

Resent Reject Regret by Aqua Summers

Chapter 901-907

Chapter 901 What Must I Do?

Deirdre found his temperament almost too zig-zagging to make sense. In the past, she could ingratiate with him as much as she wanted, no questions asked. But now, the same things suddenly irritated him.

She ducked, squeezing her shoulders into herself, and cast her sight to the floor to begin feeling and salvaging the documents.

At that moment, Brendan suddenly yanked her arm toward him and, by extension, her entire body. Before she knew it, the force nailed her legs across his lap, her shocked expression facing his visage.

It was a... rather suggestive position to be in.

Deirdre froze as she sensed Brendan drawing her into himself before he rested his chin on her shoulder.

“God. What must I do, Deirdre?” he asked, surprisingly defeatedly.

Deirdre blinked. Her fingers slipped gently before lacing around his strong, firm arm. She did not find their position repulsive-just awkward.

“You’re not mad anymore?”

Brendan looked up. “What good does my anger do? It doesn’t matter how angry I am. You just don’t get why I’m mad in the first place.”

She was unaccustomed to the helplessness in his tone. Before she could even mull about it, though, Brendan tilted her chin up and spoke again, this time with more solemnity. “Listen to me, Deirdre. I don’t want you to do anything against your will just to ingratiate yourself with me. I’ll give you anything you want, but this isn’t a bargain. I’m not rewarding you for doing something you don’t sincerely want to do.

“All I want is for you and our child to be safe. I want you to do what you truly want to do and feel what you really feel. You obviously aren’t willing to have s*x with me, so why pretend otherwise? Is this an insult to you or me? I never walk back on my promises, remember? News about your mother and the freedom for you and our child after birth are guaranteed yours. I’m not walking back on any of these, i “All I want in return is you. The real you.”

Deirdre felt her mind blowing apart by his confession. Emotions-not all of them in concordance with each other-swarmed into her from all directions. It was as if he had carved the entirety of his speech onto her neural network.

What did he say?

He said he hated it when she forced herself against her own will.

He said he would grant her freedom to leave once the kid was born.

He said he wanted the real her.

Deirdre was suddenly thrown off balance by her own emotions. Brendan was not mad because she was ingratiating with him. He was upset by the reason behind it-the fact that she was only doing it to secure his favors.

Deirdre snapped out of her trance, but reeling out of her disbelief was not easy. She looked down for a moment until finally, pressured by her confusion, asked, “Are you sure?” “Sure of what?” “Sure that there isn’t an angle here? Something you hope to

gain from me, maybe? Brendan, you're a businessman." "And the father of my child... And someone... who loves you deeply."

He took a long time just to finally say the last part aloud.

"It's only natural that nothing is more important than how you feel to me. So, don't ever do something so stupid and wrong ever again," he said.

Deirdre sank into silence. Brendan was cuddling with her in a very intimate position, yet it felt like there was an unbridgeable chasm between them.

Or at least, that was what Deirdre used to think. It used to seem impossible to heal until today when for the first time, she realized something had changed.

She should not allow her mind to be ruffled by this, and yet, as the man kissed her passionately, she found her conviction shaken.

The door was hardly closed. Mrs. Engel found herself a surprise witness to the embracing lovers when she pushed the door open, and the grin that instantly surfaced on her face said it all.

'So, the two have made up.' It was just as she expected. If Deirdre asked him to stop any fight, he would. Of course, he would because he could never bear to see her upset.

"Mr. Brighthall? Mrs. Brighthall? Dinner's ready!"

Her call snapped Deirdre out of her bewitchment, and the young woman frantically fumbled her way down his lap.

Brendan helped her, but before she left, he said suddenly, "Wait, Dee.

There's something I need to discuss with you."

Mrs. Engel set the food on the table and cocked her head in the direction of the study. It had been some time...

Finally, Deirdre appeared by the stairs with a perplexed, unsure look on her face.

