

Resent Reject Regret by Aqua Summers

Chapter 844-875

Chapter 844 If I Can Destroy Deirdre

"However, I'm extremely disgusted that you are with me but still get yourself involved with Charlene at the same time."

Deirdre furrowed her eyebrows. It was apparent that she was still thinking about the scene of Charlene in the family mansion earlier.

"I won't." Brendan immediately stated his true intention clearly. There was only sincerity left on his flawlessly handsome face. "From the moment I decided to become Kyran, I had already made up my mind to only love you in my heart and no one else." Deirdre wanted to ask, "If that is the case, why are you still deeply involved with Charlene now?" Yet, she could not bring herself to speak.

She knew that Brendan was incapable of answering that question for sure.

At the thought of Charlene's meaningful remark before she left, Deirdre asked, "Are you hiding something from me, Brendan?"

Brendan's eyes turned solemn. He thought about the injury on his shoulder and also... He tucked a strand of Deirdre's hair behind her ear and answered nonchalantly, "No, don't let your mind wander."

Deirdre nodded, her gaze still. She hoped that Charlene was only making blind conjectures.

Charlene was picked up by a car soon after she left.

Connor asked while he drove, "How is the situation?" "I've already passed the prescription to that old hag." Charlene's eyes were glistening with hatred. She clenched her fists tightly at the thought of those people's unwelcoming, discriminative gazes toward her in the family mansion earlier and Madame Brighthall's demeanor.

"I was still feeling slightly hesitant in the beginning. I thought that she might take my side at the very least, but I didn't expect my hard work to please her for so many years to be wasted. As soon as Deirdre is back, she tries to get rid of me!"

Connor smiled and said, "So, you should know who your friend is. If you don't put in more hard work, everything you have now, including Brendan and your position as Mrs. Brighthall, will leave you bit by bit."

Charlene gnashed her teeth and said, "I will abide by you, but..."

Charlene remembered something and turned her head to the side. "Is the article still up now?" "Yes, it's still at the top of Google Trends. I've already paid quite a number of Internet ghostwriters to post comments about Brendan and you being a match made in heaven. It will certainly stir up a huge commotion when the situation has come to an end." "Yet, don't you think that Brendan would have already gotten rid of the article if this were his past self?"

Charlene lowered her eyes, her expression betraying her mixed feelings.

Perhaps Brendan did still have some feelings for her but treated her coldly because of Deirdre's child. 'Am I really willing to go to the extremes with him? If I destroy Brendan, perhaps I won't even be able to become Mrs. Brighthall, and Brendan will end up hating me for the rest of his life...' 'What's on your mind?' A tinge of disgust flashed past Connor's eyes upon sensing Charlene's hesitation and uncertainty. 'This

woman is still dreaming at this point.’ “Don’t forget that Brendan will never take an extra glance at you as long as Deirdre is still around.” “I know.” A strange look flashed past Charlene’s expression. “Will I be able to become Mrs. Brighthall officially if I can destroy Deirdre?”

The next morning, Deirdre was awakened by the noise from downstairs.

She felt the bed on her left. The man was gone, and not even his warmth could be felt.

She yawned and opened the door to smell a burnt, fishy stench. She furrowed her eyebrows and headed downstairs, where the noise from the kitchen grew louder.

“Brendan?” Deirdre was confused by the moving figure in the kitchen. “What are you cooking in the kitchen?”

Brendan hastily turned off the stove and shut the lid. “Why are you awake?”

Chapter 845 Mr. Brighthall Wants It All to Himself

“How was I supposed to stay asleep after the racket you made? Besides, what are you making? Because something is definitely burning.” “Nothing.” Brendan wore a self-conscious expression, not unlike a thief. In fact, he quickly put the blame on Mrs. Engel. “It was Mrs. Engel! She forgot to turn off the stove before she left, and I smelled it burn. It’s basically coal now.”

Deirdre was skeptical. Mrs. Engel would never do something so careless.” Oh, really? Or were you trying to play chef again?”

Brendan knew his lie was coming apart in real-time, so he just told the truth. “Fine. I asked my mom for the recipe for the chicken soup she made for you yesterday because you seem to like it. I thought maybe I should make one for you every day. But... I didn’t expect cooking to be so hard.”

Deirdre was stunned. Amusement crept into her face. “Why are you so obsessed with something you’re not cut out to do?”

Brendan looked down, his eyes transfixed on her slightly plump lips. “It’s not an obsession or anything. I just... want to do more for you.”

Deirdre took a sharp breath and rolled her eyes. “You’re doing more for me by not adding to my troubles, okay?”

She jostled him aside and headed toward the kitchen. “Are there any cooking ingredients left?” “Not much left.” Surprise flitted through Brendan’s eyes. “You’re going to cook?” “What else am I gonna do after you make the entire house smell like a fire department’s calling? Honestly, if you can’t make it, don’t fake it!”

Though Deirdre’s annoyance was plain to see, Brendan relished it.

Somehow, it dispelled every trouble in his mind. He threw his arms around Deirdre’s waist from behind her and grazed her neck with his lips. “I really wish we could live like this now and forever, Dee.”

Deirdre froze. Then, she countered sharply, “How about you talk about this after you do something about Charlene?”

She pushed out of his arms. “What else is left?”

Brendan scanned the lone slab of meat at the counter and answered, “We still have some chicken.” “Chicken?” “Yeap. And it will be delivered shortly.” He pulled out his phone and called Sam. “Buy a chicken home within half an hour.”

Sam wailed to himself as the call ended. How was he supposed to get to the mansion

within half an hour? Still, duty compelled him to immediately make his way to the nearest market.

Deirdre shot an accusatory look at Brendan. So... he was not even going to hide the fact that he was lying now, huh?

Brendan acted as though he did nothing wrong. "I'm just saying, we have the right ingredient to make some creamy chicken mushroom soup."

Deirdre left him hanging. Lucky for her, cleaning up the kitchen was itself a perfect chore for someone to perform when they wanted to pointedly ignore someone.

Brendan helped a little, and half an hour later, Sam finally showed up at the doorstep with Brendan's chicken.

Brendan was displeased. "You're late." "Sir, I came from-" "Excuses."

Deirdre shot Brendan a look and decided to help Sam out of his pickle. "Did you manage to grab something before all this rush? If not, stay here for a bit. Once the chicken mushroom soup is done, you can have some too."

Sam, admittedly, missed Deirdre's cooking, so he nodded straight away. Before he could vocalize his intent, though, Brendan suddenly interjected. "No. He has work to do."

Sam froze. Work? When?

Brendan saw through his confusion and pressed on. "Have you found the mole, Sam? How did that person get hurt? Has your investigation revealed anything yet? I don't pay you to enjoy life drinking chicken soup." "But..." Sam faltered. He realized it now-Mr. Brighthall wanted the whole thing to himself. If he refused to play ball now, he would doom himself into joining Brendan's hit list over a stupid bowl of soup.

Chapter 846 What If I Give Myself to You... As Reparation?

"Oh, he's right, Miss McKinnon! I just remembered that I have a lot of work cut out for me. I guess I can only try your cooking some other time."

With that, Sam left. Brendan turned to Deirdre's deadpanned stare and said placidly, "He knows he's too busy to quietly and slowly enjoy these simple things in life. I'll have to do."

Of course, Deirdre knew Brendan had threatened Sam into leaving. "It's a big pot of soup, for crying out loud. Can you finish it by yourself?" "I can," Brendan replied under his breath. "If you're the one who made it, then I'll drink it all."

Deirdre thought Brendan was exaggerating, but it turned out he made do with his promise, after all. It even shocked Mrs. Engel by the time she returned to the mansion. Brendan was not known for his appetite, which had only grown smaller after his injuries.

Deirdre drank about half of her own portion and believed that there was nothing especially delicious about her soup, anyway.

Brendan pulled her into his arms when they were done and said, "Let's do it again next time."

Deirdre feigned a glare. "Am I your cook?"

He bit her fingertip. "Let me make it for you instead if that upsets you. I'm sure I've more or less learned how to make it after watching you." "Pass." Deirdre still felt her body trembling in fear whenever she thought of the soup Brendan made. She would

rather starve herself than drink a drop of his stuff. "I'll make it if it means nobody gets poisoned today."

Brendan looked moved, but the twinkle in his eyes quickly dimmed. Gazing into her eyes, he said, "How am I supposed to make it up for you? Maybe I should give the rest of my life to you as reparation. That way, I can treat you and our child right."

He smoothed her hair with his fingers, and his silent vow sounded almost too sincere. Deirdre froze and felt her heart surprisingly heating up.

She turned away. "Dream on, Brendan Brighthall. I'm never falling into your trap anymore."

The days passed. Brendan's work seemed to have caught up with him—he would often stay in his study for the entire day. Mind-numbing ennui had begun to torment Deirdre, so she told Mrs. Engel she wanted to go out for a change of scenery.

Mrs. Engel replied hesitantly, "Let me ask Mr. Brighthall first, okay?"

Deirdre nodded. The man was the master of this house, after all.

Mrs. Engel made her way upstairs. A moment later, Brendan walked out of his study and tucked a lock of Deirdre's hair behind her ear. "Wanna go out?" "It's boring to stay at home for the whole day. Besides, I think I might have been eating a lot more lately. My clothes are starting to feel a little too tight."

Brendan considered the woman's body. She used to be so petite, but now, she looked much healthier and plumper. He controlled his impulse to feel her and nodded.

Those viral searches and the discourses they brought should have died down considerably for the past two days, right? Deirdre would be fine.

"What time are you coming back?" "About 4:00 or 5:00 p.m., maybe. I won't take long." "Okay." Brendan leaned forward and grazed her lips with his own. "I'm in the middle of something, so I won't be able to keep you company. Call me when you're done, okay? I'll take you home." "Okay."

Brendan turned to the older woman and told her to be mindful of the crowd.

The two of them left.

Mrs. Engel found the entire exchange quite amusing, so she remarked, "You know, Mr. Brighthall seemed to be in the middle of a meeting when I went inside. It was so serious and grim there! Then I told him it was about you, and he instantly closed his laptop like the whole meeting was dismissed!"

Deirdre imagined Brendan, in his most presidential manner behind the desk, suddenly breaking character because Mrs. Engel walked into his study. It felt so comical the corner of her lips curled.

Chapter 847 Henry Walker Went to Jail on the 17th

It took Deirdre shaking out of her stupor to realize she had been smiling.

It stunned her. Was she... falling in love with Brendan? Again?

"Miss McKinnon? We're here/ said Mrs. Engel.

She nodded and got out of the car. They made their way to the shopping district and visited some interesting places. When they passed by a shop selling baby clothes, Mrs. Engel could not help but stop. "Oh, the clothes inside are so adorable, Miss McKinnon! I want to buy one for your kid. Is that okay?" "That's too soon, Mrs. Engel! My baby isn't even born yet." Deirdre giggled.

"But if we wait for that, that adorable outfit will become someone else's possession,

and I'm not gonna let that happen. You know what they say: seize the moment!" the older woman replied excitedly before pulling Deirdre into the store.

Helplessly, Deirdre let Mrs. Engel drag her inside.

The lighting was warm as it enveloped Deirdre. It eased her tension, and she began to feel the fabric used for those tiny clothes. Their sleeves were no larger than the size of her palm-it felt strange in her hand.

Then, suddenly, someone barged into the store. "Miss McKinnon? Miss McKinnon, is that you!?"

Her sudden appearance took Deirdre aback.

Mrs. Engel quickly shielded Deirdre behind her back when the intruder suddenly fell onto her knees and begged, "I finally found you, Miss McKinnon! Please, I'm begging you! Let my brother live!"

Mrs. Engel was bewildered. She had expected the intruder to be an agitator, not someone who was suddenly on her knees.

Deirdre snapped out of her shock and frowned. "Your brother? Who's that? Why do you want me to let him live?"

The woman wiped the tears off her face. "Henry Walker! My brother's name is Henry Walker. He's the one who founded Woody Inc. in Surstate. I know you remember him!"

Deirdre's face turned cold as the woman continued to sob. "He's now locked in jail, and no one can help him out or bail him! My brother said it's because he accidentally offended you, Miss McKinnon, and that... this was all Mr. Brendan Brighthall's revenge..."

She threw her arms around Deirdre's thighs. "Please, Miss McKinnon! My parents are sick, and he's their only son! I'm sure the news will give them a nervous breakdown! Our family will be ruined!"

Deirdre softened her expression, but the chilly indifference remained in her eyes.

"Look. I can't help you with anything, okay? If a man abducts someone else and harms them, they deserve to be locked in jail for breaking the law. It's your family's fault for failing to raise him right, so maybe jail time is what he needs to rethink his life's choices."

The woman raised her tear-stricken face. "Abduct someone else and harm them? Miss McKinnon, I don't know what you're talking about. My brother is only captured under bribery charges because Mr. Brighthall lodged a report against him. And Mr. Brighthall only did that because my brother somehow offended you!"

Deirdre felt her heart skipping a beat. Then, as sincerely and seriously as she could, she replied, "Your brother lied to you. He abducted Tobey Russell, that was the real reason. If it weren't for Brendan, my good friend might have died! Your brother committed a crime, and it's only right that no one can help him out of his just dessert!"

"No! That's not what happened at all! This is all a misunderstanding! Tobey Russell had returned to Eastgene when my brother was locked up! How was he supposed to abduct your friend?" the woman rebutted. "It was on the 17th. The 17th! He has been locked up since the 17th. If you don't believe me, ask the police!" "The 17th?" Deirdre froze. How could that be? She was still in Surstate on the 17th!

If Henry had been captured on the 17th, then what caused Brendan's gun wound back in Neve?

Her heart sank into an icy pit. She snapped out of her trance and wriggled herself out of the woman's arms before bursting out of the shop.

Mrs. Engel sprung on her tail and held Deirdre's hands, whispering comfort.

It was too late, however-Deirdre's mind blanked.

Chapter 848 You Disappoint Me

What is going on? Had Brendan been deceiving her all along!?

