

Resent Reject Regret

Chapter 131 The Unexpected Present

In the end, he shoved Charlene away. "This is unfair to you. It's getting late. Rest well."

Upon saying that, he headed to the master bedroom by himself to rest, leaving Charlene standing alone in the corridor. Her face, which was delicately made up, looked ready to crumble at that very moment, and she was clenching her teeth in rage.

She remembered that he had slept with Deirdre the night before she had come to the villa, yet he had used unfairness as a reason to reject her. 'Is he really scared that it would be unfair to me, or is he utterly unwilling...'

Charlene did not have the courage to think any further. She lowered her beautiful gaze, thinking that she needed to work faster. Otherwise, the consequences would be unimaginable if Deirdre were to get

pregnant.

The next morning, Brendan got up very early to work on official business. After he was done, he told the driver, "Go to the nearest pet shop."

"Pet shop?" The driver was surprised. "Aren't you allergic to pets, Mr. Brighthall?"

"Forget it, just take me there."

The driver did not have the courage to ask any more questions. He hastily drove to the nearest pet shop. Brendan opened the car door as soon as the car stopped and entered the pet shop located opposite the

car.

He almost had to cover his nose with his handkerchief because he was allergic to dog hair. He furrowed his eyebrows tightly but he did not cower. He sized up the dogs in the cages repeatedly with his eyes.

The pet shop owner approached him with a smile. "Have you found a pet that you like, sir? I can take it out of the cage for you to look at it up close."

"It's fine." Brendan backed further away and tried to remember the puppy's appearance with great effort. "I would like to get a black puppy with brown fur on top of its head. About one month old."

The pet shop owner felt troubled, as it would not be easy to get a puppy with brown fur on top of its head. In addition, the customer had requested a specific age. "Sir, your request is..."

“Too difficult?” Brendan pulled his black card out of his wallet and tossed it on the table. “Money is not an issue if you can get it.”

The pet shop owner beamed widely at once. “It’s not difficult! It’s not difficult at all! I’ll go and look for one now!”

In the end, the pet shop owner reached out to many breeders and spent more than three hours until he finally found a suitable puppy.

The puppy was kept in a cage. After paying for the puppy, the driver took the cage. By then, the back of Brendan’s hand was already covered in a red rash.

“Mr. Brighthal!” The driver could not help feeling astonished. “You’re having an allergic reaction. Would you like to go to the hospital?”

Brendan was unbothered. “It’s fine. I’ll be fine after getting some medicine. Let’s head back.”

“Sure.”

Brendan got out of the car, holding the cage after he reached the villa. The puppy curled up in the cage in fear as he headed upstairs and knocked on Deirdre’s door.

Deirdre was lying on the bed in a daze, so she paid no attention to the knocking sound. Brendan turned the doorknob and discovered that it was locked from the inside. He could not help feeling infuriated. Deirdre, I’m going to count to three. Open the door.”

Deirdre opened the door before he could count to three. Her face was slightly pale due to lack of sleep, and she looked exhausted. “How can I help you?”

Brendan found the sight of her infuriating. “Don’t tell me that you didn’t sleep the whole night because of the dog.”

“I slept.”

Deirdre answered truthfully. However, she had woken up frequently during the night and she’d had a tormented sleep all night long.

Brendan had visited her room last night and knew that Deirdre was telling the truth. He suppressed his anger and placed the cage on the coffee table. “Come and open this.”

The

puppy did not have the courage to whine because it was afraid, so Deirdre did not notice its presence. She felt her way to the coffee table in confusion and she was stunned when she felt the cage. She stretched out her hand and her face turned ghastly pale instantly when she felt the dog’s body.

“Gah!”

She hastily pulled back her hand. The cage was knocked over, and the puppy was so startled that it screamed. She fell to the ground, her face drained of blood and her body shaking uncontrollably.

Chapter 132 Ungrateful

She felt as if she could watch the scene of Bliss' tragic death in the backyard at that very moment. She experienced an emotional breakdown and said, "Take it away! Leave!"

Brendan had been looking forward to Deirdre's reaction, yet his face turned green with anger instantly when he heard her tell him to leave. Soon, his gaze turned icy.

"Deirdre, why are you acting crazy? Weren't you devastated over the dog's death yesterday? I got you a new dog, yet not only have you not shown any appreciation, but your behavior is disgusting!"

'Show appreciation?'

Deirdre's chest was racing, and she felt endless coldness enshrouding her, as if she was trapped in an ice cellar.

"Do you think that having another dog take Bliss' place right after Bliss' death will make everything better? As though the incident never took place?"