Chapter 902 Persona Non-Grata

"Where's Mr. Brighthall?" Mrs. Engel asked. "Why isn't he here with us?"

Deirdre seemingly blinked back to attention. "He, uh, said there's a lot of things at work pending his attention for the moment, so he's not going to join us. Just send his portion upstairs." "That busy, huh?"

Deirdre thinned her lips. 'The company is going through a massive purge, Mrs. Engel. He needs to ensure that every single position is being occupied by someone reliable and trustworthy, which means he's now an even bigger micromanager. It's only normal for him to be so... busy.' "I see," Mrs. Engel replied noncommittally before muttering, "Gosh, it isn't easy to found a business, right? I'll immediately bring his portion upstairs before Mr. Brighthall gnaws on his fingernails out of hunger." "Alright."

Deirdre finished her dinner alone.

Brendan did not step into her room all night.

Mrs. Engel later told Deirdre that the man spent his night on the couch in his study. "I was thinking if we should put these two couches side-by-side." The older woman wondered aloud. 'This way, Mr. Brighthall will have a better sleep if he has to crash on his couch again.'

Deirdre was about to answer her when the conversation was interrupted by a series of heels clicking on the floor. A leaned, toned silhouette took form in her blurry sight.

Deirdre could tell from the way the figure put on airs who this was, no face required.

Mrs. Engel's expression darkened. "What are you doing here?" Charlene removed her sunglasses and gave a lopsided grin, positively beaming. "What am I doing here? Excuse me, but didn't Bren inform you?" The older woman's heart sank. "About what?" Charlene trained her eyes at Deirdre, glee bursting out of them like gunshots. "I'm staying here to recuperate." "Are you kidding me!?" Mrs. Engel was apoplectic. "Recuperate from what? You ain't sick anywhere but in your head! This house is for Mr. Brighthall and Mrs. Brighthall. This is their private residence! Who in their right mind is going to let you stay here? God, I've seen kids make up more convincing lies!" Mrs. Engel's umbrage had a source. She remembered who Charlene was- the vile woman who had caused Deirdre to be incarcerated, and the devil who had thrown Brendan's company into so much chaos, the man couldn't even enjoy a dinner. Not giving the snake the boot was already the height of Mrs. Engel's decorum. It did not mean she was going to suffer Charlene's gloating. Charlene flashed her a smile and made a production of studying the surroundings. "Oh God, this place hasn't changed at all for nine years! Urgh, it totally needs a makeover. If I tell Bren I like it to look like a foreign palace, I bet he'll start renovating the whole place to look exactly as I want it!" "Oh, I remember that painting! He bought it because I looked at it for more than three seconds during an auction that one time. And now look at it! It's enshrined in your living room... What good taste!" Mrs. Engel scowled in disgust. This woman's shamelessness knew no bounds. "I bet that painting was purchased because Mr. Brightall fancied it instead of having diddlydo with you-" "Mrs. Engel? I'm getting a little colder. Could you fetch my coat for me?" The older woman hesitated. "B-But Mr. Brighthall-!" "It's okay. I learned she was coming yesterday." "Yesterday?" Mrs. Engel was appalled. "Wait. No wonder you looked so pale yesterday. M-Mr. Brighthall... How could he..." Charlene smiled sweetly. "Ah, so you're already in the know. That explains the faux coolness, but could you at least inform your aging cur over there next time? She's been barking non-stop since the real mistress of the house has returned. Train her, would you? I'm going to marry Bren! If I were you and cared about her, I'd do my best to teach her some manners before she offended her mistress for real." There was something sharp and inhuman in the end of her remark. Mrs. Engel's face turned red with rage. Glaring, she opened her mouth to retort, but Deirdre stepped in.