Mrs. Engel was trying her best to comfort the distraught young woman. "Miss McKinnon, please calm down! You can't just listen to something she said and immediately believe her, right? Why is whatever she said automatically real? Mr. Bright hall's gunshot wound is real, you saw that. There was no lie about that!"

She was right. Brendan's injury was real, or he would not have been so hurt he could not sleep. Henry's sister could have lied just to gain forgiveness and sympathy.

And yet, Deirdre's mind was in disarray. Any mood she had to stay in the shopping district was gone. She hailed a cab and quickly returned to the mansion.

She strode into the living room and found nobody there. She rose the stairs to where the study was, and right before she pushed the door open, she heard sounds-a conversation.

"Have you found our wanted person?" "We're close. The mole hides well, so it's not easy to sniff them out for the time being." "Hmph. What's the rush? The prey is well within our reach."

Sam smiled. "It went exactly as you predicted, Mr. Brighthall. Those people wouldn't have jumped the gun and exposed themselves sooner if you didn't shoot yourself in the shoulder. Besides, thanks to this injury, Miss McKinnon also stopped being so hostile to you."

Mentioning Deirdre immediately summoned Brendan's gentler side. "What time is it now?" "Over 3:00 p.m., sir." "Pass me my car keys. I should take her home now."

She heard the sound of his footsteps before the door was yanked open. Brendan looked up and found himself staring face-to-face with the woman he was thinking about. His black eyes reflected genuine bewilderment.

But her eyes were red. She swung and decked her hand across his cheek as hard as she could.

"M-Miss McKinnon!" Sam sprang out from the room frantically, "This is not what you-"

1 "Shut up, all of you!" thundered Deirdre.

She took a deep breath. Her brain felt like ground zero to a nuclear blast. Her body was trembling despite herself. She was livid-and so utterly disappointed. His duplicity was far from a white lie. This was a deliberate con where she was the butt of the joke. She believed him! She believed he would stick his neck out to rescue Tobey and believed him when he claimed he had gotten hurt for both her sake and the sake of those she held dear.

She looked up and leveled a cold glare at Sam. "I thought you'd never lie to me."

Sam tried to explain himself, "But Miss McKinnon, it's true! Mr. Brighthall-" "What? Got hurt for my sake? Or was he hurt for the sake of setting me up as the dunce? For the sake of gaining my sympathy and care when he doesn't deserve it? For the sake of making me the punchline because watching me being conflicted about my feelings and sympathy is such prime material for entertainment!?"

Deirdre's eyes went icy. 'You disappoint me, Sam.'

Her exchange tellingly excluded Brendan-as though he had ceased to exist after she slapped him. She would not spare him even a look. She was no longer disappointed with this one, it seemed. She had simply grown numb to his duplicity. It was just a few seconds, but it was enough time for Deirdre to accept the fact that Brendan was just a disgusting b*stard who would do anything for his gains.

Pain flared in her abdomen. Maybe the flames of her rage had somehow spread to her baby. Deirdre held it with her hand, turned around, and started toward the stairs. Brendan gripped her by her wrist. His eyes were uncharacteristically watery. Hapless panic shadowed his handsome features for the first time. "Don't go, Dee."

Deirdre was disgusted at how tightly he held her, how strongly he gripped her. Eyes beet red, she glared at the man whose features she could not make out. "Just how much truth is there in anything you say, Brendan?"

Brendan cleared his throat.

Deirdre snickered and snatched her hand away from him. "You've been a pretender for so long you fooled even yourself."

Chapter 849 I Can't Stand a Second of Being Near You

"No, that's not true," said Brendan, battling his impulse to pull Deirdre into his arms. He poured his sincerity out as he declared, "I mean it when I say I love you."

Deirdre sneered. 'You really think I'm going to believe you the second time? You're only going to throw another gut punch over and over again! Get away from me, Brendan. I can't stand a second of breathing the same air you do!'

She gnashed her teeth and descended the stairs hurriedly.

Mrs. Engel, mortified, hurried after her.

Brendan rubbed his brows tiredly. No matter how accustomed he had grown to the caustic words she said, it still hurt him like a knife sinking into his chest.

Sam was rueful. "I'm so sorry, Mr. Brighthall! I shouldn't... I didn't know she was standing behind the door... I shouldn't have said that..." "It's not your fault." Brendan opened his eyes. He felt as though his body was crumbling. "Even I couldn't have predicted her return at this time, let alone someone like you. The real fault lies with me. I was the one who decided to lie."

No matter how convincing that lie was, one day, someone would still find out the truth. Any gains made from mendacity would never last.

Sam's eyes reddened. "But it wasn't a lie. You were hurt for Miss McKinnon in a way. You had to shoot yourself to gain information on Ophelia McKinnon, even though you could just bide your time!" "It's enough, Sam. Lying is wrong, that's that. You can go now."

Sam hesitated, but Brendan's tone and manner clearly brooked no defiance, so he acquiesced. Gritting his teeth, he left.

Brendan went through a couple of cigarettes as he bade for time, waiting for Deirdre to calm down enough. He called Mrs. Engel, his fingers slightly trembling out of unease.

Before his call connected, he heard footsteps echoing from the living room.

Deirdre reappeared at the front door. She looked mostly the same as before, but her face was visibly tense from being exposed to the nipping wind outside. Brendan

clenched his fists and descended the stairs. He reached out to her in an attempt to gauge her temperature. "Dee?"

Deirdre ducked with a scowl and marched past him before ascending the stairs. It was Mrs. Engel who explained, "Miss McKinnon was exposed to the winds outside for a while and got a little sick. She gagged for a bit. We should let her rest."

"Gagged?" Brendan's eyes twitched. "Is she okay?"

Mrs. Engel chuckled dryly. "She's fine. It's just another typical behavior a pregnant woman might show. Her emotional state was unstable, so it probably triggered it."

Brendan's eyes darkened. "I'm sorry to have troubled you, Mrs. Engel," he said sincerely.

That took the older woman by surprise. An upper-crust elite, who always seemed way above plebeians like her, was apologizing to her?

"Mr. Brighthall, please! T-Think nothing of it! I was only doing my job.

Besides, we... We wouldn't have met that strange woman if I didn't enter that baby clothing shop, and then none of this would have happened." "A strange woman?"

"Yes." Mrs. Engel looked remorseful. "She claimed to be the sister of some guy named Henry Walker, and she then told Mrs. Brighthall a whole lot of stuff I don't really get.

The point is, she was telling Miss McKinnon that you lied to her, and at first... Miss McKinnon wouldn't believe it. She wanted to hear you explain it, so we came back early and... And that was when she overheard your conversation."

Brendan felt a momentary but sharp sting in his chest.

Deirdre had chosen not to believe Henry's sister-that meant she was hoping it was not true. She was hoping she could believe Brendan over the stranger, was she not?

Only for her to return home and have her whole world shattered once again.

Chapter 850 Pregnancy Check-Up

"Mr. Brighthall, if I may?" Mrs. Engel began worriedly. "I don't know what happened between you and Mrs. Brighthall, but I haven't been blind to how you've been treating her. I'm hard-pressed to believe anyone who says you don't care about her, okay? I also don't really understand why you had to lie to her, but if I may... Mrs. Brighthall is a very sensitive person. She needs security, Mr. Brighthall. Lying to her once is enough. Please, don't do it again... before her heart turns to stone."

A fog seemed to have dawned on Brendan's eyes. "I understand what you say, but I'm afraid this is more complicated than you might have imagined. For now, please focus on taking care of Deirdre."

Mrs. Engel raised her head. "Are you leaving?"

Brendan remembered the things Charlene had said that day, his expression darkening. "No, not leaving. I simply have something important I must settle."

He went upstairs. Naturally, the door to Deirdre's room was locked, so he knocked.

"Can I come in, Dee?"

There was no answer-just as he expected. His first instinct was to forcibly open the door with a key, but his mind quickly conjured Deirdre's sneering, snickering face and her comment about being denied the most basic of freedom and agency.

He lost to that imagery and decided against his instinct.

It also meant he had to hasten his progress.

Deirdre could hear his retreating footsteps as she lay on her bed. Her chest gradually

phased from agony to numbness, though she could still feel occasional spasms. What a joke she was. She had been under the impression she was manipulating him, but it turned out she almost fell for his honey trap. If Henry's sister had not shown up, she would have slowly and gradually wished that this cursed relationship would continue the way it was, would she not?

She closed her eyes. The day was still bright, but she was already too tired to live through the rest of the day.

She only managed to sleep at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m.

Brendan had not seen Deirdre for four days straight since then. Maybe he was busy with work, or maybe he was avoiding her. Deirdre believed the latter because, knowing Brendan, the man would always find a way to fake a "chance" meeting if he wanted to.

He stopped seeing her because he got bored of her or got bored of cooking up another funny scheme.

Mrs. Engel had no grasp of how far things had developed. All she knew was that the air had returned to what it once was-stiff, stilted, and tense. She had to put a guard on her words just like it was before.

Surprisingly, Deirdre seemed to be the most relaxed of them all. She would listen to audiobooks every day or enjoy some fresh air in the yard as if that day had never happened. Even if it had, it seemed to have failed to leave a single stain in her memory.

Like the past few days, Deirdre was reclining into an outdoor chair, her eyes closed, as she relaxed in the yard. She sensed someone drawing near and moved slightly. "Oh, Mrs. Engel! It's getting a little colder now. Could you please grab a blanket for me?"

There was no answer, so she opened her eyes.

An icy scowl immediately formed on her visage.

Brendan removed his coat and hung it on her shoulders, his movement featherlight.

Deirdre's hand began to jostle against it-she could not stand to come into contact with any of his things-but Brendan stopped her. "Just put it on. Otherwise, you'll have to trouble yourself by going upstairs to grab your own coat." "What's that supposed to mean?" asked Deirdre, raising her head. The blinding sun stung her into narrowing her eyes.

Brendan observed her for a moment before answering, "It's time for your pregnancy check-up."

Deirdre could not argue against something so obviously crucial to her health, but she thought she could at least try to fight for her peace of mind. "I'll go with Mrs. Engel."

"No," he declined firmly. "I'll never be absent on any occasion involving our child."

Deirdre flashed him a mocking smile, but she said nothing and got out of the chair. It had been a while since she stood, so her knees wobbled as soon her feet touched the ground. She fell forward.

She did not feel the pain of a crash. Instead, Brendan's arms arrived just in time to stop her fall before drawing her into him.

His strong, sturdy arm stunned Deirdre for a moment. Then, a new stimulus drew her attention-perfume alien to the scent Brendan would wear.

Chapter 851 You Just Want Me to Make Room For Your Darling Charlene

Deirdre froze before jeering, "Aww, I feel so bad for you, Mr. Brighthall.

Spending quality time with Charlene must have exhausted you, but duty compelled you to carry on pretending to be a good father by escorting me to this insignificant check-up!"

Brendan stiffened. His lips parted as though he wanted to say something before giving up. "I'll carry you into the car." "Oh, no need to trouble yourself with me." Deirdre pulled the coat over herself, her hostility palpable, and made her way slowly to the car as much as her sight could offer her. She took the passenger seat.

The journey was a silent one. Could anyone believe just how these two would unconsciously hold hands together a few days ago whenever they stopped at a traffic light?

They reached the hospital without a hitch, and the procedure began. The ultrasound quickly revealed the child to his parents-Brendan felt his palm sweating at the sight. It was just hard to imagine how small their baby was. It was not even 9cm long.

"Miss McKinnon's health was rather critical the last time, you know? I was honestly pretty worried," the doctor remarked, smiling. "But the baby's fine and stable. All signs point to us expecting a healthy, hearty baby!" "That's good news," Brendan

instinctively moved his hand to Deirdre's." Isn't it, Dee?"

Deirdre evaded him and pulled the coat over her tightly. "Are we done now? I'd like to go," she said flatly, showing no sign of maternal joy. It was as if the baby had nothing to do with her.

Brendan's gaze darkened. "Dee, that's your child too," he replied in a low voice.

There was something familiar about what he said. She realized it was something he had said while she was seeking an abortion in Surstate. At that time, his emotions-rage, agony-had been pouring out of him. Now that she thought about it, it almost felt like he had been planning a hundred steps ahead.

"You're wrong," Deirdre retorted coldly. "They aren't mine at all. I was just a means to bring your child into the world. If it weren't for you using my freedom as a bargaining chip for them, they would have been long gone by this point. To me, this isn't my child. It's just a clump of cells that is feeding off me."

It was brusque. Brendan let out a shaky, low breath, his fingers trembling. He gripped the young woman's shoulders tightly and forced her to look at him. "No, Dee, tell me this isn't what you really think."

Deirdre leveled him a scowl of contempt. She pushed his hand away from her and helped herself up by the wall. "Don't forget what you've promised me. When the child's born, I get my freedom." 1

She waited in the car for a long while before Brendan finally returned. He probably had a cigarette or two because a faint scent of nicotine pervaded the car when he arrived. He turned the engine on and said, "You'll be staying in the family mansion from now on."

Deirdre raised her head suddenly. "Why?" "Because being alone in the mansion is boring. At least my mother can take care of you in the family mansion."

Deirdre laughed aloud at how lame his lie was. "Oh, Brendan Brighthall. Will it kill you to just come clean and call it a quarantine?"

Brendan's eyes trembled. "It's not as bad as you make it sound. You can still go out

whenever you want to, so it's not really a quarantine, is it? I simply thought you looked bored in the mansion and decided that maybe you would like to keep my mom company." "If it's not a quarantine, then am I allowed to reject it?"

Brendan answered her question with silence, and Deirdre looked away.

"You'll be safe in the family mansion," he said.

She snickered. "You don't have to put so much effort into making up excuses, Brendan. You got me already. I'm just a puppet under your control, so why not be honest with someone who has lost all forms of agency? Just tell me you want me to move aside so that there's room for your darling Charlene. It's way better than whatever flimsy, crappy excuse you can make."

Chapter 852 I Need More Time

Brendan sank into silence. Deirdre withdrew her fingers into her palm and turned away.

The journey was a silent one as they drove to the old residence. Since Brendan had informed the Brighthall family entourage beforehand, several maids and domestic workers waited for her arrival.

