fury overtook Brendan. "Besides, so what if I did it? He deserves it since he dared to seduce my wife!"

"Your wife?" Deirdre snickered as she pointed at her own face and eyes. "Brendan Brighthall, is this what your wife deserves?"

Deirdre's retort hurt Brendan's pride. He clasped Deirdre's slender neck and said meanly, "You look like this just because you deserve it. You're also to blame for

Sterling's misery! If you had stayed away from him, would he have taken a video of himself and led to the exposure of his background? Why are you so stubborn? And who do you want to punish by creating this entire mess? All in all, it's your fault!" Following that, Brendan smirked. "Anyway, it's good that Sterling is miserable now. It saves me the energy of taking any action against him. Besides, this issue will force him out of Neve eventually. And you won't have to worry about him anymore. Just listen to me."

Brendan's remark further disappointed Deirdre.

Deirdre felt disgusted by Brendan's indifferent manner. She felt nauseous, threw herself toward the edge of bed, and retched even though she had not eaten at all.

While Deirdre was vomiting in pain and discomfort, nothing came out but bile.

When he saw Deirdre, Brendan's heart softened, but his words remained harsh and unforgiving. "Is it meaningful to torture yourself? No one will care if you die. It's better to live nicely, isn't it? Just forget about Sterling. He just can't work at big hospitals, but he can start his own clinic somewhere else."

Deirdre was in so much pain that her eyes reddened and tears dropped uncontrollably from them.

Chapter 49 She Absolutely Won't Die

Brendan frowned. "I'll get you a bowl of porridge."

Brendan immediately went out, dashed down the staircase, filled a bowl of porridge, and went back up. As he pushed open the door, he didn't see Deirdre on her bed.

Brendan saw Deirdre only when he shifted his glance to the balcony. He didn't know how Deirdre had made it to the window of the balcony, but he was shocked to see that she had opened the floor-to-ceiling window, which was completely unshielded.

"Deirdre McKinnon! What are you doing! Come over!"

The wind was blowing in Deirdre's ears, and she had a vacant look on her face. She no longer felt any pain. She only wanted to free herself as soon as possible.

"Brendan Brighthall, don't you force Sterry again. He's one of the few who's treated me well. Wanting to be your wife and make you love me was wishful thinking on my part, but it turns out that you're disgusted. I'm sorry," said Deirdre apologetically. She then closed her eyes with determination. "So I'm giving you my life."

"Deirdre McKinnon!"

Brendan's pupils constricted abruptly. The porcelain bowl in his hand dropped as he dashed toward Deirdre.

However, he couldn't grab hold of Deirdre. It was too late.

Deirdre was already falling backward.

Her body fell heavily to the ground, her blood splashing everywhere. Brendan's heart jerked, and he felt intense pain. He was overwhelmed with anxiety, restlessness, and anguish.

Brendan felt as though he was about to go insane. It seemed that he was about to lose something important in his life.

He desperately rushed down, but there was already a bodyguard next to Deirdre. When the bodyguard saw Brendan, he said with a face as white as a sheet, "Sir, her breathing is very weak... Is she dying?" "Fuck off!" Brendan's eyes were red, and he shouted hysterically, "Call an ambulance ! She absolutely won't die. Absolutely not!" 'How could she disappear from my life? How dare she? She is mine. Thinking she can do so without my permission is merely wishful thinking on her part!'

It took only 20 minutes for the ambulance to arrive and Deirdre to be pushed into the emergency room. Brendan, however, felt that it took forever. Meanwhile, Deirdre seemed to be holding on to her life. When she coughed, the blood she coughed up splashed all over Brendan.

"S-Sir... Would you wipe your face? It's full of blood."

Standing by the door of the emergency room, the bodyguard carefully handed a handkerchief to Brendan. The bodyguard knew how squeamish Brendan usually was about his personal cleanliness. Brendan couldn't endure it when there was even the slightest dirt on his face.

Nevertheless, he utterly ignored the bodyguard this time around. Looking tense, Brendan struck the wall with his fist.

"Damn it!"

At that moment, a nurse came out in a hurry and said as she took off her mask, "The patient is having a severe hemorrhage! We have insufficient blood in our blood bank. Who's Rh-negative?"

When he heard about the severity of Deirdre's situation, Brendan's face turned pale. He turned to his bodyguard and asked, "Do you know anyone who's Rh- negative ?"

The bodyguard felt like crying. He knew someone with the required blood type but he didn't dare say the name.

Seeing that Brendan's expression was getting graver and graver, the bodyguard suggested tentatively, "Miss McKinney, but..."