Chapter 903 Seize This Chance

"Here's the thing. We don't give a damn who you'll end up marrying, but since we'll be staying together for a while, let me give you a piece of advice," Deirdre said a little apathetically. "Mrs. Engel is going to be your housekeeper and your cook. That means she has plenty of chances to surprise you, don't you think?" Mrs. Engel caught on. "She's right, Miss McKinney. Protecting yourself against obvious enemies is one thing, but against someone who you depend on? It would be easy for me to place some pins on your pillow... Or spit in your filet..." Charlene's expression darkened before the older woman finished. "You dare!?" Mrs. Engel shot a disgusted glare. "What's stopping me? I'll quit once Miss McKinnon

leaves anyway. You don't even know where my home is. I am not scared of your petty payback!"

Charlene gnashed her teeth for a while before her ire subsided a little. She glared daggers at Deirdre and turned her umbrage back against the latter. "You turn being a doormat into an art form, huh? You're looking at the one who murdered your mom right now, and your reaction is, 'Alright. Cool, cool.' "Aren't you going to push me down the stairs and check in at the detainment center for another alternative vacation?"

Mentioning Ophelia turned Deirdre's face pale. She set her eyes at Charlene as though she was seeing through her. "Your judgment day is coming, Charlene. One day, justice will come for you."

Charlene's first instinct was to laugh, but Deirdre's glare was so cutting that it made her sneer "b*tch!" under her breath. She curled the corner of her lips and smiled. "I don't know what judgment that's supposed to be, but I know that once your kid's born, they aren't going to be with you. In fact, they are going to call me 'mom' instead of you."

Just like that, Charlene strutted upstairs, her hips swinging in self-satisfaction. A moment later, one could hear her question aloud which room belonged to her. Mrs. Engel thought to ignore her, but Deirdre clapped on the back of the older woman's hand as a hint.

Mrs. Engel forced herself to answer Charlene's call, though she deliberately offered the one farthest from Brendan's room. Naturally, Charlene insisted snobbily on living in the room next to Brendan's and accepted nothing else.

After keeping the room tidy and clean, and Charlene strode in to claim her territory, Mrs. Engel descended the stairs anxiously. "Why did Mr. Brighthall invite a woman this vile here? This is outrageous and unacceptable! This is unfair to Miss McKinnon!"

Deirdre stared into space for a few seconds and snapped back to reality. "Mrs. Engel, I know I've told you about this enough, but this time, you need to do as I say," she advised solemnly. "Charlene is not someone you can cross without consequences, so it's best you don't get her way. She could strut and act like she's above me, but she's explicitly forbidden from harming me because of my pregnancy. But you, Mrs. Engel... You don't have that kind of protection."

Mrs. Engel knew Deirdre was simply expressing concern for her well-being under this new order. "But I just- God, I can't stand that vixen! She's the man-stealer! She has no right to... And Mr. Brighthall, too. God, he disappoints me."

Deirdre's eyes darkened. "It hardly bothers me. I'll have nothing to do with Brendan after the child's born."

Charlene closed the door only after she heard the entirety of their conversation. The real reason Charlene was told to move here was pure calculation-it was part of Brendan's effort to control the media and the narrative they waded. With Charlene here, the reporters would have the pictures they needed.

But the fact that Brendan was willing to play his part in this play-pretend, to Charlene, also meant he was at least no longer repulsed by her. This was the windfall she needed-she must seize this chance!

Her thoughts drifted to Deirdre, and Charlene felt a surge of jealousy. But she could not afford any reckless move before she could possess Brendan's heart.

Brendan emerged from the front door after dusk. His handsome features were caked in a thick coat of fatigue as he loosened his tie.

He stopped in mid-action, scanning the living room.

Mrs. Engel did not come to greet him, nor was there anyone on the couch. As the older woman strode out of the kitchen, he asked.

Chapter 904 This Is Unfair to Miss McKinnon!

“Where’s Deirdre?”

Mrs. Engel’s impression of Brendan had sunk to its nadir. Had he not been her employer, she would have ignored him as though he did not exist.” She’s in her room.”

