

Resent Reject Regret

Chapter 4 Miss McKinney Is Awake

“No, Brendan! Pleaseeeeeeeeee! I’m begging you, pleaseeeeeeeeee don’t!”

His lips cracked into a cruel smirk. “Don’t? Don’t what? Aww, Deirdre, Deirdre, Deirdre. Are you playing hard to get now? How low can you sink?” he jeered. He could not care less about how she felt. If anything, hearing her snuffle and wail only frustrated him even more.

“B-B-Bren... Please, think of our child!” she heaved, pleading. Tears rolled out of the corner of her eyes like a stubborn stream. “Our... child...”

“Our what?! That thing inside you is the son of a wh*re. I have no relation to it!”

The coldness in his eyes could chill anyone’s blood. He wanted to punish her. To eviscerate her. To humiliate her. To jolt her awake from her delusion.

To make the child perish in the brutality of it all.

“Brendan—!” she cried out again, her arms flailing in her struggle.

Suddenly, the man’s phone shrieked out of his pocket, forcing him to stop. He answered the call and put it on speaker. “What?!” he grunted.

Steven Young’s voice was palpably overjoyed. “S-She’s up, Mr. Brighthall! Miss McKinney is awake!”

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Brendan drove away in the thick of the night. It was past midnight, and yet a minute after the call, the man leaped into his car and hurtled into the darkness. His reaction showed his anxiety and excitement.

How could he not act that way? The woman of his dreams had returned. He no longer needed to put on a charade with this revolting pretender.

Deirdre rose and redressed in her battered state, putting on her night clothes. She looked through the balcony windows, her eyes tracing the car’s silhouette, which was fading at the end of the road.

She felt a chill in her heart that echoed the innumerable pangs prickling through every inch of her body, forming a cacophony of unbearable pain.

Six years ago, Deirdre McKinnon had met the man on stage during a charity drive. He had been in a suit and tie, and she had fallen in love at first sight. The next time they had met,

however, it had been amid the cackling flames of a house about to be ruined. He had been almost swallowed by the fire until she had selflessly dived inside and saved him.

Before falling unconscious, he had promised her that he would find her when he recovered. He had said that he would marry her, pledging to shower her with love for that single act of heroism.

After waking up, however, he had become Charlene McKinney's fiancé.

Deirdre had re-entered his life as a Charlene impersonator. Now that the genuine thing had finally woken up, it was time to retire.

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Deirdre fell asleep on a wet pillow, but her phone jerked her awake after a while. The pain caused by his forceful activity had not fully subsided, so she shrank into a fetal position before grabbing her phone.

Her lit-up screen revealed Brendan's name.

The sight of it drained all her sleepiness away. There could only be one reason he would call her this early in the morning, but still, it was sooner than she had expected. Charlene had just woken up. Was he really so excited to divorce Deirdre—to cast her aside and remove every trace of her from his life?

Another call from the same man shook Deirdre out of her stupor. Too terrified to ignore it, she answered it and set it close to her ear.

Brendan's impatient snarl blared from the other side of the line. "I want you here right now!"

"I'm not feeling well," Deirdre replied softly. She had seen blood last night, and even now, she could feel jolts of pain assaulting her senses. "Can you let me rest a little bit? I'll file the divorce papers afterward, okay?"

Brendan went strangely quiet for a moment.

"Just come back. There's nothing to be afraid of. I'm not asking you to file for divorce now and I'm not interested in hurting your kid."

It was the first time Deirdre had ever seen him make concessions. It shocked her, but more importantly, it stirred something deep inside her. Brendan never lied. If he promised he would not hurt her kid, then he would not. But that still left one question unanswered: Why the urgency to bring her back?

Could it be? Could he have realized that—even though Charlene was awake—he harbored some feelings for Deirdre after all? That she, at the very least, deserved a heart-to-heart?

The thought sparked a wildfire in her mind. She knew the possibility was slimmer than a straw, and yet she found herself moved. She quickly covered herself with an overcoat, got out of the house, and hailed a taxi.

The journey gave her imagination ample time to run wild. What was going to happen next? She wondered and wondered until she stepped inside the mansion.

The living room was more packed than Deirdre had expected.

As soon as Brendan saw her, his furrowed brows relaxed. "She's here. Collect her blood."

'Collect her blood?'

Deirdre did not have any time to react. Someone leaped from the couch and closed their fingers around her arm.

"What are you doing?!" Deirdre cried out and tried to wriggle her way out of that grip.

Brendan narrowed his eyes in impatience. "Charlene's unconscious, you mewling pest. Someone has to donate blood, and that someone is you. You're going up there right now, so stop wasting precious time and save Lena's life!"

Deirdre could not believe her ears. "You... You told me to come... because you wanted me to donate blood?!"

