

## Resent Reject Regret

### Chapter 22 Jinx

The voice sounded youthful. It belonged to a woman -a furious young woman.

Deirdre could feel her heart shrinking in dread. “Who are you?”

“Who am I? Who am I?!” Eva Heinemann gaged as she sized Deirdre up with unreserved contempt. “Sterling is doomed because of you! Because of a stupid, irritating blind woman like you!”

Deirdre’s hands closed around the fabric of her own dress. “What happened to Sterry?”

“What happened? Ha! Do you know how much Sterling has sacrificed to protect you? They took his picture – the media took his picture and spread it all over the internet, and now he’s doxxed! The internet is canceling him! Do you know how big of a deal this is to a doctor? Saving and curing people is literally his job! And now, thanks to you, he can’t ever work in a public hospital again!

“And that Brendan Brighthall-he led the charge to

cancel the Fuller family! Do you know that? Any deal his business ventures made that was even remotely connected to the Fullers has been automatically voided, but oh, there is more! He threatened everyone – literally anyone-out of working with the Fullers. Failure to comply automatically means they are going against him, the most powerful man in the city!

“Do you get it yet? Do you understand that you, Deirdre McKinnon, are the reason sh\*t hit the fan?! You jinxed him-you jinxed your own hero the moment he protected you to make sure you stayed out of the picture! You’re a f\* cking catastrophe!”

Deirdre felt her heart sinking into an icy abyss in her stomach. Her feet felt like lead.

“Where’s... Where’s Sterry? I want to see him!”

“Hell, no!” Eva snarled, her teeth bared. “You might kill him just by showing your sh\*t-attracting face one more time! Who the hell is gonna take that chance? Besides, you can’t even if you want to. His family took him away after this entire scandal, and that’s not even a good thing for him. He’s the bastard child of the family; what reason

does his family have to even protect him instead of, I don’t know, grill him over this?!”

Deirdre’s fingers were trembling, and her eyes were red.

Even Eva’s voice broke. “I... I’m begging you, Deirdre ... I don’t know how the hell you managed to piss Brighthall. off, but I’m begging you: Make this go away! Settle whatever

this is between the two of you and make Brighthall stop canceling the Fullers! You're ruining his life, Deirdre! Doesn't that mean anything to you?!"

Deirdre let out a pained breath. Of course it meant something to her. She had never wanted to... God, she really was a walking jinx. She cursed everyone who was close to her. Her mother had been first, and now Sterling too.

"I'm sorry," she said under her breath, her head low. She clenched her fists so hard her fingernails turned ruddy. She then lifted her head again and stared ahead, her eyes as lifeless as ever. "I caused this, so I... I'll end this. I'll tell Brendan to stop, don't worry."

It was all Eva wanted to hear, so she turned and walked away.

Deirdre stared at her phone. Her fingers flew on the number pad, typing a string of numbers she had memorized and could no longer forget.

The call was connected. "It's me," she said. Every word she spoke summoned a wave of agony, as if every sound she made felt like lodging a knife in her throat. "What do you want from me in exchange for leaving Sterling out of this?"

Brendan snickered. He sounded pleased with himself.

"Go to the Brighthall Group building."

He hung up the call, and Deirdre put her phone away. She hailed a ride to the building, armed with only her walking stick, and made her way to the entrance before being immediately shoved away by security. "Go away. This ain't a food canteen, hobo. You don't deserve to even be

here!"

Her ruined face seemed to have elicited the guard's instinctive revulsion.

Deirdre could feel the pain flaring from her palms from

grazing against the asphalt. She found her walking stick and got to her feet again. "I have an appointment. Ask Mr. Brighthall if you don't believe me."

The guard did not look convinced. Just then, the receptionist came out of the building, scanned Deirdre in surprise, and told the guard, "She's a guest. Let her in."

To the guard's bewilderment, the receptionist proceeded to help Deirdre walk. "What the hell?" he wondered aloud. "Is Mr. Brighthall doing charity work now? She's butt-f\*cking ugly! Just looking at her gives me cooties. Why would someone like him even want her in his office

He trailed off. The receptionist might have shot him a look.

The warning was unnecessary, though. Deirdre had already grown accustomed to comments like these.

The receptionist led her to the elevator. While Deirdre showed no sign of anxiety or panic, the former sniped a few glances at her. Mr. Brighthall's guest was an interesting character. While her face was so scarred and damaged that anyone would lose their appetite when they looked at it, there was also a regal, composed air about her, as though she had been through a lot and had grown much, much wiser. Miss McKinney, in comparison, had none of this self-assured elegance.

"This door leads to Mr. Brighthall's office, miss. He's inside," the receptionist said, taking her leave. "You may go alone."

"I see. Thank you."

The receptionist handed Deirdre's suitcase to her and left.

The young woman mustered every ounce of courage and mettle she had and knocked.

"Come in," came the answer.