“Hmm.”

He sounded so non-committal and nonchalant it irritated Mrs. Engel enough to speak out. “Mr. Brighthall, Charlene McKinney arrived and told me to prepare a guest room for her. She said she’s going to stay here for a few days!” “She’s here already?” Brendan remarked flatly. There was no sign to paint his reaction to lean either joy or disgust. In fact, it sounded as if he had been expecting it to happen. “Her injury hasn’t healed yet, and I’m not usually at home. You should pay some attention to it while you can.”

Mrs. Engel was appalled. “And you don’t think this is unfair to Miss McKinnon, Mr. Brighthall? She’s pregnant with your child, sir, while you invite Charlene to stride into a house that belongs to the both of you as if-” “Is dinner ready?” Brendan suddenly interjected.

She froze. “Y-Yes, sir.” “Get Charlene and Deirdre.”

Brendan’s attitude made it clear that he brooked no defiance. It stealthily reminded Mrs. Engel of her position as a mere employee and domestic worker. Thus, the older woman had no choice but to set the food on the table before calling out to the women upstairs.

It did not take Charlene long to show up.

Mrs. Engel looked up and saw-to her surprise as a conservative, aging woman Charlene was dressed in a thin, flimsy spaghetti dress barring almost too much of her breasts.

Her motive was clear as day.

Charlene swung her hip and sat next to Brendan, whose eyes remained nailed at his documents without ever lifting his head.

Annoyed, she pressed his documents down and said, “Bren? No work allowed at the dining table, remember?”

Brendan tucked the papers into his folder and looked up, finally noticing her getup.

His face was as solemn and stoic as ever. It was as if Charlene had put on some normal, oversized T-shirt. “Where’s Deirdre?”

Mrs. Engel was quick to answer. “Mrs. Brighthall said she’s not feeling well, so she’s not coming.”

She felt so bad for Deirdre. How was the young lady supposed to feel well at all?

Brendan had brought another woman home! Mrs. Engel was an outsider, and even she felt her own stomach upset.

Brendan did not seem concerned either. “If her gastric is acting up again, just summon a doctor tomorrow and see what’s wrong.” “I... I hear you, sir.”

Charlene smiled. “It’s just how pregnancy is like, I’m afraid. You get a little upset here

and there every once in a while, and then you lose your appetite. I don't think it's that big of a problem, though. She could always just come back to eat after she's feeling better."

She raised her head and ordered Mrs. Engel, "Red wine, now."

The older woman brought a bottle, and Charlene popped it open. She filled two glasses—one for Brendan, one for herself—and pushed it to him, her eyes lascivious.

"I've been a good girl, haven't I? I've done a good job in helping you clean up the mess Miss McKinnon left. Yes, she was the one who pushed me down the stairs, but I wanted you to be free from the public's condemnation that I stood by you and spoke for you. I didn't even care if my reputation suffered," she said, leaning toward him, just right, to exhibit her beautiful curves.

"That's enough grounds to enjoy this one with me, don't you think?"

Brendan raised his glass, and his expression actually softened a little. "I agree."

Charlene smiled, satisfied. They clinked their glasses, letting the shrill ding echo through the hall. She pressed her ruby lips against the brim and sampled half of hers.

Brendan finished his entire glass.

Charlene waited for a moment before leaning her head against his shoulder, her cheeks pink. "Ah, the world's spinning already? My drinking skill hasn't improved at all..."

She latched her hand on the man's arm like vines. To Charlene's greatest glee, Brendan did not show any rejection nor break her hold. It was proof! Proof that Brendan had softened his stance against her. He did harbor love for her, after all!

"Are my cheeks... red, Bren?" She breathed. She inched her body closer, shrinking whatever space there was between herself and Brendan. Before her skin came in contact with his own, though, the door to the first floor suddenly opened.