When Deirdre got out of the car, Brendan said, "There has always been just one person in my heart, and that's you, Dee. I just need more time."

He did not stop to visit the house. Instead, he drove away.

Deirdre had not even made her way to the living room when Madame Brighthall appeared and hurried toward her. One of the maids was even calling out to her from behind. "Please, ma'am! It's cold and windy out here! You should put on more clothes!"

Deirdre stayed where she was, her feet rooted to the ground.

Madame Brighthall approached and greeted jovially, "Deirdre, dear, Bren told me you're coming to stay for two days!"

Brendan had even lied to his mother.

Deirdre nodded instead of telling his mother the truth. The older woman gripped her hand tightly and exclaimed, "This is great! This is wonderful. We have everything here. Everything you'll ever need and so much more! I should brew you a nice warming soup right away! Keep that body of yours snug and warm."

Deirdre stayed in the residence for two days. Settling down hardly required much acclimation since Madame Brighthall was completely devoted to making Deirdre feel welcomed and happy. The Brighthall retinue followed the mistress' example and also kept any less polite words to themselves.

That was, until today when Deirdre accidentally overheard one of the maids' conversation with Madame Brighthall. "Pardon my candor, ma'am, but does Mr. Brighthall really like Miss McKinnon? He placed her here while she is pregnant, for two days without ever coming to visit her. He never even called her once! If I'm being honest, I don't know what our boss is thinking,."

Madame Brighthall was about to chide the maid when she caught sight of Deirdre by the stairs.

Horror immediately shadowed her features. She shot a glare at the maid before quickly explaining, "Oh, Dee, I think Bren's just too busy with his work. He hasn't come back here for a really long time, you know? And there are so many things pending his

decision...”

Deirdre gave a faint smile, though that appeared to be the extent of her reaction.

“Don’t worry, Madame Brighthall. I understand his predicament. I hardly put it to heart.”

Madame Brighthall sighed in relief. She brought the young woman for a chat. Midway through, however, one of the maids interrupted them to talk to Madame Brighthall outside.

She came back a different woman altogether. In fact, her hand seemed to be trembling out of rage.

“Anything wrong, Madame Brighthall?” “N-Nothing, dear. Nothing at all.” Madame Brighthall willed herself to be calm and flashed a smile. “Just some... silly, trivial things concerning the residence.”

Deirdre could tell she was holding back information, so she decided not to ask at all. After a while, Madame Brighthall suddenly declared she had somewhere she needed to be.

“Where are you going?” “I, uh, am going to see an old friend of mine. I’ll be back around the evening. If you’re bored while I am away, have the maid accompany you in our garden. A little walk should be beneficial to the baby.”

With that, Madame Brighthall turned away and hurried off almost a little too eagerly. From her spot on the couch, Deirdre felt the assault of boredom and told the maid to switch the TV on for her.

Hesitantly, the maid replied, “Uh, the TV’s busted, Miss McKinnon. We haven’t found the chance to fix it yet. Maybe I could let you watch some talk shows from my phone instead?”

The corner of Deirdre’s lips twitched. ‘The TV was working just this morning!’ “There’s no need. I’ll go upstairs and rest.” “I’ll help you up the stairs, then!”

Deirdre sat on her bed. She did not feel sleepy at all. Judging from Madame Brighthall and the maid’s reactions, Deirdre was sure something must have happened. That uncertainty and unease began to develop into a quiet dread, so she decided to enjoy the breeze from the balcony.

There, she picked up bits and pieces of conversation.

“What do you think Mr. Brighthall is trying to do? Miss McKinnon is pregnant, for Christ’s sake! Is he actually thinking of two-timing them both?”

Chapter 853 My Wedding With Brendan

“I mean, what’s there to say this is what he’s planning to do at all? If you ask me, I think Mr. Brighthall just wants the kid inside of her, not necessarily her. The one he truly loves has got to be Miss McKinsey, right? What they have is a solid, several years-worth of relationship, and that’s far more than what a pretender could ever come close to.” “You say that, but I can tell just how real and sincere Mr. Brighthall’s care and concern for Miss McKinnon is, you know?” “Of course, he’s concerned. She’s the mother of his child! Of course, he has to give a damn about her. She’s pregnant, for crying out loud. Is he going to let her throw a fit? Trigger her into some hysterics?”

The voices faded into the distance just as their words began to take a more mocking shape.

Deirdre thought she had grown numb to comments like these, and yet hearing the word “pretender” still felt like a knife in her chest.

It did not matter how hard she tried. In the end, she would always be seen as a pretender. A knockoff of a genuine product.

Deirdre heard a series of rapping at the door. She turned around and heard a maid’s voice from behind the door. “Are you asleep yet, Miss McKinnon?”

Deirdre salvaged her composure and opened the door. “What’s the matter?”

The maid seemed troubled. “Uh... It’s, uh, Miss McKinsey. She’s here... to see you. She asked me to inform you about that.” i

Deirdre was stunned. She did not expect Charlene to come to her personally.

The maid looked very disconcerted. In the past, she would not have come to disturb Deirdre with news like this at all-in fact, she would have immediately told Charlene to go home. But Charlene was not just anyone she could turn away from now. This was the future Mrs. Brighthall, and the maid could not possibly risk offending her.

Deirdre snapped out of her stupor and opened the door. The maid stepped back and went downstairs with her hand on the rail. There, a corner of her blurry sight caught the silhouette of a woman.

She did not even need to speak. Charlene rose to her feet. “Miss McKinnon, long time no see!” she said with a wide grin breaking on her face. She was beaming.

Deirdre’s heart sank, but she was careful not to show anything on her face.” Long time no see? Really? If memory serves, we just met a few days ago.” “Time’s changing, darling! We’re meeting under very different circumstances now. Earth-shattering different circumstances. Naturally, it feels like we haven’t seen each other since forever!” she replied not-too- subtly.

Deirdre was not in the mood to engage with whatever Charlene had come up with to entertain herself. “So, what’s the point of being here this time, Miss McKinsey? Time’s wasting, so how about you get straight to the point?”

Charlene laughed. Her entire frame was trembling from the force of her self -satisfied joy. “You really want me to cut straight to the chase, darling? I was only trying to be kind for your sake. Because I’m worried that if the news gets out, neither you nor your precious little baby can survive it!”

Deirdre clenched her fists. Her lips stayed shut. Her eyes remained fixed on that blurry silhouette. 1

Charlene was not the least bit perturbed. She took slow, deliberate steps toward Deirdre and produced a card from her bag before placing it in her hand. The hardness of its material stunned Deirdre a little, but what came after her initial shock was a faint hint of recognition.

“We’ve at least been friends before, right, Miss McKinnon? And friends speak frankly to one another, so yes, you’re right. Let me cut to the chase. This is an invitation to my wedding with Bren!” She giggled. “I hope you’ll come to wish us the best.”

The conceit in her tone and words felt like thorns pressed against Deirdre’s skin. Her eyes trembled, and her grip on the card increased. She suddenly understood why it felt so familiar. This was the same design Deirdre had chosen for her wedding with Brendan a few years ago-she had picked a unique material and pattern back then because Brendan let her plan the entirety of the wedding.

It had been so important to Deirdre that she had done all she could to ensure that

even the most minute detail was done to perfection.

And now, the same card had ended up becoming Brendan and Charlene's wedding invitation.

Her mind went numb. She suddenly understood why Madame Brighthall had been acting so strangely, or why the maids had let loose their contempt toward Deirdre, and why they had suddenly seen it fit to welcome Charlene into the residence.

Chapter 854 The Wedding Invitation

Brendan and Charlene were getting married.

That was despite the fact that she was bearing Brendan's child. In other words, her pregnancy had done nothing to stop the man from loving another woman.

It was the kind of thing that would elicit disdain and jeers. The only reason why they even showed Deirdre the most basic of decorum was that the father of her child was Brendan himself.

"Oh, I see." Deirdre exhaled a long breath. She did not feel as shaken as she thought she would be-perhaps she had been anticipating this for that much time. The only thing that she thought of-and so the only that caused any feelings-was what Brendan had said before he left. "You've always been in my heart."

What an absurd joke he had made.

"Congratulations, I guess. And sorry, too, since I'm not yet fit to meet the world right now. I'm going to have to skip your wedding." She set the card on the table.

Charlene stared at Deirdre's face as though hoping she could catch a glimpse of jealousy from her gorgeous features. She chuckled. "Can't meet the world, or forbidden to?"

Deirdre's eyes dimmed.

Charlene twitched the corner of her lip into a smile. "I feel bad for you. Miss McKinnon. I really do. You've even managed to be pregnant with his child! But even after I gave you so many chances, you still failed to make him love you. But don't worry! I have to thank you for doing the job of childbirth for me, right? I'll take good care of that kid as Brendan's wife in the future. Pinky promise!"

She shoved the card back into Deirdre's hand, turned on her heels, and left.

The maid quickly followed her to see her off.

Nobody seemed to think it was worth comforting Deirdre or asking if she was okay.

Deirdre could not stop thinking back to the past-the wedding she had planned.

She had planned the entire event meticulously. She had devoted her soul to it, and yet Brendan did not care about any of that at all. To him, it had felt like going through yet another ceremonial motion-even the part where he had cradled her by the waist and called her "beloved" had been simply part of the show.

He had spent their wedding night cooped up in the room Charlene slept.

She had spent their wedding night awake, waiting for her husband, who never came.

One thing was for sure: Brendan had learned to be better at pretending. Or maybe he had realized she had some utility after all. Now, he could even manage to say "I love you" with so much faux sincerity that Deirdre was almost fooled.

She chuckled the card to the floor and went back upstairs.

Dinnertime came. Madame Brighthall returned from outside, her face wrought with a mix of helplessness and fatigue.

A maid quickly approached her and asked, "Are you alright, Madame Brighthall? Here, have a tablet to calm your mind a little."

She waved dismissively. "Where's Dee?"

The maids exchanged glances. "She's upstairs." "But it's time for dinner. Why hasn't any of you notified her?" "Well... we did. But Miss McKinnon's probably not hungry. She said she wanted to sleep, and since pregnant women are easily tired out, we decided to just leave it be."

Madame Brighthall sighed, her face ashen. "If that's what she wants, then let her be. We... The Brighthall family owes her too much. God, we owe her too much."

The maid nodded and poured a glass of water.

Madame Brighthall sat on the couch, and suddenly her eyes caught a card left at the corner. She picked it up and saw Brendan and Charli's names in large, bright letters. Her heart skipped a beat. She leaped to her feet.

The maid came in just in time when she yelled frantically, "What in tarnation is this'?"

The maids, of course, knew. Panicked, one of them answered hesitantly, "It's... uh, the invitation card to, urn, Mr. Brighthall and Miss McKinsey's wedding..."

Madame Brighthall slammed the card on the table. "Christ, I know what it is! Why can I possibly not know!? But where in h*ll did it spring from? Did Dee know about this!?"

The maids were too frightened to lie. Perturbed, one of them explained, "M- Miss McKinnon knew, ma'am. It's... It's Miss McKinsey. S-She came to give the card to M-Miss McKinnon personally-" "She did what'?" Madame Brighthall snapped, cutting the maid off in a sheer rage. Her chest hurt, but she continued to snarl. "Who the h*ll told any one of you to let that woman in!? Dee had no idea what happened! Doesn't any one of you know that!?"

Chapter 855 Brendan Doesn't Deserve You

The maid fell onto her knees pathetically. "B-But Madame Brighthall, Miss McKinsey's going to marry Mr. Brighthall! She's going to be our mistress very soon, and we... We can't possibly say no to someone like that! What if Miss McKinsey holds grudges against us-" "You're telling me... You cower before her so-called authority while I'm still alive!?" "Madame Brighthall?"

A soft, quiet voice flitted through the room from upstairs. The older woman turned around.

Deirdre was standing at the stairs, her expression placid. Her eyes were not even red. "Madame Brighthall, it was not a big deal at all." She continued flatly. "They aren't wrong to think twice about keeping her out. Charli's going to be the next mistress of the family, and if they refuse her entrance on your behalf, it's only going to become a point of conflict between you and your daughter-in-law." "Deel!" Madame Brighthall felt her words choking in her throat. She could imagine just how smug Charlene had been when she deliberately egged Deirdre on with that invitation and felt a pang in her chest. "Don't listen to that woman. All she's good at is spouting nonsense!"

Deirdre flashed a smile. "So, it's not true? Is Brendan not going to marry Charli? The invitation was fake?" "I... I mean-" "Don't worry, Madame Brighthall. I'm not as hurt by this as you think I am," Deirdre interjected indifferently. "Brendan and I made this clear from the very beginning. He wants the child... not me." "Preposterous!" Madame Brighthall thundered in frantic rage. "You're the only daughter-in-law I acknowledge

and the mother of my grandchild! You should be Mrs. Brighthall! It's your rightful place! Bren is the one who's insane!"

Deirdre chuckled dryly. "Nobody is entitled to anything by right, Madame Brighthall. Besides, I don't love him."

The crowd was stunned.

Deirdre, however, felt only the sweet relief of release. This was what she had always wanted to do-to be honest about the nature of their relationship and define who she was to Brendan on her own terms.

"Brendan wants only the kid. It was the only thing he would allow in exchange for my freedom," she added. "I don't interfere with his marriage choice because I don't even care. So, please, Madame Brighthall, don't turn this into a fight between you and Brendan over things like right or wrong. There is already a crack in your relationship with your only son. Deepening that schism will be bad for the both of you."

Deirdre had done it again-always showing concern for other people's situation in places most people would have ignored. Her conclusion snuffed out anything Madame Brighthall had wanted to say.

In the end, the older woman could only sigh. "Brendan... doesn't deserve you at all." Now that Charlene had broken the illusion the Brighthall retinue had been ordered to maintain, the maids no longer tried to hide any mention of the upcoming wedding. As the days passed, the latest gossip and stories kept cropping up. There was talk of a seaside church. There was a discussion on how many nights Brendan spent with Charlene-the story never ended.

The entire city was delighted for Neve's golden boy and his chosen mate. They were just bidding for the day itself to arrive.