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Brendan was startled for a moment before he actually made a call without hesitation.

After disembarking from the plane, Charlene was resting

in a hotel nearby. When she saw Brendan's call, her gloomy expression was instantly replaced by a smile. At the same time, she wondered whether Brendan was calling her to tell her he was coming over at this late hour.

Charlene picked up the call. "Bren..."

"Come to the Neve Hospital immediately!"

The phone call was ended. The bodyguard was dumbstruck. He couldn't believe what he had just heard. Brendan had actually demanded that Charlene, who was still recovering, come to the hospital for a blood transfusion for that ugly bastard?

When Charlene arrived at the hospital and learned about the massive hemorrhage Deirdre was suffering in the emergency room and the necessary blood transfusion, her face instantly turned pale.

Chapter 50 I Am Her Husband

Charlene was still in a wheelchair. Her eyes reddened, as she felt the injustice of it all. "Brendan, you want me to donate my blood to Ms. McKinnon? You should know that I haven't recovered yet..."

"When she was pregnant, she still donated her blood to you, didn't she?" Brendan stopped Charlene from objecting. "She must not die! I'll tell the nurse to be careful when taking your blood so she doesn't hurt you."

Brendan's remark was akin to him telling Charlene that she couldn't refuse.

Charlene looked gloomy and scratched the leather cover on the wheelchair with her fingernails so hard that she almost tore it. She forced a smile and said, "Well, the life of Ms. McKinnon is a human life after all. As long as she can survive, it doesn't matter if I die, let alone donate my blood."

As soon as she finished her sentence, the nurse appeared in a hurry again. "Is the blood donor here? And who's the patient's next of kin? I need a signature for the emergency medical consent form!"

"I am!" Brendan strode forward and said while pursing his lips, "I'm her husband!"

'Husband?' Charlene grasped her hands and clenched her

teeth in anger. 'What does Brendan mean? If he's Deirdre's husband, who am I to him?

Deirdre is just a woman with a disfigured face. So what if she jumped off a building? Why would Brendan be so anxious to get me here in the middle of night to donate blood to that bastard?' Charlene felt rage and fear simultaneously. Even though she had disfigured Deirdre's face and told her to shut up, she still couldn't stop Deirdre from making a comeback and taking everything that belonged to her!

After signing the consent form, Charlene was taken to draw blood. Meanwhile, Brendan sat stiffly in his seat with a vacant look on his face.

Brendan's hands were still covered in blood. He could still somewhat feel Deirdre's warmth, and his eyes reddened.

'How dare she jump off a building? How could she be so decisive about leaving? Just for the sake of Sterling?'

Thinking about Sterling filled Brendan's heart with hatred.

"Buzz..."

A vibrating ringtone came from Brendan's pocket. He didn't want to pay attention to it, but when he saw the caller ID, he couldn't help grasping it tightly.

A voice rang out when Brendan pressed the answer button. "Mr. Brighthall, we have completed the

investigation you requested. Regarding Ms. McKinnon's eyes, she indeed went blind in prison."

'What?'

Brendan frowned slightly. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, we have all the medical reports."

"When did she go blind?"

A sigh was heard from the other end of the line before a reply came. "On June 27th."

It was the exact same date Deirdre had told the doctor. At the time, however, Brendan had reacted with disdain and sarcasm and stubbornly thought that Deirdre was talking nonsense.

Brendan had even scolded Deirdre and said that it was all her fault before she'd jumped off the building... Brendan suddenly felt intense pain in his chest and felt his chest gradually tighten. He felt like he was out of breath. He couldn't believe that he had been kept in the dark and he'd had no idea how desperate Deirdre had been. He had thought he had protected her well, but he hadn't even known about her blindness!

Brendan grasped his phone tightly, his eyes going bloodshot. He finally understood why Deirdre blamed him for everything and hated him so much that she had been willing to jump off the second floor.

Brendan was in extreme pain, and green veins were bulging in his arms. He then ordered his bodyguard, "Get

Steven here!"

The bodyguard was so overwhelmed by Brendan's intimidating aura that his face turned pale. Nevertheless, he immediately called Steven upon receiving the order.

As soon as Steven arrived, Brendan kicked him hard without showing any mercy.

Charlene, who had just returned from the blood donation and intended to adopt a sweet look of suffering in front of Brendan, gasped as she witnessed the scene.

Charlene knew Steven was just like a brother to Brendan. No matter how serious the trouble Steven caused was, Brendan would only reprimand him. Therefore, she wondered what had caused Brendan to be so furious.

Charlene suddenly felt uneasy.