Chapter 905 No Man Could Suffer This

Deirdre emerged from her room, causing Mrs. Engel's eyes to twinkle before she immediately rushed to greet her. "Mrs. Brighthall! You're here!"

Brendan immediately pulled his arm out of Charlene's.

Charlene glowered. She finally had the chance to be alone with Brendan before this b*tch decided to ruin it!

Not that she could point her fingers right now. Deirdre was bearing Brendan's child. It was only normal that the man was disinclined to show any sign of intimacy with her while the woman he impregnated was standing right there.

Thus, Charlene launched back into her well-practiced pretense. "Aren't you feeling unwell, Miss McKinnon? Why are you here?"

Deirdre descended the stairs with Mrs. Engel's help and curled the corner of her lips.

"I got hungry just like you, Miss McKinney. After all, I'm pregnant," she replied.

"Besides, this is your first meal since coming to my house, and it'd be so unbecoming and improper of me not to join in."

Her smile screamed deliberation. She was advertising, right on Charlene's face, that she was the mistress of the property—her manner and word choices were calculated! Even the timing of her arrival was meant to dump a bucket of ice all over Charlene's perfect chance to be intimate with Brendan!

Charlene's rage almost twisted her features, but she could not let even a fraction of

her scowl show while Brendan was still there. She gritted her teeth to stop herself from acting out and forced a smile. "Your commitment to courtesy is surprising, Miss McKinnon! Now you're making me blush. I guess I should learn something from you before Brendan starts making small, unhappy sounds whenever I fumble a little as the house host in the near future." "It's okay. No need to be flustered. Manners and etiquette aren't things you can learn in a few days, Miss McKinney, but I'm happy to teach you during your stay. I'm going to need you to help entertain our guests when the baby's out, and I need to recuperate."

Deirdre's reply would sound cordial only if one ignored its undertone: 'You'll never get to be anybody worth a damn as long as I'm here. In fact, you're even going to be my glorified maid once my baby's out.'

It felt as though someone had jabbed thorns into Charlene's ears. "What's that supposed to mean? I thought you'd leave after the baby's born."

Deirdre raised her spoon and seemingly mused for a moment. "No, it depends on how much you'll allow me to stay. A woman still needs to recuperate after giving birth, right? And since I've gotten so used to being here... Of course, if you don't like me, I guess I'll have to look elsewhere."

Charlene's smile did not even reach her eyes. 'That depends.'

Deirdre's attitude irked her. That b*tch had the audacity to egg her on just because she had a bun in the oven? F*ck off!

Brendan was going to marry her and let her stay in the mansion, though, was he not? And as soon as she slept with him-and got their child together -Deirdre would lose whatever meager attention Brendan had for her already. She would be as relevant as a piece of used rag!

The thought gave Charlene solace. She began her performance anew, cutting pieces of ribs for Brendan while squeezing in as many overtly suggestive movements as many times as she could.

Brendan left the pieces she cut aside without explicitly accepting or rejecting them.

After Mrs. Engel set a bowl of steaming soup at the table, he filled a bowl and offered it to Deirdre.

"I don't want it," Deirdre snapped, looking away. Hostility filled her face. "I don't need it. Pumpkin soups disgust me!"

Charlene watched the drama unfold in gleeful interest. She thought Deirdre had decided to give up on any semblance of agency in exchange for a comfortable life, but her assumption seemed to be wrong, after all. There was still a line she would not let Brendan cross, and Charlene was that line. Her presence still managed to anger Deirdre into lashing out in public.

But everyone knew that lashing out at a man in public was taboo. No man could possibly suffer a blow to their ego!

Just as Charlene expected, Brendan's visage turned cold. He might have stopped himself for the sake of their child. "Just finish this one, and you can go," he grumbled.

"No!"

The two of them began to push the bowl back and forth until, finally, it flipped, shattered, and spilled its content to the floor.