As it turned out, Charlene's birthday arrived first. As usual, the festivities were hosted in the family mansion, and this time was no different. The Brighthall retinue had begun preparing for the occasion as early as the morning bright, and one of them even came to Deirdre's room to remind her of the occasion.

"Miss McKinnon? There will be important guests today. Owing to your... unique role, please remain in your room for the whole day, okay? In case you grow bored... you can always go to the second floor and, I don't know, walk around or whatever. No one will be there, at least."

By evening, the living room was filled with the chatter and ding of the party going underway. Guests flooded into the residence, carrying just as many presents and well wishes. Deirdre could hear Charlene's overjoyed laughter from where she slept.

In comparison, her room appeared abandoned and unwanted. Maybe it was just the silence. Maybe it was the fact that she was alone, and the light was not even on. One thing was for sure: Deirdre had begun to feel the numbness of boredom, as well as the growing irritation she had over bits and pieces of the discussion downstairs.

She remembered what the maid had said. The second floor was not off-limits, so she rose and opened the door.

The ground floor was positively swarmed with guests, but none of them ever thought of looking up to notice the lone silhouette darting toward the second-floor stairs.

She hardly reached the balcony when she heard Madame Brighthall chiding under her best-controlled undertone, "You talk to me right now, Brendan. There's no one here, so

no one's going to hear us, so you tell me the truth. Just what in God's name are you thinking!?"

Chapter 856

Don't Worry. I Won't Show Up And Ruin Your Party "Deirdre is the one you truly love! So what's with this.... wedding with Charlene? God, it's like I don't even know my own son anymore!"

Brendan was silent. Then, almost languidly, he said, 'This is between Deirdre and me, mom. You don't have to care.' "I don't have to care?" Madame Brighthall took a deep breath to maintain her composure. "I would love to turn away, Bren! I even wish you could just marry Charlene already, and then what happened? You would put yourself at death's reach if it meant you could keep Deirdre by your side. But now that you have her back with you, you... go ahead and do these things that just don't make any sense!" 'This whole thing is hard to explain.'

Madame Brighthall felt her heart chilled. "So, you're not even going to attempt to explain it, are you? Or are you telling me that the one you love has always been Charlene McKinney, and the only reason you did so much to get Deirdre back was that you're just that possessive?"

Brendan thinned his lips. The moonlight illuminated his features in its silvery coldness, making him look like he was sculpted from a block of ice. He did not say anything, and yet Madame Brighthall understood.

Disappointment filled her eyes. "Remember this: this was your choice.

When the whole thing is over, you don't even have to lift a finger. I'll return Deirdre's freedom to her myself."

Brendan's lips parted, but he seemed to have thought against saying whatever he wanted to say. "You have to attend the wedding, mom. It's the only way to show the Brighthall family acknowledging Charlene. I'll send Sam to get you." "I am not going! I thought I've made myself clear. I am not sparing even a glance to a daughter-in-law I don't even acknowledge. You can tell the world out there that I'm skipping the event due to health reasons."

Brendan simply added, 'Then I'll personally come to escort you.' "Brendan, you!"

Brendan nodded and turned toward the stairs. That was when he noticed Deirdre standing at the corner of the steps leading up to the second floor, her hand still on the rail.

His eyes momentarily lost their cultivated facade. The young woman looked much thinner than she used to be, but her eyes remained clear... and cold.

Her expression deadpanned. She must have heard everything they had said. And yet, she was so devoid of reaction that it also felt as though she had not heard anything at all.

She turned and walked back down.

"Dee!" Brendan's hand reached out to her and withdrew itself before it could catch her. Now was not the time.

"Stay inside for the day. Don't come out."

Contempt flitted through her gaze. "Oh, don't worry, Mr. Brighthall. I'm not going to show up and ruin your party. That would be so pointless."

Brendan's finger trembled. Then, he nodded. "Good."

Deirdre returned to her room, surprised at how calm she was throughout the ordeal. It was as if nothing Brendan did or said could ever bewilder her anymore.

The world outside was growing louder and merrier. It seemed that Brendan had left the second floor and returned to Charlene's side. The guests erupted into cheers and congratulated them as though they were already a married couple.

Deirdre placed her hand on her abdomen. She was even more certain now that the child should never be born. Brendan would only use them as a tool to inherit his business, yes, but Charlene would be worse. There was no way she could even let Deirdre's child live.

Time passed as Deirdre stared into space. Suddenly, the doorknob turned, and the door opened.

Deirdre was stunned. Did she forget to lock the door?

She looked up and saw a woman under the door frame. "Who's there?" she asked.

"Miss McKinnon, who else? I'm the only one who remembers you exist on a day as merry as this one."

Apathy overcame Deirdre's face as soon as she heard it. "I thought you'd be too busy laughing at whatever jokes the guests downstairs made to come to see me in a small, unlit room."

Chapter 857 The Culprit Responsible for Your Mother's Death Was...

Charlene entered while stretching her waist. She said, 'You are indeed putting up with it that you don't even turn on the light. So, this is how you are being treated? It seems that you don't have a great life anyway.'

Faking a smile, Deirdre replied, "For sure, I'm not as honorable as you are, that you have thousands of supporters just to celebrate a birthday. I'm just staying here in the mansion."

Feeling rather proud, Charlene teased, "So, Deirdre, what's the meaning of you living in this world? You should have taken a look at yourself, whether you are capable of snatching Brendan away from me. Whether it's the wedding in the near future or the birthday party today, Brendan will give me whatever I request. He has been accompanying me these few days too-"

Charlene didn't continue but cast a meaningful look.

Accompanied? How had he been accompanying her?

Thinking of the possibility Brendan might have done it with Charlene, Deirdre felt badly nauseous and thought about how unclean Brendan was.

He was extremely unclean.

Deirdre had acid reflux and threw up beside Charlene's foot.

'Yucks!'

Charlene stamped her foot away, but it was too late. Hence, her face darkened.

Deirdre moved her lips to say, "I'm sorry, Miss McKinsey. I'm pregnant and can't help myself when I'm disgusted." i

Charlene locked her stare on Deidre, and rage filled her so much that she wanted to punch Deirdre in her face. However, she changed her mind and invaded Deirdre's personal space instead.

"Deirdre, you are feeling proud for bearing Brendan's child, aren't you? I wonder how your mother would react if she learned that her daughter is going to give birth to a

child for her killer. Would she be so furious that she would jump out of her coffin and strangle you to death?"

As a response, Deirdre abruptly grabbed Charlene's wrist.

"Ouch!"

Having a cold yet indignant face, Deirdre rose to her feet. "What have you just said?" Charlene was pleased with herself, so she completely forgot her pain and restated, "I said that it's Brendan who led to your mother's death!"

Deirdre's mind went blank. She forced herself to stay calm and collected. Following that, she narrowed her eyes to glare at Charlene and asked, "Charlene McKinney, I do hate Brendan, but I'm not stupid. What does it have to do with Brendan that my mom fell from the third floor? Or do you want to say that Brendan is responsible for my mom's death? If this is the case, you're indeed too lame. He was trying to restrain me with my mom, so what good would it do him if he were to kill my mom?" "Yes, Ophelia McKinnon's death was indeed of no benefit to him." Charlene continued in a slow manner. "But it doesn't mean he didn't indirectly kill her."

Deirdre gritted her teeth as she asked, "What are you trying to say?" "Can't you understand it? It's me, the culprit responsible for your mother's death," said Charlene slowly.

Deirdre's eyes widened in astonishment, only feeling that her view was completely dark.

"How unfortunate that old lady was to be your mother. In order to ruin you and cut off the connection between you and Brendan, I went to her personally.

"I told her that you were waiting for her on the third floor's balcony, and she went! How simple-minded she was! While shouting your name, she climbed further up. Then, I told her that she would get to meet you by jumping down-" "Charlene McKinney!" roared Deirdre. She was on the verge of collapse and pinched Charlene's shoulders with both hands. "She had no grievances with you! And her mental state was not as good as that of a child!"

Blinking as if she was innocent, Charlene replied, "Yes, but her daughter snatched my man away from me, and this is heinous. By the way, you should be glad that you are blind. Otherwise, I could show you her bloody condition. Tsk, tsk, tsk! Do you know that she didn't die immediately? She was wiggling and shouted your name continuously..."

Chapter 858 Brendan, Save Me!

Deirdre was on the brink of collapse. "Charlene McKinney! You vicious woman! How could you attack a patient with mental health and an unsound mind!? Why aren't you dead yet!?"

Charlene was forced to retreat to the balcony, yet she kept provoking Deirdre, "You can't blame me only, can you? You should blame yourself for falling in love with Brendan. Otherwise, I wouldn't have needed to deal with a fool, would I?"

"Thankfully, Brendan arranged for your mother to be there, where all his men were my subordinates. Hence, I could easily approach her and even delete all scenes recorded by the monitoring cameras except the scene when your mother jumped down. To put it bluntly, Brendan was the accomplice."

Taking a deep breath, Deirdre felt so painful that she was trembling.

"Deirdre, don't you think that you're such a j*rk? The man you love not only sent you to suffer in prison but also loves the culprit responsible for your mother's death." "Shut up!" Deirdre looked up with her eyes turned blood red and abruptly pounced at Charlene. "Charlene McKinney! You killed my mother, and I want you dead!"

Rushing toward Charlene, Deirdre pressed her against the railing.

"Ahhh!" Charlene shrieked, and her shriek attracted people to look up. They saw the main character of the day pressed against the rail by a woman.

"Help! I need help! She's trying to kill me!"

Deirdre's desire to have Charlene killed was so strong that it isolated all the surrounding noise.

She grabbed upon Charlene's neck so tightly that her nails turned white. She choked Charlene to a state whereby Charlene's face turned bluish and looked pitiful to the others.

"Isn't that Miss McKinsey? Why is she being bullied by a woman?" "What's happening? Who's that woman? She looks so familiar. Is she Miss McKinnon's cousin?"

Upon hearing the noises, Brendan instantly went to the room and kicked the door open. The wind howled at the balcony, and when he saw the undisguised killing intent in Deirdre's eyes, he knew that something irreversible had happened.

The moment Charlene saw Brendan, she seemed to have found her final straw.

"Brendan! Help me!"

Deirdre didn't turn, not even taking a glance at Brendan. However, she was very disappointed.

She was so disappointed that Brendan would come so quickly when he learned that something had happened to Charlene, for the fear that Charlene would slightly suffer and be hurt.

Clenching his fists, Brendan said, "Deirdre, release your hands. It's crowded down there, so it won't do anyone good if things get serious. Let's sit down and talk calmly together." "Talk calmly?"

Those words upset Deirdre. She couldn't accept Brendan was requesting her to stay calm when Charlene had killed her mother.

Feeling a stabbing pain in the lower abdomen, Deirdre omitted her surroundings and pushed hard with bloodshot eyes.

Charlene fell straight down from the balcony.

"Charli!"

Brendan rushed forward, but he couldn't make it in time. Charlene fell, hit the ground, and fainted.

The entire scene induced an uproar among the spectators beneath.

"It's a murder! A woman is murdering someone at the Brighthalls' banquet!" "How dare she attack the future Mrs. Brighthall? Is she crazy?" "She hasn't died yet, has she?"

That woman upstairs is so cruel to murder so justifiably! Oh, I remembered! Isn't that woman Charlene's young

cousin? It turns out that they are all crazy. Charlene hit and killed someone with her car and is still in prison, and now her cousin pushed someone down the balcony before so many witnesses!" i

Sam was also among the crowd. When he saw the scene, he immediately requested a stretcher to carry Charlene to the hospital as fast as possible.

Chapter 859 Cover Up

Charlene must not die. Otherwise, Deirdre couldn't explain herself under so many eyewitnesses.

Seeing the scene, Brendan held tightly on the rail, so tightly that his veins were bulging.

He had taken a lot of precautions, but he didn't manage to prevent Charlene from provoking Deirdre.

When he saw someone taking pictures, Brendan subconsciously stood before Deirdre to protect her while his eyes filled with coldness.

"If I do remember correctly, you must be the chief editor of the Entertainment Weekly Magazine." Squinting his eyes while looking at the man with the camera, Brendan warned, "If any photos are leaked today, I guarantee that Entertainment Weekly Magazine will vanish completely from Neve! You can try if you don't believe it."

The Entertainment Weekly Magazine was the largest media outlet in Neve. As the chief editor, the man had a lot of connections, so he could stop all media outlets from publishing the news as quickly as possible.

That was the reason Brendan purposely chose to threaten him.

The man was furious, yet he didn't dare to retort. After all, the man knew that if he were to go against Brendan, he would be forced to live a life worse than death.

Nevertheless, some people were unconvinced by such a threat.

"Mr. Brighthall, so you are trying to seal our mouths to cover up for the murderer, aren't you?"

As soon as someone took the lead to voice it out, the rest followed suit in expressing their dissatisfaction.

"Mr. Brighthall, we all clearly know about your capability. None of us can go against you, provided you want to cover it up. But are you sure you can cover it up? When the woman behind you can push someone down the balcony, she may do it again next time!" "Although it's important for an entrepreneur to have capabilities, it's more important to have a conscience. Mr. Brighthall, it's indeed immoral for you to cover up this incident. Moreover, no secret can be kept forever, especially when the woman has done it so openly. Are you sure no one will spill the beans?"

Suppressing the anger, Brendan said coldly, "Murderer? Who's the murderer? How dare you say Charli is dead when she is still alive? In this case, there is no such thing as a murderer!"

The crowd was rendered speechless for a while.

"So, does it mean that you are covering up for that woman behind you?" "This is my family matter, and it's not as complicated as you all are thinking. We will resolve it ourselves. Therefore, please take the whole scene as a charade, and we will continue the cooperation. As for whether the secret can be kept forever, I only know that we are capable of sealing our own lips. I don't think anyone would want such a trivial matter to affect our cooperation in the future, right?"

The crowd looked at each other in blank dismay. In fact, not to mention that Charlene was still under emergency treatment, even if she died, it had nothing to do with them

indeed.