"What else could I do?" Brendan sniggered. He did not feel any emotion for animals. "Do you want me to resurrect the dog?"

Deirdre wanted to laugh. So it turned out that, in Brendan's opinion, anything that was lost could be replaced with a similar item.

"Leave." Her lips were trembling. "Get out! Leave!"

Brendan was infuriated. He caught her by surprise when he clutched her lower jaw, his eyes burning with agitation. "Deirdre, don't you dare be ungrateful. Do you know how much money I spent just to get a dog. that looked like the previous dog?"

Not only had he experienced an allergic reaction, but the money he had spent on this dog had been enough to buy ten dogs of popular breeds. In the end, he had to make peace with Deirdre not expressing her appreciation to him. Instead, Deirdre had actually responded with a disgusting attitude.

"What have I done to deserve this, Deirdre?!"

Deirdre was in so much pain that she teared up, yet she held back her tears by force. "I don't need a dog. I don't need your condescending pity because I hate dogs and I hate the powerless feeling of failing to protect someone else. A person like me doesn't deserve to keep a dog as a pet!"

She breathed heavily. "Please leave!"

Brendan was extremely furious. He clenched his fists tightly as he looked at Deirdre, who was crying profusely. He left, slamming the door while holding the cage in his hand.

Charlene had already heard the commotion and stood by the door, attempting to eavesdrop. Brendan got out of the room just in time to meet her eyes. She was stunned for a moment before she saw Brendan holding the cage.

Her heart started racing for a second. The dog looked so similar that she almost assumed that the previous puppy had survived the ordeal and had come back to seek revenge on her. However, she

realized soon enough that it was only her imagination.

Brendan had actually found a similar dog. 'What is he trying to do... Is he trying to appease Deirdre? He came rushing back from the company on purpose just for that woman.'

Charlene was burning with jealousy at that thought.

"Brendan," she said in a weak, gentle voice. "What happened?"

"Nothing." Brendan's eyes were filled with agitation,

'I shouldn't have poked my nose into other people's business

He tossed the cage on the coffee table and called someone to take the dog. Charlene bit her lip without Brendan noticing it. She said after Brendan ended the call. "So it turns out that the dog was specifically purchased for Ms McKinnon. It's no wonder the dog looks very similar to the dead one Brendan, that was really thoughtful of you. Is it because Ms. McKinnon is not in a good mood that she hasn't been appreciative?"

Brendan was even more disgusted. "Who does she think she is to have such an attitude? She's only seizing this opportunity to milk the situation and show her grief"

"You went to great trouble, Brendan. If I was Ms. McKinnon, I'd most certainly be very touched..." Charlene smiled bitterly. "I envy Ms. McKinnon very much because you treat her so well..."

"So well?"

The words triggered Brendan.

Chapter 133 Birthday Party

Deirdre was ungrateful no matter how well he treated her. On the contrary, she loathed him for meddling in her business and wished that he would leave her.

If Sterling had given her the dog as a gift, he figured that she would have immediately given herself to him as a sign of appreciation.

Brendan felt jealous at the thought of this possibility. He clenched his fists tightly, and his expression turned even colder. "You're overthinking. A woman like her doesn't deserve to be treated well by me. I thought of doing it at the time because the dog died in my backyard."

"Is that so?" Charlene's eyes turned gloomy, yet there was nothing she could do to object. She bit her red lips gently and said, "So it turns out that you're now showing concern for Ms. McKinnon on purpose, Brendan. In that case, my mind can be at ease. It's possible that I'm not magnanimous enough and I want to have all your attention. Am I being selfish?"

"How can you be?" Brendan looked at Charlene's conflicted expression and felt a tinge of guilt in his heart. "Don't worry, Deirdre is in no way comparable to you in my heart."

In the next few days, Brendan was even more distant around Deirdre.

He would ignore her completely if they encountered each other by coincidence and he would walk past Deirdre right away, while Deirdre would remain calm as well. Unless it was necessary to go out, she would spend most of her time in the room.

However, they would encounter each other during meals. anyway.

Deirdre could only keep quiet and attempt to reduce her presence with all her might.

Brendan took one glance at her and felt himself losing his appetite. He placed down his cutlery and said, "Charlene, enjoy the rest of your meal slowly. I have a video conference to attend in the study."

"Sure," Charlene answered. However, she could not help saying in concern, "Take care of your health, Brendan. We're going to attend the birthday party tomorrow."

"Hmm."

Deirdre stopped eating for a moment. "Birthday party?"

Brendan headed upstairs while Charlene cut her steak like a show-off. "It's October 25th tomorrow. I believe that Ms. McKinnon is aware of the significance of the date, right?"