Chapter 906 She Won't Push Me Away If She Really Loves Me

Storm clouds pooled around Brendan's visage almost instantly. He locked his eyes dead on Deirdre's face, snarling, "How long are you going to act like a brat, McKinnon!?"

The commotion summoned Mrs. Engel out of the kitchen. Seeing ceramic pieces bathing in a pool of pumpkin soup on the floor, the good woman immediately tried to de-escalate the situation.

"Mr. Brighthall, please hear me out! Mrs. Brighthall had never liked pumpkin soups! I can vouch for that! This is why I made something else for her instead. She's not trying to make things hard for you, I promise!"

Deirdre's face was ashen and unyielding. "You don't have to explain anything to that thick skull, Mrs. Engel. I'm always wrong to him anyway!" She sulked.

Brendan scowled. His patience was running out. "You're the one who's been acting out like a petulant tw*t since you were released from the detainment center!" he thundered. "If anything in this house offends your oh -so-high horses, talk it out like a grown-up! Nobody will lick your boo-boo just because you know how to throw a fit!"

"M-Mr. Brighthall!" Mrs. Engel faltered, appalled. That was so sarcastic even Mrs. Engel could not bear to hear it... let alone Deirdre.

Just as she had expected, a resentful glare overtook Deirdre's face.

Charlene's glee was palpable from the twinkles in her eyes. The time was ripe for her to step in. "Bren's right, you know," she said, her voice dripping with faux concern. "If something's bothering you, let it out like an adult instead of throwing a tantrum, okay? Bren's exhausted from work already. There's no reason he has to come home just to suffer another round of punishment." "I don't think you have as much right to comment as you think you do. Why do you think Brendan's exhausted at work? That catastrophe couldn't be made possible without your amazing contribution, Miss McKinney!"

Charlene's face fell, and her eyes turned misty. "But that's because you pushed me down the stairs from the first floor and almost killed me! How was I supposed to play it cool after all that trauma!? In fact, you're the one who's getting a slap on the wrist instead of actual justice. You used your pregnancy to fish for sympathy and got out sooner than you should have! Meanwhile, I have to suffer the public's rage!" "Ha! You deserve it." "McKinnon!" snarled Brendan. "Watch your mouth! Nobody here is obligated to indulge you!"

Deirdre froze. Then, seethingly, she rose from her seat, stormed up the stairs, and shut the door to her room.

Mrs. Engel wanted to follow her and comfort the young woman, but Brendan stopped her. "Screw that b*tch! I bet she's starting to act like a brat because I've been too nice to her! As if I haven't been as patient and understanding as I could! If I let you comfort her despite her being at fault, she will start acting like a royal pain in everyone's *ss!"

"But Mr. Brighthall, M-Mrs. Brighthall's... She's simply hurt. I don't believe she wanted to throw a tantrum for tantrum's sake at all. Pregnancy also often comes with mood swings, and-" "You should stop defending her, Mrs. Engel," Charlene suddenly spoke up and sighed. "This isn't the first time I've seen her throwing hissy fits. Bren's human after all. Of course, his patience wears thin. But I'm sure Miss McKinnon will come around someday... when she has finally thought things through."

Mrs. Engel shut her mouth but not her mind, which had been firing off curses against Charlene for a while. It was all that demon's fault! She just kept sowing discord ever since she had arrived. Even Brendan's attitude toward Deirdre had changed because of her!

Charlene pouted as though she was the poor, sad victim. "Please, Bren, don't be mad anymore," she comforted. "I think she's just jealous of seeing me living under the same roof, you know? In the end, she's acting out because she cares about you. If this isn't working out, I guess I'll just leave." "No. No need." Brendan frowned. "You have to stay here to stop those online narratives from growing. Besides... if it was out of jealousy, she would do whatever it takes to make me stay by her side and love her instead of shoving me away."

The event soured Brendan's mood. He lost his appetite altogether.