Everyone was in the business field. Thus, why should they bother when even Brendan, Charlene's fiancé, wanted to cover it up?

The crowd fell silent.

Madame Brighthall came forward and said, "Let's call it a day. Thank you for joining the banquet."

Since Madame Brighthall had spoken, the guests left one after another. Brendan turned to Deirdre and saw her eyes still red. It was as if she was still immersing herself in her emotions.

"Deirdre." Brendan reached out but was shaken off before he could touch her.

"Go away... You make me sick!" Deirdre could hardly speak.

She could grit her teeth and endure it no matter how Brendan bullied her. However, Brendan turned out to be an accomplice in her mother's death. At that moment, she felt unprecedented hatred. She groped behind her back, found a lamp, grabbed it, and threw it at Brendan.

Chapter 860 You Don't Blame Me?

With a loud noise, the cover of the lamp shattered on the ground.

Slowly, Brendan put down his arm, which had a long and narrow cut on it. Blood gushed out, but he didn't even frown. He was merely stunned.

For Deirdre to really attack him, she must really hate him.

He even believed that Deirdre would push him down the balcony, just like how she had pushed Charlene if she were powerful enough.

Madame Brighthall rushed upstairs toward them. When she saw Brendan's bleeding arm at the door, she was startled for a moment and hurriedly went forward.

"W-What's wrong? Deirdre... Brendan... What?"

Brendan's phone rang out suddenly. When he saw the caller on the screen, he accepted it with his uninjured arm.

"Mr. Brighthall." Sam's tone sounded serious. "Have you solved the problem of the banquet? Would you like to come over? Charlene is-" "Okay, I'll be there immediately."

Brendan immediately cut off the call and was prepared to depart. His action pulled up short Madame Brighthall for a moment. Following that, she hurriedly asked, "Where are you going? Bren, we'll have to stop your arm from continuous bleeding and have it bandaged first!" "Lena's condition doesn't seem good, and I'll have to check it out. I may have to sign a form on her behalf and authorize treatment."

Madame Brighthall knew clearly that Brendan had to go, but she couldn't help worrying. "What about your arm?" "It's not a big deal," said Brendan as he took a glance at the wound, the lamp, and the woman filled with intense hatred. "It's just a minor injury. I'll go handle it at the hospital."

Following that, Brendan went off quickly.

After Brendan left, Madame Brighthall turned to Deirdre. Her eyes were filled with complex emotions.

"Deirdre..." She reached out for the lamp in Deirdre's hand. "This is too dangerous. Can you please give it to me?"

Surprisingly, Deirdre didn't resist Madame Brighthall from taking away the lamp. She remained calm and collected.

Lowering her head, Madame Brighthall saw the shattered glass of the lamp on the carpet, and Deirdre was bleeding because she had stepped on them. Feeling complicated, she ordered maids to clean the carpet and a doctor to handle the wounds on Deirdre's feet. Deirdre remained quiet throughout the process. She was so quiet that she didn't look like a human but a walking dead or a puppet. "Deirdre, regardless of condition, the most important thing for you is to take care of yourself. Please remember that you are more important than your child." Unable to hide her concern, Madame Brighthall held Deirdre's hand tightly. "Tell me if you are unhappy. If you wish to leave here... I'll help you." 2

Deirdre finally responded. She looked at Madame Brighthall and asked, "You don't blame me?" "What can I blame you for?" "For bringing trouble to the Brighthalls by pushing Charlene down the balcony before all the guests and for having injured Brendan." Deirdre laughed at herself "I understand your personality well. Something must have happened for you to be so impulsive. As for Bren, it's his fault to have broken your heart again after chasing you back. Not to mention hitting him with a lamp, it's normal for you to feel like killing him."

Madame Brighthall's words touched Deirdre. She was surprised that Madame Brighthall would stand by her side instead of her son without hesitation. She began wondering why a reasonable person like Madame Brighthall would have such a selfish, cruel, and ruthless son like Brendan. Well, at least Brendan was devoted to Charlene. Because of Charlene, he would go to the hospital first, even if his arm was injured. Deirdre deemed that if it weren't for the child she was bearing, Brendan might have already pushed her to the forefront and made sure she paid the price.

Chapter 861 Take Miss McKinnon

After Deirdre's wounds were dressed, Madame Brighthall kept her company for a while.

Deirdre lay on the bed after Madame Brighthall left, yet she was having difficulty falling asleep.

She dreamt of her mother sitting cross-legged under the apricot tree and waving to her when she finally fell asleep. Her smile was just as kind and gentle as before.

"You're late. Put down your school bag quickly. I don't want my precious daughter to be tired."

She ran forward with tears down her face, yet the scene changed to the rooftop instantly. She watched as her mother jumped from the rooftop and screamed hysterically, but there was nothing she could do.

"Miss McKinnon! Miss McKinnon!"

Deirdre was awakened by the sound of someone knocking on the door. She sat upright in shock, breathing heavily, and her face was drenched in tears.

"What's going on?"

She felt her way to open the door. The maid said in a panicked tone, "Miss McKinnon, the police are here."

Deirdre sat in the living room and felt the oppressive feeling from the crowd of police officers in the house. The police officer brandished his badge and said with a cold expression, "Deirdre McKinnon, someone reported to the police for the premeditated

homicide of Charli McKinsey. You're coming with us."

Madame Brighthall immediately ran out. "Sir... This is a misunderstanding.

What do you mean by premeditated homicide? It is utterly impossible!

There must be a mistake somewhere."

The police officer treated Madame Brighthall with respect in view of her identity, but he still spoke sternly. "Madam, the police have investigated this case, and there is no

mistake. Miss Charli McKinsey is the person who reported this case to us." "What?"

Madame Brighthall backed away repeatedly. 'Charli has reported it to the police?'

The police officer said, "Don't worry, madam. The police won't wrong a good person, but if we do find that Miss McKinnon didn't commit the crime indeed upon our investigation, we'll send her back. Take Miss McKinnon!"

The female police officer behind him stepped forward and cuffed Deirdre's wrists.

Deirdre did not resist and followed the police outside calmly.

Meanwhile, Brendan arrived in a rush and got out of the car. His flawlessly handsome face was tense, while his dark eyes were bloodshot as he stared strenuously at the woman walking out of the yard.

'You're going to be fine, Deirdre. I will make sure that you're released safely.'

Deirdre ignored him, lowered her head, and got into the police car.

The police car drove away. Madame Brighthall hobbled to Brendan and gave him a ferocious slap.

'This is the wife you chose! This is the woman you want to marry! It's fine that she stole your heart, but she is trying to exterminate everyone! What have I done wrong in raising a son like you!?"

Madame Brighthall was furious while Brendan's head was slightly turned to the side.

The maid hastily grabbed Madame Brighthall's arm. "Madame Brighthall... Please calm down. I'm sure that Mr. Brighthall didn't want this to happen either!" "He didn't want this to happen? If he didn't want this to happen, why did he invite Charli to throw her birthday party here? If he didn't want this to happen, why did he let Charli show up in Deirdre's room that day? If he didn't want this to happen, why is Deirdre detained by the police?" 1

Madame Brighthall covered her chest, and her face turned purple bit by bit. 'There are things that I don't ask, but it doesn't mean that I don't know. I shouldn't have told you Deirdre's whereabouts in the past had I known that you'd be so unrepentant!"

"Madame Brighthall! Don't talk anymore. Have your medicine quickly!"

The maid bustled about by bringing medicine and water.

Brendan did not utter a word, but he turned around and got into the car.

He made a promise to Madame Brighthall before he got into the car, "I won't let anything happen to Deirdre."

The car engine was started. He drove all the way to the hospital and opened the door to the ward. Charlene was sitting on the bed, being fed food bite by bite. She beamed with joy at the sight of Brendan. 'You're here, Brendan.'

Chapter 862 Is This Your Goal?

Brendan signaled the caregiver to leave. He asked coldly after the door was shut, "Did you call the police?"

Charlene blinked innocently upon hearing that, and her expression turned so grievous

instantly that she was almost tearing up.

"Hmm... Brendan, I know you must think I'm at fault. However, I can't help it because Miss McKinnon is truly terrifying! She shoved me down the stairs with her own hands! Had the grass not cushioned my fall, it's possible that I wouldn't be alive anymore. I'm lucky I only broke a leg, but I don't have the courage to think what Miss McKinnon would do to me in the future. So, I can only let her face the consequences she deserves." "Consequences that she deserves?" Brendan narrowed his eyes.

Meanwhile, Sam's call came.

"Sir, the situation is looking very bad now. It's apparent that Charlene is well prepared in her plan. There is a drone recording of Miss McKinnon pushing Charlene down the stairs, and it is posted online. The online community is already clamorous, and the police have also acquired substantial evidence for the case. Charlene cannot control public opinion online and produce precise evidence by herself. I'm certain that she has a backer."

Brendan put down his phone and stared at Charlene with his deep, dark eyes. "Is this your goal?"

Charlene appeared innocent. "What goal? Brendan, my goal is to be married to you, right? I know your goal very well, too, of course. Don't worry, I will hand over all of Ophelia's information on our wedding day, and I won't go back on my word."

Brendan stared at her coldly for two seconds before he left, slamming the door.

Charlene cracked a proud smile. She thought that her effort in triggering Deirdre to shove her down the stairs had not been wasted. The outcome was exactly what she wanted indeed.

As long as Deirdre was sent to prison, Brendan's heart would be all hers.

Brendan got into the car and inhaled a deep breath to calm himself. He ordered someone to handle the public opinion online and drove to the police station.

When he saw Deirdre again, she was separated by a glass. Her expression was calm, as if she had expected this to happen.

Brendan clenched his fists tightly and sat opposite her.

"Don't answer to the police on yesterday's incident regardless of the interrogation. I will hire the best lawyer to defend you."

Deirdre raised her head at last. Other than coldness, there was a look of mockery in her eyes.

'You'd really do your best for the child in my womb, Mr. Brighthall? You want to get me out of jail so badly, but aren't you afraid you'll disappoint your dear Charlene?'

Brendan shut his eyes and opened them again. "I just want you to be safe." 'Just want me to be safe? That's nothing but sarcasm.'

Deirdre burst out laughing aloud, her shoulders bouncing from the laughter. Her reddened eyes were filled with boundless hatred when she said, "Stop pretending, Brendan. Every word you say now will only disgust me! You should be glad that I'm in a detainment center now, or else I would have killed you for sure! I want you to die with Charlene!"

She was so agitated that she stood up. A staff member immediately ran inside and pinned Deirdre to the table.

Deirdre did not attempt to struggle either, but she glared at Brendan. 'You should die. I will never let you have the child, even if it means I have to be sentenced to life in

prison!"

Afterward, Deirdre was taken away to calm down.

Brendan sat on the stool rigidly and felt the pain brought by the woman's hatred that was worse than any form of punishment.

It felt as if every chunk of flesh on his body was stripped away, his tendons ripped, and his bones drawn.

Brendan's eyes were bloodshot, and he forced himself to calm down. He did not have time to stay longer, so he headed outside at once. As soon as he arrived at the police station's entrance, he was surrounded by a crowd running toward him. They held up their phone cameras and queried him.

Chapter 863 I Owe Too Much to Her

"Mr. Brighthall! Why are you suddenly showing up at the police station? Could it be that the video clip posted online is true? Did your ex-wife's cousin really push Charli down the stairs?" "Are you here at the police station to handle this case? What sort of punishment will Deirdre be subjected to?" "Someone posted online claiming that you're going to protect your exwife's sister. Is that true? Is your conscience clear to Miss McKinsey, your fiancée whom you're about to marry soon and who loves you so deeply? Or you're having feelings for Deirdre because she looks similar to your exwife?" "The murderer must be convicted! Let alone the fact that the victim is the future wife of the Brighthall Group's owner. Mr. Brighthall, we will be scrutinizing this case as citizens, and we want you to give us a satisfactory reply! Don't disappoint Miss McKinsey's love for you! Don't disappoint our trust in you!"

The crowd was enraged, and they encircled Brendan.

Brendan was capable of using all sorts of ways to deal with these people if they were journalists, yet these people were all passersby.

Brendan could only keep his mouth shut.

"I have no comment. Make way!"

Naturally, those people would never let the opportunity slip. They aimed their cameras at Brendan's face.

Sam came rushing over, and the police officers from the station came to mediate the situation. Only then did Brendan manage to leave the crowd and get into the car.

Brendan rolled up the car window and pinched his eyebrows, suppressing his anger.

Sam's expression was solemn as well, and he drove the car until they arrived at a deserted place before he stopped the car.

"Sir, even though we're already figuring out a way to suppress public opinion online, the online community is still continuing their heated discussion. What should we do now?" "Where's Declan? Where is he?"

Declan majored in law when he studied abroad. He considered being a lawyer his side occupation, but he was already very accomplished in his law career. He had won countless cases in court, and Brendan could only set his mind at ease if Declan were to handle this case.

Sam said, "Mr. King is still in Eastgene. However, I already called him an hour ago. Mr. King told me that he will come over at night when he is done managing his own affairs." "Get a copy of the drone video clip and wait for Declan." "Yes, sir."

Declan got off the plane at 1:00 a.m., already looking tired. After exiting the airport,

Brendan was waiting for him in the car. Brendan had smoked quite a lot of cigarettes, and the dark circles under his eyes showed the extent of his concern.

Brendan put out his cigarette and fanned away the cigarette smoke after seeing Declan approaching with his luggage.

‘You’re here? I’m sorry. I wasn’t planning on troubling you initially.’

Declan handed his luggage to Sam and said smilingly, “You don’t have to make polite remarks like this to me. I’ll be even more pissed if you don’t tell me about the incident. However, I didn’t manage to find out much about the situation on the flight. What happened?”

They headed to the mansion, and Brendan briefed Declan about the situation along the way.

Declan pondered for a moment and said, “Miss McKinnon is not that kind of impulsive person. She should know very well of the consequence for pushing Miss McKinsey down the stairs in the witness of everyone. Hence, I’m very curious about what happened that made Miss McKinnon lose her senses.” “I’m not too sure about that.”

