

#### 41: She's Already Gained the Upper Hand

"Caitlin! Let's talk in the study!"

By now, Quade was beginning to show some wariness toward her. He gestured for her to follow, and Caitlin calmly followed him to the study.

Audrey, seeing that Quade actually agreed to speak privately with Caitlin, was fuming. "Quade, what are you doing? What could possibly be so secretive? Why take that woman to the study?"

"Enough, Audrey! Wait here for me," Quade snapped, turning his back and leading Caitlin away.

Audrey, left behind, could barely contain her rage. What kind of game was Caitlin playing? What was she going to say to Quade? And what happened ten years ago on June 22nd?

In the study, Quade's posture was no longer as commanding. He appeared slightly uneasy, his usual authoritative air faltering. He lowered his voice and said, "Caitlin, what exactly are you playing at?"

Caitlin coolly met his gaze. "Mr. Gray, you'll understand soon enough. Ten years ago, on June 22nd, what exactly happened in this very room, Mr. Gray? I assume I don't need to go into detail."

The revelation about that event from a decade ago had come to Caitlin through an anonymous tip-off.

She smiled coldly. "If I were to reveal everything you did back then to the police, what do you think would happen? Who would end up discredited and disgraced?"

Quade's heart began to race. He didn't know exactly how much Caitlin

knew, but if she truly knew the full extent of what had happened ten years ago, his reputation—and perhaps his entire life—could be ruined.

"You wouldn't dare!" he growled through clenched teeth.

"I dare. What do I have to lose? I'm just a nobody. My reputation's already been tarnished by Audrey, and compared to your powerful position, what's the big deal?"

Caitlin's voice was ice-cold. She and Quade locked eyes, and after a tense moment, Quade hissed through his teeth, "If you dare reveal anything, I'll make sure you never leave here alive. You won't make it out of The Gray Family's door today!"

Slap!

Caitlin slammed her hand onto the desk, her voice as hard as steel. "Mr. Gray, it was your family that started this. You bullied a defenseless child and now you want me to apologize? How is that fair? And now you want to threaten my life?"

Her words rang out with chilling authority, the room feeling heavy with her murderous intent.

"You think I'm easy to push around just because I'm a woman? I've already put my life on the line coming here today. You think I fear The Gray Family? Do you think I fear you, Quade?"

Her gaze turned icy, and she leaned in, her voice low and dangerous. "You, Quade, have positioned yourself as a man of integrity to the public, but who knows that behind this study's walls, you've been hiding over a hundred million in cash? Where did that money come from? Should I help you figure that out?"

Caitlin's words struck like a lightning bolt. She had done her homework before coming to confront Quade. She knew exactly what skeletons he had hidden, and now she was going to use them to her advantage.

Quade froze, his mouth opening and closing in shock. Sweat began to bead on his forehead. How did this woman know? How did she know about the hidden cash behind his study wall?

Caitlin could see the panic in his eyes. She had already gained the upper hand.

She continued, "Don't worry, Mr. Gray. I'm not here to expose your dirty secrets, nor do I care to. I'm not interested in any of it."

Quade, still reeling from the shock, stammered, "Then... what do you want from me?"

"I'm still the same," Caitlin said calmly. "Your wife and son bullied Howard. I want them to apologize at The Vanderbilt Family, and I want you to stop your attacks on Vanderbilt Enterprises Group."

"If you agree to that, I guarantee you'll keep your position and even rise further in power. Otherwise..."

Quade was cornered. After a long pause, he finally agreed, "Fine! I'll do it. I'll have them apologize."

The study door creaked open, and Audrey stumbled in, almost falling into the room. She had been eavesdropping, trying to figure out what Caitlin and Quade had been talking about.

"Quade, what did she say to you?" Audrey demanded, pulling Quade aside.

Quade looked at his wife with a mixture of disbelief and frustration. "Caitlin told me everything. You and our son were the ones who went too far, insulting a child, and you didn't even discipline him properly! So, you're going to The Vanderbilt Family with our son to apologize."

"What? You want me to apologize to them?" Audrey looked as if she had been struck by lightning, utterly dumbfounded.

"I know it's hard, but it's what we have to do," Quade responded, his voice hardening.

Caitlin had already made her exit, striding confidently past Audrey.

"Mr. Gray, I'll leave you to it," Caitlin said, walking past Audrey with her back straight.

As Caitlin walked through the living room, everyone in The Gray Family watched her leave, none of them daring to stop her.

Once she was gone, Audrey erupted. "Quade, what's going on? What did she say to you? I thought you were helping me! Why are you asking me to apologize?"

"Enough! Apologize and stop questioning me. There's no more to say!"

Audrey, still fuming, hissed, "I know it. She must have said something to you. Did you two do something together? What exactly did you do with her, Quade?" 1

She grabbed Quade's collar, shaking him.

Quade shoved her away, and without warning, slapped her across the face. Slap!

Audrey stood frozen, stunned, as her head snapped to the side.

"You hit me?"

"Calm down! Don't make things worse. She has dirt on me, and she could destroy everything. If you don't want me to fall from grace, go apologize to Caitlin and The Vanderbilt Family!"

Audrey stood there, speechless. Caitlin had something on Quade? And now Quade was scared of her?

She couldn't believe it. How had Caitlin gained so much power? Even Quade was afraid of her?

Outside The Gray Family mansion, Caitlin walked out.

Xavi, waiting nearby, saw her come out unscathed and hurried over. "Caitlin!"

"Xavi, what are you doing here?"

"Mr. Vanderbilt wasn't sure about the situation, so he sent me to check on you. How did it go? Did they give you trouble?"

"No, everything went smoothly. They were very polite," Caitlin replied, her voice calm.

Xavi smiled, relieved, and said, "That's good. Please, let me drive you back."

"No need. I have someone else to meet. You can head back."

With that, Caitlin walked toward a waiting Bentley. As she got in, the car quickly drove off.



Xavi watched in shock as the luxury vehicle disappeared down the street. Whose car was that? Where was she going?

Back at The Vanderbilt Family mansion, Xavi reported back to Sebastian.

"You're saying she left The Gray Family, said she was going to meet someone, and then got into a Bentley?" Sebastian's voice was thick with confusion.

"Yes, Mr. Vanderbilt," Xavi confirmed.

"Was it a young man? Tall, handsome, rich?"

"Exactly."

Sebastian fell silent, his mind racing. Caitlin had mentioned liking younger men before, but was she really going on a date with one now?

He clenched his fists, a sharp pang of jealousy surging in his chest. "Did you follow her? Where is she going?"

Xavi hesitated, sensing the tension. "Mr. Vanderbilt, I didn't follow her. I assumed you would want to know, but it's clear you have a lot on your mind."

Sebastian, looking unnervingly anxious, snapped, "Get out, now!"