"Why else could I have asked you to come?" Brendan sneered. "Because I give a sh*t about you? Because I want you to come back and rest?"

Deirdre's face paled. Her hopes—her wishes and imagination—had been fanciful fantasies all along. "I'm pregnant, Brendan! Can't you just get emergency blood bags from the hospital or something? It's more reasonable than asking a pregnant woman to give blood!" she said. Her lips were trembling, and she felt her heart sinking into a pit of shards and needles. "You're asking me to die, Brendan!"

"And? You think I give a damn about you dying?"

Brendan had always hated how easily she mentioned her death—it was just so irritating. His attention focused on her waist, and a sneer crept onto his lips. "I'm not forcing you to do anything, though, am I? You're free to say no, but you'll be saying no to your kid's survival too. I'll make sure it won't live to see tomorrow."

Deirdre felt a chill seizing her body, and yet she could not fight him. She felt his men pushing and jostling her upstairs... toward the second floor.

She had never been there before—not even once—despite being married to him for two years. Nor had she ever imagined being granted the opportunity for the sole, cruel purpose of being someone's blood donor.

They shoved her down on the bed, pinning her. That was when Deirdre's eyes fell on Charlene's features next to her.

She had always believed that they just looked alike. An eighty-percent resemblance, maybe. But that was not the case at all. It was like staring at herself—a clone whose features mirrored her own with absurd accuracy.

They were like twins. But that did not mean they enjoyed the same treatment.

Charlene alone was the object of Brendan's love and tender touch. Deirdre watched every inch of frost on Brendan's face melt at the sight of his muse. She watched him pull the blanket up to Charlene's chin with precious gentleness. She watched him turn to the medical attendant nearby and heard him say, "Pump as much blood as she needs. I don't want Lena to suffer any longer."

Then, Deirdre felt her head spin, and clusters of dark spots descended upon her.

Her limbs were so devoid of strength that moving any one of them by the time she woke up became a chore. Instinctively, she clutched her abdomen, her eyes reddening.

Brendan was too cruel to believe. He really wished the kid would die.

"Miss McKinnon? Is that you?"

A voice as soft as the whisper of a breeze alerted her. Deirdre turned; Charlene was already awake. She was sitting up on her sickbed, and it occurred to Deirdre just how composed she was. They might share the same looks, but the vibe between them could not have been more different. Unlike her, Charlene felt like a natural princess born to be nurtured by a man's love and devotion.

"Miss... McKinney..." Deirdre called out. Just parting her chapped lips to speak hurt.

She did not know how to feel about Charlene. Was she jealous? Well, it felt as though even being jealous of her was beyond her status. Deirdre was too low in the mud to compete with Charlene in any way, was she not?

She envied her. She envied the privilege Charlene held—the privilege to be loved by Brendan Brighthall.

Charlene flashed her a smile. "Call me Lena. It's the nickname Brendan gave me," she replied. "He gave you a world of trouble for my sake, didn't he? I'm so sorry you had to live through that for two years."

"It's n-nothing," Deirdre huffed quietly. Charlene's show of kindness only made meeting her gaze even more difficult. "We... We were just using each other."

"Huh," Charlene hummed, her lips curling. Her eyes fell on Deirdre's abdomen before they darkened. "And one of the ways you used him was by doing whatever it took to have him enter you."

Deirdre was stunned. It felt like a punch. Before she could react, however, Charlene suddenly grinned. "I was kidding! Can you pass me a glass of water, Miss McKinnon?"

"A-Alright." Her head was spinning from the aftermath, but Deirdre forced herself to reach out for the mug on the bedside table. She was about to pass it to Charlene when the latter suddenly slapped it away from her.

"It hurts!" she shrieked.

Boiling water scalded Deirdre's hand, and the pain drained any faint color she had on her face. She hardly had the time to wonder why Charlene had done that when a blurry figure emerged from the door.

A force knocked Deirdre off her bed, making her crash on the floor.

"What the f*ck are you doing?!" she heard someone say. She lifted her head and saw Charlene snuggling in Brendan's arms, his face pale from panic and concern. It was as if he wished the two of them could merge into one, especially if it meant he could protect her forever.

Charlene's eyes reddened. "I-It was nothing, B-Bren. She was just worried, you know? I get it—now that I'm awake, she's gonna lose it all. She just wanted to warn me about stepping out of line," she said. "I really wish I could tell her that she didn't have to do that. I'll always honor your choice, Bren, even if that choice isn't me. I'll leave the two of you alone."

"Her? My choice?!" Brendan growled, glowering at Deirdre as though he was hoping his look alone could tear her apart. "Over my dead body! She has never been a choice—she was just a f*cking bitch I called when I felt like it!"