Brendan exhaled slowly. At the thought of the woman’s eyes filled with extreme hatred, his heart wrenched in pain beyond his control. “Deirdre and I didn’t have much of an opportunity to interact since the incident took place. I managed to get to the police station yesterday with great effort, but Deirdre resisted me very much. It was utterly impossible to communicate with her.”

Upon saying that, Brendan said in a self-mocking tone, “I owe too much to her.”

Declan smiled. ‘That’s undisputed...’

Chapter 864 Miss McKinnon Has...Pleaded Guilty!

“I’ve already told you from the start that if I were Miss McKinnon, I would not only hate you but also possibly kill you.”

Brendan felt bitterness in his throat. “That is why I’ve always been doing my best to make up for my mistake, but I didn’t expect something like this to happen in the middle.”

Declan said, “I feel that the only troubling part about this incident is that the shoving incident is real. If Charlene insists on the investigation, it will be very hard for Deirdre to walk free.” “However, Charlene isn’t injured severely. In addition, Miss McKinnon is pregnant, so she won’t be sent to prison. We will only need to delay the conviction, and we will stand a chance at turning the tables.”

Brendan’s dark eyes dimmed. “I know. I’ve already tampered with the video clip by blurring it. In addition, the guests of the party are on my side. We can totally claim that Charlene was intoxicated and confused...”

At the same time Declan nodded, he said hesitantly, “However, we will need Miss McKinnon to work with us on this. Are you sure Miss McKinnon is still willing to trust you now?”

Brendan was stunned for a moment. Before he could speak, Sam suddenly ran into the house, his eyes filled with panic.

Brendan had never seen Sam behave this way, and his heart was racing.

Soon, Sam said anxiously, “Sir, Mr. King, this is bad! Miss McKinnon has... pleaded guilty!”

It felt like a bomb exploding in everyone’s hearts.

Brendan sat on the sofa rigidly and thought about the woman's hateful gaze and her words.

'You should die. I will never let you have the child, even if it means I have to be sentenced to life in prison!'

Her hatred completely suffocated Brendan at the time, and now that he thought about it, he came to realize that she was prepared to do so from the start.

She would rather be in prison with the child than be affiliated with him.

Brendan felt his heart wrench in pain. He had to bend forward to put pressure on his chest to maintain his sobriety. His eyes were reddened with tears, and he had to calm himself for a while before he raised his head to look at Declan's concerned gaze.

"Are you alright?"

Declan was well aware of how unpleasant Brendan felt now because he had experienced despair and struggles in love too.

He spared no effort in making up to the woman, yet in the end, it was all for nothing. In addition, the woman whom he loved deeply loathed him so much that she wanted him dead.

"I'm fine." Brendan calmed himself with great effort and stood up. "I'm going to see her."

Declan hesitated for a while. "Brendan, I think it would be better for me to go now.

Miss McKinnon may not necessarily listen to you. In fact, she may not even necessarily want to meet you." "However, I can't just do nothing." Brendan lowered his eyes. 'This is between Deirdre and me, so I will have to handle it personally.'

Declan understood Brendan's intention and did not comment further.

Brendan decided that he would rest on the sofa until the next morning because it was already midnight, and he was afraid that he would disturb Deirdre's rest.

It was still in the same spot as before. Deirdre sat over there and did not look that different from yesterday other than her lips appearing paler.

Brendan calmed himself before he walked over. He did not mention the guilty plea, but he furrowed his eyebrows and said, "Why are your lips so pale? Did you catch a cold, or did you not rest much?"

Deirdre kept quiet for two seconds before looking up. "If you're here just to put on such a boring show, I'm leaving."

She stood up while Brendan suppressed his discomfort and said, "Can't I show some care for you?"

Deirdre stopped while Brendan said, "You may hate me, Deirdre. In fact, I will totally support you in tormenting and punishing me. After all, I did so many wrong things. However, you shouldn't punish yourself. Can your health withstand being in prison for the second time?"

Chapter 865 Why Aren't You the Dead One?

Deirdre was stunned for a short while. By the time she recovered from her surprise, she had assumed a sarcastic expression. "Aren't I punishing you now?"

Brendan was actually irrefutable.

"Moreover, how is prison any different from being confined in your house to be with you? I feel that there's more freedom to be in prison anyway. I don't have to see you daily and be disgusted by you at the very least."

Deirdre's remark was cruel. Brendan felt his head spinning, and he could not tell if he was feeling unpleasant or if he was ill. He clenched his fists tightly and suppressed his unusual demeanor.

"Do you know what will happen after this?"

Brendan's eyes were bloodshot. "No one can guarantee your safety or survival when you're in prison. The video clip of you shoving Charlene down the stairs is spreading all over the web, and everyone knows about it. You'll be the murderer rejected by everyone when you're released from prison. Do you still want to go through the previous experience once again?"

Deirdre was caught in a daze for a moment before she said, "I don't care anymore." She wished that she could do this to punish herself so she would not feel so tortured.

"How about the child, then? Do you want the child to suffer with you?" Brendan pursed his lips so tightly that his lips turned pale. "Deirdre, why have you become so foolish? If Ophelia were to see you in your current-" "You don't have the right to mention her!" Deirdre went from being calm to enraged abruptly. Her body was trembling ever so slightly. "Don't you dare ruin her name!"

Brendan was astounded by her reaction. "Why?"

The woman's hateful eyes appeared before him once again. Brendan felt his heart racing and came to understand the situation a little.

Soon afterward, he moved closer to the glass. "What did Charlene say to you?"

Deirdre's eyes were moist with tears. She clutched the hem of her top tightly to calm herself with great effort. "Shouldn't you already know what she said? After all, you're her accomplice!"

Brendan's mind went blank. He inhaled softly and said, "Deirdre, I understand that you're disgusted with me, but you should know that Charlene is not trustworthy. What did she say to you? Don't you want to cross-check what she told you?" "Cross-check? Who am I to cross-check with? Who should I trust between you and Charlene?"

Deirdre was hysterical, and her eyes were filled with resentment. "Let me ask you this, Brendan, how did my mother die?"

Brendan was stunned for a moment. He had received the information that Ophelia had jumped to death accidentally at the time. It was truly quite normal for a patient with mental illness to fall from the balcony. Her face had been a bloody mess from the fall, so they could not find another cause but to regard her as Ophelia and bury her. It was also the reason Brendan believed that Ophelia might still be alive.

Brendan's silence made Deirdre utterly disappointed. "It was because Charlene personally lied to get her to the second floor so she would jump downstairs to see me. On the other hand, Charlene did this all because of you!"

Deirdre's teeth were chattering when she finished her sentence. She felt boundless coldness enshrouding her. She inhaled a deep breath and said in extreme hatred, "I lost my father when I was young, and my mother was my last surviving family member. Why did you take away the life of the person I loved the most? What did I do to you to deserve that? Tell me!"

Brendan felt his head spinning. He was constantly reminded that he had ruined everything for Deirdre, yet Deirdre's query still made him feel suffocated.

"Brendan, why aren't you the dead one?"

Brendan could clearly see the hatred in her moist eyes across the glass. If there was

no glass as their barrier, she would probably kill him with a knife.

"No..." Brendan's lips were pale. "Deirdre, I know that it is very hard for you to believe me, but... Ophelia is not dead."

Chapter 866 How Am I Supposed to Believe You

Deirdre was astounded upon hearing that.

"What do you mean?" Soon, Deirdre calmed down and stared at Brendan's outline with a disappointed gaze. "What sort of trick are you up to again, Brendan?"

Brendan was frustrated.

He had done way too many things that made it very difficult for Deirdre to trust him.

"I'm not. I know that you may find it hard to understand the situation, but I'm telling you the truth that Ophelia is still alive."

Deirdre's fingers twitched. "Brendan, what is the point of you making up this lie? My mother's death is an established truth... that both you and the police are well aware of. You would have told me from the start if she were still alive. How can you possibly be hiding it from me until now!?"

She was utterly disappointed. "How foolish do you think I am that I will believe in your lowly lie?"

Brendan heaved a sigh softly and clenched his fists so tightly from the discomfort of his body until his veins bulged up. However, he still wanted to look normal to Deirdre.

"Ophelia's death was verified by me and the police back in those years indeed, but her corpse's face was a mess from the fall. There was utterly no way to tell if it was her. Most importantly... it's possible that she is being manipulated by someone now."

Deirdre's expression was one of confusion and overwhelming emotions. "What the h*ck... are you trying to say here?"

Brendan looked at the woman's face with unprecedented gentleness.

"Deirdre, do you still remember what I told you before? I told you that I love you."

Deirdre felt her heart twitch in pain. Brendan continued. "Since I love you, why would I want to be with Charlene? Am I doing it to deceive you? Yet, why haven't you thought about what's the point of me deceiving you?"

"If all I wanted was the child in your womb, I could just confine you to the house and force you to give birth to the child. I can use a multitude of ways to accomplish that, but I will never expound on your feelings. That is just not what I do, and you should know very well that I will never waste my time on unnecessary matters."

Deirdre fell silent, and her breathing was ragged. Her hands that were pressed against her thighs were clenching subconsciously.

He was right.

She was puzzled by Brendan's remark indeed.

If all Brendan wanted was the child, why would he care about the feelings of the child's mother? He could have gotten her settled in the family mansion and waited until the child was born instead of being meticulous in every way. He was determined to be a good father.

"Charlene is threatening me with Ophelia."

Deirdre raised her head abruptly.

Brendan's lips were pale, but his dark eyes were ferocious as usual. "She knows that I've been utterly disappointed by her, so she is forcing me to be with her and marry

her with your mother's photo.

"Do you still remember when I got shot? I told you that I got it because of Tobey, but in truth, I wanted to go to the place where your mother was confined and see if I could stand a chance of getting her. Afterward, I was ambushed, so I came up with the idea to shoot myself in an attempt to force those people to reveal themselves.

"This is everything that happened without any lies. I indeed love you, and you're the only one I love."

Deirdre's mind was chaotic, and her entire body was burning upon hearing Brendan's love profession.

Her train of thought was messy, and she only found her voice after a long time. "Why didn't you tell me before then? You had plenty of chances when you were with me, yet why are you telling me this now? How am I supposed to believe you?"

Brendan kept quiet for a moment before he answered, "I'm sorry. It is because I still can't confirm if the woman in Charlene's captivity is the real Ophelia yet."

Chapter 867 Leave It to Me

"I have her photo, and I can confirm that it is not photoshopped. However, the plastic surgery techniques are advanced these days, and it is not utterly impossible to find one or two women that look like Ophelia in all of Berth.

"I was afraid of giving you false hope only to disappoint you again, so I could only figure out a way to trace Ophelia's whereabouts, yet I didn't expect that..."

Brendan did not finish his sentence, but Deirdre was well aware of what it was.

He did not expect that she would be triggered by Charlene and push Charlene down the stairs.

In truth, Deirdre was well aware that Charlene was mostly provoking her, but she could not care about that anymore at the time. If Charlene was the enemy who killed her mother, it would be her only chance to avenge her mother.

Deirdre was having a hard time processing the information, but Brendan's sincere words did not sound like a lie.

"Brendan... Will I still be able to trust you one last time?"

Brendan's dimmed, dark eyes lit up with a tinge of hopefulness. He looked at the woman before him, and his lips trembled. He inhaled a deep breath strenuously.

"I know what you're worried about. You're worried that my goal is the child in your womb. Don't worry." Brendan shut his eyes and opened them again in a determined manner. "When the child is born, you can leave with the child. I would just like to take a glance at the baby, and that will be enough for me."

Deirdre raised her head in surprise upon hearing that and clutched the hem of her top in her clenched fists out of astonishment. She could not see Brendan's face clearly, but she could feel the man's determination, seriousness, and sternness from the ambiance.

Brendan smiled. "My initial goal was to keep you company for a little while longer. If you insist on leaving, I won't separate you from your biological child, of course."

He said, "Deirdre, if that person is not your mother, Ophelia, Charlene will most certainly be your mother's killer. Would you be willing to go to prison so that your mother's killer remains at large?"

Deirdre clenched her fists tightly.

She was struck by the remark. She had no hope left in Brendan, indeed, and she knew that there was no way to get rid of him, so she chose to go to the extremes. However, if there was real evidence that showed that Ophelia was possibly still alive, Deirdre wanted to go after the possibility.

If Ophelia was dead, Deirdre wanted to see Charlene face the consequences with her own eyes.

‘Yet, I’ve already pleaded guilty.’

Brendan replied with a smile when he noticed that Deirdre was becoming flexible.

“Leave it to me...”

The visitation ended, and Brendan walked out of the detention center. He toppled to the ground as soon as he walked outside.

When he woke up, he was in the hospital and had an intravenous drip in his hand.

Declan was making a call when he heard the commotion and turned around. ‘You’re awake, huh?’

He served a glass of water, and Brendan took a few sips. He said with furrowed eyebrows, “What happened to me?” “Gastritis. Your gastritis has flared up because you don’t eat or rest normally. However, it is good that it’s just gastritis. Otherwise, it would be bad if you fell ill during a crucial moment like this.”

It seemed that his condition was not considered too severe. Otherwise, Declan would not be joking anymore.

Brendan massaged his temples because his head was throbbing. He rested for a while before he asked, “How long have I been out?” “About a day and a half.” “How about Deirdre?”

Declan said smilingly, “Don’t worry. She has withdrawn her guilty plea according to your method. She claimed that she was in a poor mental state. In addition, she is pregnant, so the police gave her some time.”

Brendan nodded. “I just want to get this over with quickly. Her body is weak, and the environment of the detention center is poor. She will catch a cold easily and get sick.”

Declan smiled as he said, “I understand, and I’ve already arranged for my people to visit the police center.”

Chapter 868 Interview

“However, I’m quite curious how you managed to convince Miss McKinnon to the point she is willing to follow your instruction to withdraw her guilty plea.”

Brendan looked at the dripping intravenous drip and said calmly, “I told her the truth. I told her everything without holding back anything.”