Deirdre lowered her gaze. She knew all about that date, of course. It was Charlene's birthday.

During the two years she had been with Brendan, she used to pretend to be Charlene and force a smile on her face when she received birthday wishes on a birthday that did not belong to her. She would try to forget her own birthday with great effort.

"You took my place as the birthday girl during my comatose period, Ms. McKinnon. When you were in prison, we would only celebrate my birthday minimally in order to stay away from the limelight. Brendan. has always felt very guilty about that." She heaved a sigh. "Hence, he told me that he would give me a proper celebration this time and introduce me to everyone in the Brighthall family mansion."

'The Brighthall family mansion.'

Deirdre's hand hurt. It turned out that she was gripping the fork way too tightly.

She loosened her grip and said nonchalantly, "Congratulations, Ms. McKinney."

"Thank you. Are you going to attend my birthday party, Ms. McKinnon? I seem to remember that you have not celebrated your own birthday all this time. Why don't you consider tomorrow your birthday and join the celebration?"

Deirdre had already grown numb to the humiliation, so she did not even bat an eye. "It's fine. My body is not doing so well. I hope you have a great time, Ms. McKinney."

"Are you really not coming?" When she noticed that Deirdre was about to stand up, Charlene's smile grew wider and she said slowly, "How will you witness everyone approve of my relationship with Brendan if you don't come?"

Deirdre halted to a stop and said coldly, "You seem to have a rather boring life, Ms. McKinney. You're only pleased when you have people witnessing your love."

"You..."

Brendan walked out of the study and furrowed his eyebrows after noticing that the atmosphere in the room was off. "What are you two talking about?"

"We're talking about my birthday party tomorrow." Charlene chuckled and said in a self-pitying tone, "Brendan, can we invite Ms. McKinnon to the party as well? It will surely be very pitiful and lonely for her to be home all by herself tomorrow, right?"

Chapter 134 I Missed Listening to Her Voice

"Why would we invite her to the party?" Brendan was displeased. "You're too kind. She deserves to be pitiful because she has only herself to thank for that. Besides, your birthday party is very important. Who's going to have a good time at your party when the sight of her spoils all the fun?"

"But... Isn't Ms. McKinnon going to be bored at home all by herself?" She said in a pitiful tone, "I believe that Ms. McKinnon won't spoil the fun."

"However, does she deserve to be invited to your birthday party?" Brendan's dark eyes were tainted with coldness as his eyes were fixed on Deirdre's face. "Speak for yourself. Do you deserve to attend such a grand event?"

Deirdre's heart was racing. This was Brendan's most lethal blow. It was not enough that he had humiliated her. He was now forcing her to acknowledge the insult.

Deirdre believed that Charlene must be smiling in satisfaction at that very moment. She took a deep breath, suppressed her shaky voice, and answered, "I don't deserve it."

Brendan said in a mocking tone, "It's great that you know that. Why haven't you gone back to your room?" Deirdre shut her eyes and opened them again. She then walked upstairs step by step, feeling pain.

ore her door was closed, she heard Charlene say pretentiously. "Don't do that, Brendan. Ms. McKinnon is already suffering a great deal..."

No one knew that her birthday was one day before Charlene's. It was today. The more celebrated Charlene's birthday was, the lonelier and more desolate she felt.

No one remembered her real birthday other than her mother.

Deirdre opened her eyes and felt her heart racing, her eyes stinging with tears. Her mother was still living under Brendan's control, and she wondered if her mother's illness had been cured or if her mother missed her. She was utterly clueless..

She sat upright and waited for the voices outside to quiet down before she opened the door and walked toward the study.

She knocked on the door and opened it when she heard the words 'come in'.

Brendan looked disgusted and surprised by the sight of her. "Leave!"

Deirdre clasped her hands behind her back shakily, mustering the courage to say, "It's my birthday today, Brendan."

Brendan was stunned for a moment. He'd had no idea, or one could say that he had never cared about that. Soon, his astonishment was replaced by contempt. "So? Don't tell me you would like your birthday to be celebrated with a party too. You know better than me if you deserve that!"

Deirdre was already used to the discrimination and could not be bothered to frown even in the slightest. I don't. I just... I just want to talk to my mother. She used to wish me 'happy birthday' in the past... I've missed listening to her voice..."

She assumed that her request was very simple, yet Brendan rejected it without any hesitation with a dark gaze. "That would be impossible! Stop dreaming!"

"Why?" Deirdre could not make sense of it. "Don't I even have the right to talk to my mom? Brendan, I'm not even asking to meet her. Can't I just talk to her?"