Charlene watched the man's retreating back with her face propped on the thick of her palm. Schemes after schemes began to take shape in her mind.

She wanted her life with Brendan to return to what it used to be.

That would be far more ideal than working with those people and becoming their puppet.

Chapter 907 Hang On A Little Longer, Okay?

All Brendan cared about was the kid Deirdre bore him, right? So what would happen... if Charlene got pregnant too?

The young woman thought long and hard about it as she savored her risotto. When she was done, she got up and went for a bath as preparation.

Deirdre lay on her back alone and watched the sky turn darker and darker. Sleep came to her like a cascade, but a second after she drifted off, she heard soft noises coming from her balcony.

It sounded as if someone was opening her window. She pulled herself up with her palms, but before she could even see anything, the figure that entered her room through the balcony threw their arms around her and locked her in a suffocating embrace.

Deirdre froze. Shock gradually displaced her sleep. Then, softly, she urged, "Have you gone nuts?"

The first floor did not sound like much on paper, but it was still a considerable height to fall from. The fact that this unhinged man had decided to climb out of his window and into hers as if he would somehow be exempted from accidents was just... insane!

"But I'm starting to miss you already," Brendan replied, rubbing her hair with his cheek. "I rolled around my bed and still couldn't sleep, so I thought, huh, I should come to see you." "What happens if Charlene sees you like this?" Deirdre rebuffed nervously. "All that performance will be for nothing!" "That's not gonna happen. Don't worry." He laughed. "We sleep in separate rooms, remember? How is she going to tell?"

After all, the two lead players, had orchestrated what happened during dinner. Deirdre had agreed to it despite not knowing what Brendan's ulterior motive was, but it was fun to watch Charlene beaming smugly as if she was the winner instead of the unsuspecting fool.

"Did you miss me?" asked Brendan, his eyes blazing a little too strongly at the young

woman's top half. Her loose collar from her shoulder down gave him ample window to admire, though his eyes ultimately glided down to her abdomen. He placed a hand on her abdomen. "What about our kid? Miss me yet?"

Deirdre did not even know what to answer. Amused, she replied, "Brendan, the child doesn't even kick yet."

Brendan leaned his head forward and pressed his ear against her skin. He listened for a moment and said, "Ah. The kid said it missed me and wants me to be around the two of you tonight."

Deirdre hardly had a chance to answer him. Swiftly, Brendan hooked Deirdre's body toward him. The young woman found herself lying on all fours atop his chest.

The entire room was filled with Deirdre's scent. As Brendan breathed it in, he closed his eyes. "Just hang on a little longer, Dee. I'll have Shea guarding you very soon.

That way, you'll be protected from whatever crap Charlene will throw your way." "It's okay." Deirdre perched on his chest, her eyes downcast. "I've been waiting for a chance like this for so long. Having to wait slightly longer is not that difficult." "Good to hear it."

Their position was a little too awkward to Deirdre's liking. She started to move, hoping to get down from him, when suddenly, she froze in midstruggle.

Brendan opened his eyes. "Why stop?"

Deirdre's skin was boiling. She was frozen stiff.

Brendan gently pulled her to his side and kissed her ear. "Oh, that? Don't worry. I'm not going to do anything to you tonight, especially since I don't think you can handle it."

Deirdre cast her eyes down, speechless. Her sleep was completely gone, though.

"That's all?" she asked despite herself.

Brendan shot her a meaningful glance. "Deirdre McKinnon, do you know what that could mean when you put it that way?"

She stiffened before a wave of flustering warmth washed over her. "Wait! What I meant was—"

Brendan pressed his finger on her trembling lips and stopped her from explaining. "I know, Dee. I know," he said, his eyes gentle. "Come on. Time to sleep."

Deirdre took a deep breath and closed her eyes. It was initially difficult, but as she breathed in his scent, she grew drowsy and even fell asleep.

It was then that a series of soft but perceptible rapping sounds on the door startled Deirdre.