Declan was surprised. “Is that so? In truth, you should have done that from the start. However, you’re always carrying burdens by yourself. I find it quite surprising that you would choose to tell Miss McKinnon and let her share your burden... It seems that she is really important to you.”

Brendan cracked a smile. The answer was obvious without the need to speak.

Declan could not help feeling envious. ‘When will I have a relationship like this? It’s a waste that this relationship is too heavy and risky.’

Brendan thought about all sorts of things that happened between him and Deirdre.

He used to think that relationships were troublesome in the past. He cared about Charlene, but he knew deep down that he felt responsible toward Charlene most of

the time. He had only realized that a relationship was not that bad after building a relationship with Deirdre.

Just as they were looking at each other, the room door opened heavily all of a sudden. Brendan raised his head and found Sam breathing heavily at the door.

Declan asked smilingly, "What's going on? What's so urgent?"

Sam pursed his lips and did not say anything, but he turned on the television immediately.

In the next moment, Charlene's face appeared on the screen. She lay on the bed looking emaciated and appeared to be severely injured to the eyes of outsiders.

A journalist asked away from the camera, "Miss McKinsey, is the online article true about claiming that Miss McKinnon pushed you down the stairs?"

Charlene's eyes were reddened with tears, and her beautiful face was tainted with fear. "I... I don't know what I've said wrongly to offend Miss McKinnon that she would actually..."

She did not answer the question straightforwardly, yet her answer made no difference.

The journalist said quickly, "So, it is true. However, Mr. Brighthall chose to keep quiet about the incident. In addition, Miss McKinnon is the cousin of Mr. Brighthall's ex-wife. Do you think that this incident will just pass?"

Charlene looked straight at the camera, and her pale lips moved as she said softly, "Brendan is a righteous person. I believe he will certainly be able to provide me with a proper outcome when something so serious happens to me. Our love is beyond all doubt, and I hope the online community will not implicate the Brighthall Group and Brendan in this incident. This is a conflict between Miss McKinnon and me. Brendan is only caught in a difficult position."

When her voice died away, the caregiver by the side immediately said, "I'm sorry, but we need to administer medicine for Miss McKinsey! She broke her leg and can't dance anymore despite being a ballet dancer in the past. However, we can't let her end up crippled for the rest of her life. Please leave the room and give her some privacy."

The interview ended, but Brendan was still staring at the television screen.

Declan's expression was not as relaxed, and his smile had vanished. "Charlene is very intelligent and is using public opinion to her advantage."

Brendan brought up his social media on his phone and found that it was filled with posts berating Deirdre.

The posts claimed that Deirdre's elder cousin was a murderer while she was a mad woman.

In fact, some extremists had even threatened the Brighthall Group through their official websites and claimed that Deirdre must be sent to prison. Otherwise, they would boycott the Brighthall Group's products.

Public opinion swayed instantly, and there was no way to suppress it.

Sam received a call soon afterward and told Brendan, "The police are not willing to release Miss McKinnon on bail anymore. They claimed it must be Charlene who drops the charges, or there must be stronger evidence. Otherwise, you will see Miss McKinnon in court."

Chapter 869 Pressure From the Board of Directors

However, the situation was dire. Let alone seeing Deirdre in court, Brendan would be surrounded just by leaving the house.

Brendan was so furious about the upsurge of the online community's opinion on executing Deirdre that he smashed his phone.

Declan suppressed his unpleasant expression. "Frankly, it is apparent that Charlene is fully prepared to make use of public opinion to exert pressure on the case."

Nonetheless, it was the truth. It was already very difficult for Deirdre to get away now.

Sam asked, "Do we still need to release the video clip?" "That won't work anymore."

Declan said, "Charlene has already acknowledged the incident publicly. If we were to claim that the woman in the video clip is not Deirdre, it would only infuriate the community even more."

"Sam, hire keyboard warriors to draw the online community's attention to the fact that Charlene can no longer dance so that Charlene can draw in a bunch of support. Then, post a few scandals that expose some celebrities to divert the crowd's attention. We'll see what to do next."

Sam hastily nodded and took on the task while Brendan removed the intravenous drip from himself.

Declan asked, "Where are you going?" "To the company."

People were stirring up trouble at the entrance of the Brighthall Group's building, just as Brendan had expected. As soon as he entered from the car park, the board of directors was present in the boardroom beyond his expectations.

Mr. Jensen was the first to speak, and his gaze was tainted with contempt. "Mr. Brighthall, you're getting the company in the limelight over and over again. We don't even need to promote ourselves, and we've already gotten on the top search page."

"Mr. Jensen?" Brendan looked at him and said coldly, "If I don't remember wrongly, we sent you to retire abroad, didn't we?"

Mr. Jensen's face was pale with fear and green with rage. "You tell me! I'm one of the founders who built the Brighthall Group to its current glory. Who do you think you are to force my children and me to migrate elsewhere!" "That is because even with my multiple top search articles, I'm still no match for Mr. Jensen's unpleasant scandal that happened once." Brendan looked toward the assistant next to him. "Send the nonconcerning personnel away from the boardroom." "Yes."

The security guard came to escort Mr. Jensen out of the room. Someone could not bear it anymore and stood up. "Mr. Brighthall, you should consider what you can do to salvage the Brighthall Group's reputation as your current priority, right?"

Brendan cast a look at the security guard. He then took the main seat after Mr. Jensen was taken away. "Naturally, I'm here to give a proper explanation to everyone." "The explanation is unnecessary." Someone grunted and said, "You should give a proper explanation to the common people. The online community is protesting about not using the Brighthall Group's products if Miss McKinnon is not sent to prison! It would be fine if there were only a few of them, but there are so many of them. It's going to result in a great loss for the company!" "He's right. Mr. Brighthall, we know how you run things, but you've been bringing so much trouble to the company apart from your recent lack of responsibility for the company's affairs. We have always been straightforward with you. Shouldn't you be disassociating yourself from the woman

sooner in view of the public opinion?" "I think that the woman should be sent to prison sooner! Then, the company will make a public announcement to disassociate from that woman!"

Before his voice died away, the speaker had already received a cold glare from Brendan and a wave of oppressive feeling as sharp as a knife drowning him. He could not refrain from trembling.

The crowd of people came to understand the situation instantly.

"Mr. Brighthall..." One of them braced himself to say, "Are you really going to defend that woman?"

Brendan said coldly, "I will handle this situation myself." "How are you going to handle it, Mr. Brighthall? Public opinion is already so heated. Is there another way other than sending the woman to prison?"

Chapter 870 If Something Bad Were to Happen to You, What Would Happen to Her Then?

The group of people changed their expressions drastically out of astonishment. "The online community is making a huge fuss. There is no other feasible way to appease the community's anger other than this!"

Brendan remained polite. He rolled up his sleeves and spoke in a cold voice. "You'll know whether there is a feasible way when you see the solution. I'm here today to warn everyone to keep their mouths shut. After all, we are all in the same boat, and our main priority is to stabilize the company."

Everyone fell silent when his voice died away.

Meanwhile, a staff member knocked on the door, and there was already sweat running down his face. "Mr. Brighthall!" "Speak." "Mr. Jensen is... I don't know what is wrong with him. He's spreading rumors downstairs that you have an intimate relationship with Miss McKinnon. That both of you are not only living together but also... that you've slept with each other before. He claims that Miss McKinnon is your mistress who became jealous because you'll be marrying Miss McKinsey and that she refuses to be the mistress, so she shoved Miss McKinsey down the stairs!"

Brendan's pupils constricted abruptly.

The board of directors was clamorous. Each member was furious when they recovered from the surprise, but their anger was not aimed at Mr. Jensen.

"Mr. Brighthall, we don't care what your relationship with Miss McKinnon is, but you're not allowed to affect the company! Or else, we're going to unite and dismiss you from your post!" "Had you not insisted on getting rid of Mr. Jensen so stubbornly, he wouldn't have gone as far as to be merciless. After all, it will not be good for him if the Brighthall Group is in trouble." "In my opinion, there is only one way to handle this situation. The woman must be sent to prison, and Mr. Brighthall should personally clear up the situation..." "That is out of the question!"

Brendan's gaze turned icy cold, and he assumed a threatening expression. "Whoever brings up the topic of Miss McKinnon's imprisonment, I will make sure that everyone learns about the consequences of doing so!"

Brendan pushed against the table surface with his hands and leaned forward slightly as if he was a cheetah in hunting mode. He exuded coldness that made everyone feel uneasy despite the warm weather. "Mr. Brighthall... If... If you insist on doing this, we

will unite and dismiss you from your post!" "I would like to see who's going to dismiss him."

All of a sudden, a female voice came from the door.

Madame Brighthall entered the room, and the board of directors assumed different expressions.

Even though Brendan was incapable of controlling them with his shares, Madame Brighthall was a member of the board of directors as well.

"Madame Brighthall, are you going to support Mr. Brighthall's reckless act?"

Madame Brighthall's expression was nonchalant. "I don't know about his reckless act, but I know who the Brighthall Group's decision maker is. I believe that everyone knows very well that our mutual goal is to ensure that the Brighthall Group can sail through the storm this time. You care about the Brighthall Group, but Brendan cares about it even more. Moreover, who is going to bear the responsibility of managing this company when he's gone?"

The board of directors looked at one another. One of them said, "Yet, Mr. Brighthall refuses to get Miss McKinnon sent to prison. In view of the current situation, it will be difficult to appease the public's rage other than using this method!"

Madame Brighthall did not even look up. "We will have to see how Brendan handles the situation. If he is incapable, I will personally send Brendan to rest without troubling everyone else."

The board of directors did not insist anymore since Madame Brighthall had already said so. Someone was still reluctant and said in contempt, "We shall wait and see how Mr. Brighthall is going to handle the situation then."

The board of directors left. Brendan looked toward Madame Brighthall, his expression overwhelmed with emotions.

"Aren't you angry, mother?"

Madame Brighthall sat on the sofa. "Will my anger ensure Deirdre's safety? Since it can't, there is no point in being angry. Moreover, I choose not to intervene, but it doesn't mean that I'm foolish. It is apparent that someone is targeting Deirdre after so many incidents. If something bad were to happen to you, what would happen to her then?"

Chapter 871 Make Her Suffer

A faint smile shadowed Brendan's lips. "Thank you."

He meant it.

Madame Brighthall said nothing. She left.

But the controversy did not end there. Mr. Jensen's speech had kicked up a storm. As Brendan shut his laptop, Sam remarked, "I have a feeling Mr. Jensen planned all of this down to the little speech he gave. He even had pictures of Miss McKinnon living in the villa so he could strike at the affair's angle." "It's that coward's only way to stay alive after the grave he dug," Brendan growled frigidly. The pain seemed to be drilling into his temple, emboldened by the sheer torrent of imbroglios that were all rebelling against Brendan's control.

"And Deirdre?" "Miss McKinnon should be released today, but... I think she's still in there." "I see. I'll be going to see her then. She must be so scared."

It was the afternoon. A young woman caressed the clothes she had been folding and

waited for the police. The door opened, and she heard her name. "McKinnon?" She rose, taking the clothes with her, and followed the police. Instead of heading toward the station's entrance, the police officer led her to a room full of suspects and closed her inside.

"Wait!" she cried, shackling against the bars in shock. "I thought I was supposed to be released today!" "After Charli McKinsey accused you of homicidal intent and the whole Internet storm you spawned, you really think we're gonna let you out? As if! Nobody's leaving until someone gets to the bottom of this. In the meantime, you're staying with them. Maybe then you'll learn some discipline."

Deirdre's heart sank. An Internet storm? What was that supposed to mean?

She hardly had the chance to press on. The police left her clinging to the bars-its metal nipping to the skin-until she turned around and saw a crowd of humanoid silhouettes encircling her.

"So, that's the Deirdre McKinnon I've been hearing so much about? No wonder she got to stay in that private suite in this sh*t hole. I know you're Brendan Brighthall's lover, but sh*t, you look meh." "Look at her squeezing into the corner! Wait, she's blind? F*ck me. I didn't know Brendan's into power plays! Kinky-kinky, Mr. Brighthall!"

"Why the h*ll is she his lover? She's so sh*t! Miss McKinsey does not deserve to lose out to someone like this! We should balance the universe ourselves, right?"

Deirdre had gone through things like this back in prison, so she knew exactly what was entailed in their remarks. Immediately, she shrieked at the top of her lungs, "Help! Help!"

Her aggressors started pulling her by her hair before smacking across her cheek.

"Shut the f*ck up, b*tch! You get the warden in, and I'll f*ck you up even harder!"

"Shove a rag to it!" "Words are she's pregnant, so don't cause her kid to go, or she'll get to leave here with a new excuse. F*ck her up on places people can't see, people!"

The violence only stopped after they tired themselves out. Deirdre had been curling into herself at the corner, trembling, but her hand had been firmly guarding her abdomen throughout the ordeal. It seemed to have fueled the women's rage-they kicked and stomped her on her legs, arms, and back.

If someone were to undress her... The wounds would expose themselves instantly.

It was then that a police officer came to inform, "Mr. Brendan Brighthall has arrived to see McKinnon."

The bullies paled.

Not a word of their... 'activity' could ever be leaked to him!

As Deirdre was on her way out, one of them helped her to her feet and hissed in her ear, "If you know what's good for you, keep your lips sealed. He's in hot water himself, honey, so he's not going to be able to save you or bring you out of here. If you're idiotic enough to say something wrong, and we get wind of it, oh... Darling, you haven't seen anything yet!"

Almost as if to seal her threat, she pinched Deirdre's arm hard.

Deirdre saw black spots dancing in her eyes as a spell of dizziness crashed onto her. Her mind was still numb and blank by the time the police officers brought her out of detainment.

Chapter 872 Her Exposed Wrist

What did they mean when they said Brendan himself was in hot water?

What was going on out there?

Deirdre could not stop from asking the police officer leading her away, "C- Can I ask? What has happened while I'm here? Why can't I be released?"

The police officer regarded her visage. Her experience so far had dealt a blow to her appearance-she looked so feeble. She was so beautiful that nobody could expect her to be so capable of murder. A gorgeous sight like her pushing another woman down the stairs to kill the latter!?