Brendan's thin lips were pursed tightly. No one knew that Ophelia was dead better than him. Forget about

talking to her. She no longer existed in this world.

"She's not allowed to talk on the phone due to her condition." Brendan made up an excuse. "She's still receiving treatment, and her condition is very unstable. If she listened to your voice, it would affect her treatment."

"What's going on with her?!" Deirdre's eyes reddened with tears instantly. She asked anxiously, "I thought you said that she was already back in the country?"

"It's precisely because she's back in the country that it would be troublesome if she fell ill again. When she recovers, I'll arrange for a meeting between you two without you telling me."

Deirdre's eyes reddened with anger, but she did not have the courage to comment further out of fear that Brendan would go back on his own word if he was angered and she would not see her mother for the rest of her life.

Chapter 135 Promise

"Alright..." Suppressing the bitterness in her voice, Deirdre nodded strenuously. "I'll wait."

She was planning to return to her room when a song filled the entire room all of a sudden.

Deirdre was stunned. She knew the song like the back of her hand because it was her ringtone.

Brendan was rather surprised as well. He pulled the drawer with a long face and saw Sterling's name displayed on the caller ID.

Sterling had attempted to call Deirdre previously but he had stopped calling after finding out that Brendan was holding the phone without any intention of passing it back to Deirdre

Brendan's face turned green with rage now that Sterling was suddenly calling Deirdre for no apparent

reason.

Deirdre did not have the courage to act rashly. Her hands were tightly clenched, and she suppressed all hope as she asked, "Is my phone ringing?"

Brendan narrowed his eyes and inquired closely without answering her question, "Whose call are you looking forward to picking up?"

He suppressed the anger in his tone, but Deirdre could sense it without seeing it. She bit her lower lip and subconsciously denied it by saying. "No one's "

"No one's?" Brendan sneered. She had looked like a dead woman with her empty, dull gaze previously, yet her eyes lit up and her entire person began glowing when the call came in.

"I believe that you've figured out who the caller is, right? Would you like to take the call?"

Deirdre appeared to be conflicted but shook her head after a few seconds.

Brendan clenched his fists so tightly that his knuckles turned white Unexpectedly, he pressed the accept button and put the call on speaker.

Sterling's voice came from the other end of the line at once. "Deirdre? Is that you?"

Deirdre felt her heart racing. She kept her head lowered and did not utter a word. In fact, she did not even have the courage to express any emotion.

Brendan sneered while he stared at Deirdre's face closely. "I'm sorry for disappointing you, Mr. Fuller. It's not Deirdre, it's me."

Sterling could not hide his disappointment, even though he had not thought that Deirdre would have access to her phone. "Can you please pass the phone to Deirdre?"

"She's right next to me, but she's busy." Brendan looked at Deirdre and said in a flirtatious, provocative tone, "Her mouth is preoccupied with another task at the moment, so she's not able to take your call for the time being. Mr. Fuller. You may speak to me, and I'll convey your message to her."

Sterling clenched his teeth to withstand the uneasiness he felt and said, "Are you listening, Deirdre? I wasn't planning on calling you but I called anyway. You told me you wanted me to go the other day, and I understand that my presence must have affected your life. That's why I bought a bus ticket today and I'll be moving to another location tonight. I hope you live a good life and I wish you a happy birthday. Don't forget our promise. I'll be waiting for you."

Sterling did not procrastinate. Instead, he ended the conversation after speaking briefly. Meanwhile, Brendan's expression turned gloomy.

'Promise?'

He felt a gush of ineffable anger burning in his chest. He asked, "What kind of promise is that?"

'Deirdre made a promise to Sterling without telling me?'

He was infuriated to learn this. He glared at Deirdre coldly and pushed over everything on the desk abruptly when Deirdre refused to answer him. The items fell to the floor with a loud clatter.

"Speak! Have
you lost your voice?"

Brendan spoke in a stern voice that startled Deirdre. She said through tightly-clenched teeth, "It's not important. It happened a long time ago."

'A long time ago?'

It was before he had found her. Brendan's eyebrows did not relax at all. He took a few steps forward and clutched her throat before he lifted her up. "Deirdre, you still don't understand my question."

A suffocating feeling filled her mind. She hung from his arms and said with great difficulty, "I promised that we would move to the place where he used to stay to live out our lives together if we had the opportunity."

She uttered the words with great difficulty, yet Brendan could hear the adoration they felt for each other. It was the promise of a lifetime.

Chapter 136 My Necklace Isn't On Me

Why was he so exasperated to learn this? Because all of this was supposed to belong to him!

Brendan let go of Deirdre at the height of his rage. She thought this meant she could breathe a sigh of relief, but a new force simply knocked her off her footing, causing her to lie on the desk.

She felt his body pressing against hers and then felt his labored breathing.

A chill crawled up her spine. She knew what was about to happen. "No, Brendan! No!" she yelled, struggling.

He acted as though he could not hear her. He grabbed her arms and pinned them to the side, sneering, Why? Isn't this the point of your existence? Why else do you think I let you live by my side? And you think you'll get to live with Sterling one day-ha! Fat f*cking chance!"

His free hand gripped her neck, his eyes wild with frosty rage. He pushed her down on the desk with his weight and did not care one bit about her struggle, protests, or reluctance.

Charlene listened from outside his study. As she clenched her fists, her beautiful features morphed into something twisted.

Deirdre blacked out during the experience. She did not wake up until the next afternoon.

Charlene had just finished putting on her tailor-made dress and makeup. She was just about to put on her necklace when a thought flitted through her mind.

She dropped the necklace back into the box.

Charlene arrived at the banquet venue in a car. The old Brighthall mansion was already packed with guests by that point, and amid the revelry, Charlene spied Brendan in the lounge.

She could still see scratch marks on his neck. Deirdre had left them.

Her eyes turned cold for a moment. She stepped forward with a smile and greeted him. "Sorry I'm late, Bren. Where's Mom?"

"In the hall." He beckoned for her to come forward and hooked her arm around his. "We should go inside

now.”

“Right,” Charlene replied sheepishly. She took a few steps forward before reeling in realization and shock, her hands frantically searching her neck. “Wait, my necklace! Bren, my necklace isn’t on me! I must have forgotten to put it on when I left in a hurry. Oh no... What am I gonna do?”

“It’s just a necklace, Lena. Don’t worry. You’re beautiful with or without it.”

“B-But... She bit her lip. “It isn’t just any necklace. It’s Mom’s birthday gift to me. It means a lot more than just a necklace, and I promised her I’d wear it today. Not doing it just feels... You know, like I’ll hurt her feelings.”

Brendan frowned. “I’ll get Sam to retrieve it for you.”

“Sending him back and forth will take too much time,” she replied, sounding contrite. “How could I be so stupid? This is too important to forget, so why did I? Ohh... I just wanted to make Mom happy, but my stupid self just keeps getting in the way!”

“Hey, don’t say that about yourself.” Brendan comforted her, pulling her into his arms and patting her back. Charlene sniffled. “Is anyone home? Maybe they could deliver the necklace to me right on time.”

Brendan’s expression darkened for a moment. “There’s... Deirdre.”

“Oh.” Charlene’s expression froze. A defeated smile settled onto her lips. “It’s fine, then. I couldn’t possibly make Miss McKinnon my delivery girl. You’re right, it’s just a necklace. It’s no biggie.”

Charlene sounded so ginger and meek that it made Brendan feel guilty. He thought about the things Deirdre had done to Charlene-really, compared to the litany of trouble Deirdre had caused, delivering Charlene’s necklace seemed downright trivial. What was the worst that could happen?

He told Charlene to wait for him and strolled inside the mansion to call Deirdre on the family phone.

The woman in question was still sleeping in her room, but the incessant ringing sound coming from the

living room woke her. She opened her eyes groggily and was instantly assaulted by an ache all over her body, wincing and shuddering as a result.

God, it hurt everywhere.

Chapter 137 What Now?

Deirdre pushed herself to get out of bed.

The phone in the living room was still shrieking incessantly-almost like an audio representation of suffering without end. She got out of bed with great difficulty and walked through the door. She then picked up the phone-

And Brendan's annoyed snarl greeted her. "Took you long enough!"

Deirdre's fingers tightened around the receiver. As if he had not played a part in this! It had been cold the day he had stripped her naked in his study and forcibly had sex with her. She had felt both chills and a heat rush after that and had unsurprisingly come down with a fever. Even now, she was working her way through a brain fog.

Not that he would care, anyway. All he cared about was spilling his seed and making himself feel good. To him, she had always been a subhuman at best.

"I have a headache. I just woke up," she croaked.

Brendan snickered. "Would it kill you to cut back on your malingering? It's almost late evening, for Christ's sake."

Deirdre pressed her lips and decided to change the subject. Suppressing her headache, she asked, "What do you want?"

"Charlene accidentally left her necklace at home instead of bringing it to the party. She needs that necklace because Mom gave it to her-it's important. You're at home, so come and deliver it here."

"What?" Deirdre was taken aback. Had he just asked a blind woman to deliver Charlene's necklace?