"Even if I don't answer your question, I'm pretty sure you can guess it by this point, right? Or are you telling me you don't know what you've done?"

Deirdre stared at him, confused.

"Jesus Christ, what's wrong with the world... Everyone knows you pushed an innocent young woman down the stairs in an attempt to kill her, okay? And that's just the first taste of the whole scandal, apparently!

"One of the board members of the Brighthall Group has revealed that you and Mr. Brighthall are lovers, which means the sh*tstain you left soiled the entire business group altogether! Aren't you a piece of work? No wonder Brighthall's coming to see you in the middle of the night. He's probably having a migraine just thinking about how in h*ll is he going to fix this clusterf*ck!"

That seemed to be the extent the police officer was willing to talk. He turned back forward and continued their journey.

Deirdre's mind was blank. So many things seemed to have happened... and now, even the Brighthall Group was being dragged through the mud?

She clenched her fists as she was led into a room.

Brendan was sitting on the other side of the window. Seeing her, he instantly rose to his feet and cried out, "Dee!"

He failed to disguise the fatigue in his voice, but it did clue Deirdre in as to why it had taken him so late to finally see her. He must have been busy with his company affairs until the late hours. Instinctively, she stuck her wrist into her pocket and cast her eyes down.

"It's very late. You should be resting instead of coming here, Brendan. We can talk when you're free," she said. 'You don't have to worry about me being here. I don't mind.'

Something in her demeanor hinted she knew something. Specifically, knowledge of what might have been happening to Brendan out there. All it did was make him want to rush inside and break her out of the detainment center, though.

He forced his impulse back to the back of his mind. "I'm sorry. Something's happened outside, so now you have to stay here a little while longer. I promise that I'll personally come to bring you home when everything's settled." "Okay." His palpable concern over her made Deirdre feel a little uneasy, so she avoided his gaze. "Is that all? If yes, excuse me."

She was worried Brendan would notice something wrong about her.

"No, Dee, wait!" Brendan cried out, his eyes fixed on her. Genuine love was practically oozing out from his eyes. "Won't you spare me the time to talk to me for a bit? I want to... be with you."

Stunned, Deirdre remained in her spot without turning back to see him. "I, uh, am a little tired. It's late night, Brendan."

Her palms were sweating out of panic.

Brendan was quiet. He studied how her spine jutted against her rather emaciated skin and said, "I won't bother your rest if you're tired, but can you stay and have some supper with me?" "Supper?" She turned, shocked.

Brendan had informed the police about his intention. It was just the perfect excuse to remove the glass window between them-and now, they could talk and look at each other at the same table.

He could not take his eyes off her. It became clear that the young woman had become dramatically thinner after a few days.

He also knew that the food served in the detainment center was never good, so he had bought all kinds of scrumptious things from any restaurant still operating at this hour and had them all delivered to the facility.

Sweating to herself, Deirdre sat before the table nervously.

Brendan pushed a bowl of soup to her and remarked warmly, "Here, some chicken soup to warm your body and give you strength. You look a little feeble right now, Dee. I don't want you to pass out before I come to take you out of here."

Deirdre accepted it and took a spoonful sip. "Mm. It's delicious."

Brendan's eyes were positively melting with concern. But then, suddenly, her exposed wrist caught his attention.

Chapter 873 Where is She?

"What's that on your wrist?"

Deirdre's heart skipped a beat. She retracted her hand immediately as if she had touched something hot, her heart racing. "What's what?"

Her reaction was unexpected; Brendan was stunned. "Uh, why is it so dirty?

It looks like dust." "Oh!" Deirdre exhaled a breath of relief. He did not see her injury after all. After all the trouble the scandal had brought to him via the Brighthall Group, the last thing she wanted was for Brendan to be distracted by her affair. "Er, the wall was a little dusty when I accidentally rubbed my skin against it."

Brendan produced a piece of wet tissue. "I'll help with that."

He gingerly held her wrist with his one hand, but before the wet tissue even made contact, Deirdre suddenly withdrew hers in a state of nervous panic.

"What's the matter?"

Deirdre went quiet, but Brendan thought he understood why she balked. "Sorry. I genuinely only wanted to clean your hand for you. If you're not comfortable with it, you're welcome to help yourself."

He was upset-Deirdre could hear it in his voice. That hurt feeling did not make her loosen her lips, though. She quietly took the tissue and cleaned her wrist under the table. At times, she accidentally rubbed against her injury, and a little of that pain would break out of her face and make her lip twitch.

She finished her meal as quickly as she could and rose. "I'm finished. I should go back."

Brendan wished God could give him more time, but he had to admit it was getting late. Besides, he could not risk being too forward in rekindling their relationship by this

point. The only way they could get somewhere was through slow, steady, baby steps. "Alright. You get an early rest, okay? If there's anything you'll like me to help with, please don't hesitate. I will help you. I promise."

A glint flitted through Deirdre's eyes as she nodded a little anxiously. The warden led her back to the room where the other ten inmates waited in the corner, their eyes boring into her.

When the warden left after a few words, they relaxed. One of them approached her and pulled Deirdre by her hair. "Did you snitch?"

Calmly, she shook her head.

The leader was rather pleased. She clapped Deirdre's cheeks. "Good girl. You should be proud of yourself for not being a snitchin' b*tch, darling, 'cause you just dodged a bullet there. Anyway, you're sleeping in the corner but leave your blanket. I'm going to spread it wide on the floor for myself."

Brendan cleared the food from the table and got back to his car. He was about to start the engine, and yet his mind kept conjuring scenes of Deirdre's overreaction.

Something just did not feel right.

She even stayed with him for far longer than she usually did.

He got out of his car and returned to the station.

"McKinnon? Oh, she's not staying in that individual cell anymore."

Brendan frowned. "Why not?" "Why else?" the warden replied haplessly. "The scandal she's involved in has grown so big that the top brass is making sure nobody's giving her any preferential treatment."

Brendan's heart sank. "Then where is she now?" "She's locked up with other female suspects." "Show me, now!"

It was a chilling night. The cement floor seemed to emanate cold from every inch before prickling Deirdre's skin as she sat by herself in the corner. She could not stop shaking.

She could not lean against the wall, or the cold would nip at her. The only thing she could do was curl into a ball, her arms protecting her belly.

'I have been through worse,' she told herself.

Her days in prison had been far more tormenting than anything this detainment center could throw at her. She was sure she could survive this if she just steeled herself-but there was no way she would rehash the past.

This time, she would protect her baby.

Sleep overcame her. Slowly, she closed her eyes.

When Brendan ordered the warden to bring him to Deirdre's new cell, he did not expect he would see something like that.

He did not expect to see the other suspects huddling with one another, snug in their blankets, while Deirdre was relegated to the corner with her arms around her legs. Her uniform was so thin that she was visibly shivering from the cold.

Chapter 874 You Can't Take Her Away!

The sight stung Brendan in the eyes like thorns. Murderous air began to pool around him like the onset of a nuclear explosion. He slammed his hand against the bars, thundering, "What the h*ll am I seeing!?"

The warden's face turned as white as a sheet. He knew all too well what this

was bullying between inmates. What he did not expect was Brendan catching it right when it happened.

His hoarse commotion woke the inmates. When they saw who it was, their minds turned blank. They had no idea that a man whose very status would equate him to a modern-day prince would deign himself to visit a dirty cell in a detainment facility! "M-Mr. Brighthall! W-Why are you here? N-No, this is a misunderstanding! It's all Miss McKinnon's idea! She found us filthy and decided to sleep in her own clean little corner instead of huddling with our grime. She said it herself! The corner's clean, she said!" "Exactly! She's the one w-who's ostracizing us! Thus, we chose not to force her against her wish!"

Their desperate ruckus to clean themselves off suspicion woke Deirdre. She stirred and groggily listened to their defenses for a while before looking ahead. There, she saw a familiar figure in her blurry sight.

Her heart seemed to stop beating for a second. 'Is that... Brendan!?

'But why is he here!? He was supposed to have left!' "Shut the f*ck up!" growled Brendan, his features twisting into a horrifying grimace.

Sheer wrath had consumed his reason-he had to grit his teeth just to stop himself from being a monster. He stepped inside the cell, intending to bring Deirdre out of it. Before he could grab her wrist, though, he saw the bruises.

"What the f*ck!?" He exhaled and yanked her sleeve back.

Her entire arm was filled with blue-black bruises. Against her porcelain skin, they looked even more harrowing than they already were.

The rest of the inmates panicked. "T-That's-"

Any excuses they could come up with seemed futile by this point.

Brendan turned to the warden, his eyes steely. "I trust that you people know what to do about this."

The warden felt cold sweat oozing out of his spine and nodded. "O-Of course! How dare they do this in a place of law and order, like a police station!? We'll immediately begin an investigation to see who's responsible." "Investigation? Who's responsible?"

Brendan scanned the crowd and broke out a laugh.

Everyone shivered in fear.

Wordlessly, Brendan carried Deirdre into his arms and started toward the door.

"Mr. Brighthall!" The warden and his colleague began to crowd around. "You can't take her out like that!"

Brendan's eyes were as cold as icicles. "I can't? Do you have any idea how much trouble your entire station will be in if I bring this up for legal scrutiny? A pregnant woman, innocent before an official charge, was being abused while she was detained in your station under your watch. Can you really see yourself getting out of this sh*t alive?"

Everyone froze and exchanged glances.

"If something were to happen to her, none of you, I mean not a single one of you, would be able to handle the responsibility. I'm just bringing her to the hospital to receive the medical care she deserves. If you're worried about my intention, then go ahead and get one of your people to tag along!"

With that, he strode back out to the hall and to the parking lot, his steps frantic but

stable. The popped veins crawling around his arms were proof that he was doing his best to contain the raging beast inside him.

“B-Brendan...”

Deirdre curled into herself even more. The man’s arms were strong, firm... safe. She felt the safest as she had ever been. And yet, she was worried. If word of Brendan forcibly taking her out of the detainment center got out, only more troubles would follow.

“B-Brendan, put me down... I’m okay, really...”

Brendan’s breathing became even more labored. The flames of his rage were threatening to pour out of his every pore.

He set her down on the passenger’s seat, tipped her chin up, and kissed her supple lips hard.

It hurt enough that Deirdre froze.

Brendan took a deep breath. “When are you finally going to learn to protect yourself, Deirdre? When are you finally going to trust me a little more?”

He was infuriated, but it was more than just because she was being bullied.

It was because she was still thinking about hiding her pain from him despite the abuse she had suffered.

Chapter 875 You Just Have to Trust Me

Deirdre would never know how much it pained Brendan to see her retreating into the corner like a puppy being bullied. It felt like his heart was being torn into two by someone’s bare hand.

The rage-and his helpless ignorance-at the kind of abuse suffered by the woman he loved was coursing through his veins and animating every single fiber in his body.

How he wished he could be the one to suffer in her place!

The pain from his forceful kiss lingered on Deirdre’s lips. Quivering, she said shakily, “B-Brendan, I...”

He threw his arms around her and hugged her tightly. “Why can’t you just- stand up for yourself more, Deirdre? Why?” he murmured, pained.

Deirdre did not know how to react at all. She had never heard Brendan use such a voice before-never heard him sound so desperate, so vulnerable, so pleading.

“I’m... I’m fine...” It took her a long time to force her thoughts back down to comfort him. “Nothing happened. I’m okay. It wasn’t so bad, you see? If it were, I would have told the warden.”

Brendan unbuttoned her collar and stared at the bruises coldly. “This is your definition of ‘okay’?”

Deirdre went quiet. She hastily buttoned her shirt again. “I mean, it’s better now.”

Brendan fixed an unreadable look at her for a while before fastening her seatbelt and driving her to the nearest hospital.

Brendan only found out, during the subsequent medication examination, that all of her bruises had been targeted at areas where her uniform would cover. They were all over her and were made by her aggressors kicking her with the tip of their shoes.

Even the nurse in charge of administering medicine exhaled forlornly.” How blackhearted would you have to be to even do such a thing to a pregnant woman? God, the

depravity!"

Brendan walked away from them to call Sam, ordering him to show up at the offending police station. He was sure those inmates had not done what they did unprompted-and even if they did, they would not have found the need or desire to hide their actions.

This had to be the work of some outside forces. By the time he finished his call, the nurse had finished her task, too. Deirdre put on her clothes, her cheeks a little burning.

Brendan grabbed hold of her shaking hand and did the last button on her collar.

'You can rest easy tonight, so please, take a good, well-deserved rest. I'll be right beside you.'

Deirdre raised her head and frowned a little. "I still think you should send me back there." "Why?" "Because I have pretty much recovered by this point. Besides, I'm... I'm a suspect. If other people learn that I've been sent to the hospital in the middle of my detainment, they will make a hill out of this mound. I don't want to give you another world of trouble."

Brendan caressed her hair. Hearing her care for him just warmed his heart.

"Don't worry," he replied. "I'm not so powerless that my love can't even get a good night's sleep. The police have incentives not to let news like that be leaked to the public, so you have nothing to worry about."

Deirdre had wanted to refute him further, but Brendan, rubbing her hair, interjected gently, "You just have to trust me."

He sounded so even-keeled yet undergirded by a quiet, firm strength.

Deirdre was suddenly reminded that this was Brendan Brighthall, the kingmaker-if not the king himself-of Neve.

Ultimately, she fell asleep in a fetal position at the height of her exhaustion.

A while later, Declan pushed the door. "How is Miss McKinnon?"

Brendan signaled him to lower his voice. Shooting one last glance at the young woman slumbering peacefully, he left the room with his friend.

There, he finally answered, "She's covered in bruises, but it's clear enough that her aggressors were instructed to brutalize her as much as they could without harming the baby. She should be right as rain after some hospitalization."

He did not sound as though he was relieved. In fact, he sounded like a butcher ready to get to work.

Declan could tell his friend had no plans to let those aggressors go, so he cautioned.

"Hold your horses. This happened under the police's watch, remember? At least wait until these inmates are released back to society. By that point... Meh, you can abduct them and bring them to the organization. Do whatever you like with them, I won't even give a damn.