Her bewilderment was blurted out of her lips in the form of words before she knew it. "Brendan, I'm blind. Bringing her necklace to the party, unassisted, is a tall order for someone like me. It'd be better to send someone back here to get it."

Brendan frowned. "You think I'd let you out of the house if I weren't desperate?" he retorted matter-of-factly. "The main event is about to start. All you need to do is hail a cab and come to the old mansion-it will take only a few minutes at most! I'll have someone wait for you by the main entrance, so that's that. Get the necklace now-time is running out!"

Deirdre fought her dizziness by holding on to the edge of the table. "Aren't you scared I might seize the chance to run away?"

Brendan went quiet for a while. When he spoke again, his reply was undergirded with contempt. "Sure. Run as far as you like. Don't worry about your mom. I'm sure she will be fine if you run away."

Deirdre felt a lump in her throat. Even with Sterling gone, Brendan still had leverage against her. She took a deep breath and asked, "Where is it?"

"In Lena's room. On her vanity table. It's in a box, so just bring that box over."

Deirdre returned to her room and put on a warm coat before entering Charlene's room. She felt her way through, found the vanity table, got the box, and left to hail a ride. The journey lasted about 20 minutes. Someone approached her as soon as she got out of the car. "Is this Miss McKinnon?"

Deirdre passed the box. "Here it is-what Charlene wanted. Give it to her. And now, excuse me."

The other person balked with an awkward smile. "Hold on a moment, Miss McKinnon. Miss McKinney told me that she would very much prefer that you give that necklace to her directly. Sorry for the

inconvenience."

Deirdre frowned. What kind of trick was she up to this time? She had zero intention of heeding that

woman's order, but she was just as reluctant to make things hard for this innocent messenger. Mustering all her patience, she replied, "Fine Lead the way."

"Right this way!"

Deirdre was led through a quiet, secluded path that cut through the backyard. She did not meet any of the party guests. Then, finally, they stopped by the door to the lounge.

"Miss McKinney is waiting inside. Please make yourself comfortable. You'll have to excuse me-I've got some other things to attend to. See you!"

Deirdre nodded and grabbed the door handle.

A million thoughts raced through her head. Charlene must have planned this elaborate scheme to humiliate her in front of the other people in the lounge, Deirdre would bet on it. Then, she would drag her to the hall where all the other guests were and debase her even further.

To her surprise, the only sound that greeted her was Charlene's voice. "Gosh, Miss McKinnon! You're finally here." She greeted her sweetly. "Sorry to trouble you with my necklace. I accidentally left it at home and I really thought I wouldn't be able to make it to the main event with it!"

Chapter 138 I Killed the Dog.

God. Every part of that cordiality sounded so manufactured and phony. Deirdre was in no mood to play the game, so she placed the box on a rack next to the door and turned on her heel.

"Miss McKinnon, wait." Charlene stopped her as she rose from her seat with a smile. "What's the hurry? Don't you wanna look around? You know, enjoy the vibe now that you're here?"

"Not interested," Deirdre rebutted nonchalantly. She had never been interested in what the affluent upper- class considered haute couture or their glamor. The only reason she had even wanted to be Brendan's wife was because she had loved him.

Of course, even that had gone away.

"I brought you your necklace," she stated placidly. "If there's nothing else you need, excuse me."

"But there is oneeee thing." Charlene replied quickly. Her smile deepened. Then, she fished out her phone gracefully and played a video.

The whimpers and cries of a dog being tortured filled the air.

Deirdre stopped dead in her tracks. She could feel her blood boiling from her feet to her head.

Charlene tittered. "I'm willing to bet you recognize this sound, Miss McKinnon. What was the name of that damn dog again?... Oh, right. Bliss. I remember the way it went down as though it was yesterday! Its belly was cut open, and even though it was near death, that poor thing got its limbs lopped off too. Oh, look! You can see it glancing at the mansion throughout the video-it was looking for you, wasn't it? Maybe it just wanted to see you before it was gone forever?"

Deirdre's eyes were red. She turned back to face Charlene, her voice shaking as much as her body. "W-W- Where did you get this?"

Charlene's eyes narrowed. "Why don't you take a guess? Guess why I would have a video like this or why I seem to have intimate knowledge regarding the dog's death."

Deirdre's eyes seemed to be quivering in their sockets. She tearfully croaked, "It... It was you! You killed Bliss!"

"Tsk, ts. Hold your horses, darling. I was watching a musical with Bren at the time, 'member? I didn't have any time to waste by killing a dog." Charlene responded. The grin on her face was etched even deeper on her lips. "But yes. I was the one who hired the hobo. Now, he's cuckoo for sure, but he's not completely out of his senses all the time, okay? So I gave him a buttload of money and dug a hole in the backyard clandestinely. Then, when you and Sam went out shopping, I opened the door to your room- and whoosh! That dumb dog bolted out excitedly! It ran to the backyard straight away. And then..."

Deirdre pounced, her fingers clutching Charlene's neck as tears rolled down her cheeks. "How could you?!" she shrieked at the top of her lungs. "Are you even human?! Bliss was just a dog! It was innocent- and you killed it!"

Charlene was short of breath, but the glee in her eyes only burned brighter. "Y-Y-You're... right... It was just a d-dog.... It would have... lived a happy life... if it had been owned... literally by anyone else..." she added." But you... You just had to... be its owner... You had so many chances... to leave us... but you k-kept... staying

Deirdre felt a loud ringing sound in her brain. She was blind, and yet in her mind's eye, she could see Bliss crying as it stared in the direction of the mansion. Waiting for help. Waiting for her.

It was like a knife slicing through her heart.

Bliss' mother had died of an illness. And Bliss itself... It had not even gotten to breathe and live in this world for a little while longer.

All because of the stupid conflict between two humans. Bliss had died... as collateral damage.

Tears broke free from her unseeing eyes. Her arms were shaking, and Deirdre felt a profound, homicidal

anger.

She hated her!

"Die! You should die!" she cried before she tightened her grip suddenly.

Then, just as suddenly, she heard footsteps hurrying over behind her.

A new force clamped around her hands before hurling her away from her target. Then, she crashed down on the floor.

Chapter 139 A Leopard Never Changes its Spots

"Bren!" Charlene sputtered and fled right into Brendan's arms in terror. She gawked at Deirdre, fear widening her eyes as she yelped, "She's gone crazy, Bren! She's lost it and she is trying to kill me!"

Remnants from Deirdre's chokehold were still etched around her neck, sore and stark. A little up ahead, Brendan could see tears flooding the corner of her eyes. The sight provoked something ugly within him.

Exasperation. He had only left Charlene alone for a while, but it had been enough time for this to happen. Had he been there one second sooner

He lunged, his fingers digging into Deirdre's shoulders like talons, his strength so totalizing that it could crush bones. "Deirdre f*cking McKinnon! You'll never f*cking learn, will you?! Even after all this punishment, you still can't stop harming Lena!"

Deirdre's tears rolled down her cheeks endlessly, wetting the floor. Her chest was aching so much that even breathing had become hard. She glowered at Brendan, her eyes beet red, and retorted, "What should I have learned, huh? She's the Devil behind it all! She's the Devil behind everything! She Must Die?"

The agony-the despair-in her eyes was so overwhelming that even Brendan was taken aback. He could not find even a sign that she was faking this. He quickly recovered from his shock with a frown, however, and demanded, "What do you mean behind everything?"

Charlene stepped in hastily. I don't understand her either! She gave me my necklace a few minutes ago. Then, instead of leaving, she started having this weird puzzling rant, rambling on about everything that should have been hers, and then and then suddenly, she started to choke me... Her voice quivered. Thank God you were here, Bren. I. I was so sure I was going to die?"

"Spare me that bullsh*t!" Deirdre erupted. Every breath she took felt like a knife making a gash across her bleeding heart. "Show us your phone, Charlene, if you even have the goddamned courage to do that, you snake! Show that video again, I dare you!"

Brendan's expression darkened. "What video?"

Charlene shook her head violently with tears in her eyes. "I don't know! I don't know what you're talking about, Miss McKinnon!"

"You're lying! There's a video of Bliss' stomach being cut open right there on your phone! You filmed it just to show it to me-to torment me! And now you're playing dumb again?!"

Brendan's eyes turned stormy. He extended his hand toward Charlene and ordered, "Give me your phone."

"B-Bren?" Charlene murmured, startled. Her pupils seemed to constrict. "You... don't trust me?"

Brendan softened his tone. "No, I trust you... Which is why I need you to hand me your phone. I want Deirdre to be proven wrong, without a shadow of a doubt, about all of this! Give me your phone."

Charlene handed her phone to him. He began to search her media files but he did not find even a single video stored-let alone a video depicting Bliss' torture.

Brendan's heart turned into steel. "When will you finally f*cking stop slandering Lena?!" he yelled. "Do you treat your blindness as some get-out-of-jail card? Do you think your disability puts you above basic decency?!"

He loomed over her and cupped Deirdre's jaw with force. "There isn't a single video on Lena's phone!" he snarled. "Not even one!"

Deirdre's face turned white. "That's impossible!" she choked. She had heard it with her own ears! "W-What about her recordings? Then it's got to be an audio recording!"

"Enough!" Brendan bellowed. He chucked her away from him as though he was disgusted, and Deirdre lost her footing and crashed down on the floor. She knocked into one of the stools nearby and panted in pain.

Brendan shot her a frigid glare, as though he was looking at a disgusting, wretched schemer who just could not stop sinking lower. "How many times have I warned you, Deirdre? How. Many. Times?! You just won't stop! You thought I'd be helpless against you now that Sterling's gone, did you?!"

"Sam!"

The man in question peered inside the room-and immediately knew what must have gone down.

“Take her back to the mansion and lock her in her room! She’s not to be given food unless I explicitly state so!” Brendan ordered. “When Charlene’s birthday party is over, I’ll come back and teach her a

memorable lesson.”

Upon saying that, Brendan took Charlene with him and left.

Deirdre shivered. Any pain her body felt paled compared to the agony in her wringing heart.

Chapter 140 Help Me Out With This

Sam approached Deirdre gingerly. “Miss McKinnon? Come on. We should go,” he said. “That... That was too reckless of you, miss. You shouldn’t have acted out that way during an important event like this one. Things could have gone really bad, and... You know Mr. Brighthall wouldn’t possibly let you off lightly.” Deirdre knew he was speaking the truth. As she cast her eyes on the ground, her tears rained down on the cold, hard floor before she replied, “Did you know? The homeless man who murdered Bliss... was Charlene’s employee, Sam. She hired him.”

Sam was bewildered. “What?!”

Deirdre pressed her hand against her chest, but it did nothing to relieve her from her pain. “She told me... that Bliss kept looking in the direction of the mansion when... when it was about to die,” she croaked. “It... was waiting for me to save it, Sam. And what was I doing at the time? I... I was s-shopping for new clothes! I f-failed Bliss. I k-k-killed it!”

“No, Miss McKinnon,” Sam rebuffed with a frown. He had recovered from his initial shock. “You can’t possibly blame yourself for this. I was the one who took you out shopping, remember? Do you consider me an accessory to the crime? Look, neither of us knew that was going to happen that day. Who could have? Which is why I’m sure Bliss doesn’t blame you for what happened. And you... you shouldn’t either.”

Deirdre bit her lips hard. “But the only reason it had to die was because I was its owner-Charlene only wanted it dead because Bliss belonged to me!”

She had never hated Charlene’s guts so much in her life before. And yet, that same woman was outside, dressed in a fancy dress, bathing in self-congratulating fanfare and festivities at her own party. She kept hearing waves of cheers from the guests and listening to stupid birthday well-wishes and compliments meant for the woman.

Deirdre’s eyes were red, and she dug her nails into her arm.

A thought flitted through her mind. She aimed her red eyes forward, knowing that this was where Sam was. “Can you help me?”

He was shrewd enough to understand her intent instantly. "You're... You're planning to make this public, right?"

Deirdre gritted her teeth. She had duped herself into believing that patience would be her greatest weapon. -if she waited long enough, Brendan would grow bored of her one day and she would be able to flee. Charlene's actions had mocked her faith so much that it had now collapsed. There were no other options left except fighting for the justice Bliss deserved.

"Brendan's sure I'm accusing Charlene without proof. And Charlene had planned to provoke me long before she decided to make up an excuse to get me here. Don't you see? I have a target painted on my back. Escape has become a pipe dream," Deirdre murmured. Despair colored her lifeless, downcast eyes while blue-black bruises began to surface on her arm as she dug her nails harder. "But this time... She revealed a lot about her scheme in her bid to provoke me. There's a video or a recording on her phone that can act as proof. She also has some clues that connect her to the homeless man..."

"Sam, I need help."

For a long while, the room was silent.

"I... see," Deirdre said self-deprecatingly. "I must have made an impossible request, Sam. That was unfair of me. I'm sorry-"

He sighed, but his tone was firm and resolute. "No. I work for Mr. Brighthall, not Charlene. I was the one

who brought Bliss to you too. I want justice for Bliss more than anyone else in the world, so I will help you expose the person behind its death."

His words moved Deirdre, and her lips formed a shadow of a smile. "Thank you," she croaked.

"No need to thank me. I'm helping you for Bliss's sake, too. But I have a condition." Sam crouched close to her and pried her fingers away from her arm. "I want you to stop hurting yourself, especially before you know the result. If you don't love yourself, then nobody else in the world will see a reason to love you."

Deirdre and Sam left for the mansion. Behind them, the hubbub of laughter and cheer rang on, radiating

ignorance.