A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 341

Rest

Amber POV

Twelve hours.

Jason drove for twelve hours without stopping.

Not once.

The sun had disappeared and risen again while we crossed highways, mountains, and empty roads, yet he never asked me to take the wheel.

He simply kept driving.

I had offered at least twenty times.

“Jason, let me drive for a while.”

“I’m fine.”

That was always his answer.

“I’m fine.”

But he wasn’t.

I could see it in the dark circles under his eyes and in the way his hands gripped the steering wheel so tightly that his knuckles had turned white hours ago.

And somehow, the children understood.

Alice, who usually complained after twenty minutes in the car, hadn’t said a word.

Alex hadn’t asked to stop, either.

Not even for the bathroom.

They sat quietly in the back, curled up beneath blankets, occasionally glancing out the windows whenever we passed another car.

They were scared.

Terrified.

And it broke my heart. 1

Because this was exactly what I had wanted to avoid.

The court hearings.

The reporters.

The threats.

The bomb.

The fear.

I had wanted to protect them from all of it.

Instead, they were suffering because of battles they couldn't even understand.

Asome point during the drive, Alice had climbed onto Alex's seat and fallen asleep against his shoulder.

Alex stayed awake for another hour, gently holding her hand before eventually drifting off himself.

They looked so small.

Too small to be carrying the weight of secrets that belonged to generations before them.

I looked away before Jason noticed the tears gathering in my eyes.

"They'll be okay."

His voice startled me.

"You don't know that."

He kept his eyes on the road.

"No."

He sighed.

“But we’ll make sure they are.”

For the first time in twelve hours, I saw his expression soften as he looked at the rearview mirror.

“We have to.”

The gates of the castle finally appeared on the horizon just after dawn.

For the first time since leaving the airport, I felt my body relax.

Home.

At least for now.

The guards immediately opened the gates, and Jason drove straight to the main entrance.

Before the engine had even stopped, the front doors opened.

Mrs. Sun practically ran down the stairs.

The moment Alice saw her, she burst into tears.

“Grandma!”

Mrs. Sun pulled both children into her arms, her expression immediately changing when she noticed how quiet they were.

“My babies…”

She kissed Alice’s forehead and wrapped an arm around Alex.

“You’re home.”

Alex tried to smile.

“We’re okay.”

The adults exchanged looks.

He was six years old.

Children his age weren’t supposed to reassure adults that they were okay.

Mrs. Sun finally looked at Jason and me.

“You both look exhausted.”

Jason stepped out of the Hummer and stretched his back.

“I think I forgot what sleep feels like.”

Mrs. Sun frowned.

“Did you stop at all?”

I laughed weakly.

“Not once.”

She stared at Jason in disbelief.

“You drove for twelve hours straight?”

Jason shrugged.

“I wasn’t leaving them alone.”

Mrs. Sun didn’t argue.

For once, even she seemed too shaken.

As the staff carried our bags inside, Mrs. Sun walked beside me.

“Oh, before I forget.”

I looked at her.

“The parents and children at school have been asking when your next classes will be.”

I blinked, momentarily confused.

“My classes?”

She smiled softly.

“The safety classes, the investment workshops, the little talks you’ve been giving the students.”

For a moment, I almost laughed.

The outside world had exploded.

People were trying to kill us.

And somehow, children still wanted to know when I would return to teach them.

The thought made my chest ache.

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“It’ll have to wait.”

Mrs, Sun frowned.

“Why?”

I hesitated for a moment.

“Mr. Stait asked for my help.”

“The military summoned me.”

Mrs. Sun stopped walking.

“The military?”

I nodded.

“I don’t know exactly what they need yet.”

“Just that I’ll be helping them.”

She looked as though she wanted to object, but after everything that had happened, she simply sighed.

“Promise me you’ll be careful.”

I squeezed her hand.

“I promise.”

After making sure the children had eaten something and fallen asleep in their rooms, I finally sat on the edge of our bed and called Emory.

He answered after the second ring.

“Please tell me you made it home.”

“We just arrived.”

I heard him exhale on the other end.

“Good.”

I leaned against the headboard.

“So, when do I leave?”

Emory laughed quietly.

“Straight to business, huh?”

“Someone tried to blow up my family yesterday. Forgive me if I’m impatient.”

He was silent for a moment.

“You’ll receive instructions within the next two days.”

“Two days?”

“Yes.”

I frowned.

And until then?”

“Rest.”

I almost laughed.

“Emory, have you met my life?”

“I’m serious, Amber.”

His voice softened.

“You’ve been through a trial, a twelve-hour drive, and someone tried to kill your family.”

“Spend time with your children.”

“Sleep.”

“Let Jason sleep.”

I glanced toward the bathroom, where Jason was taking a shower.

“I don’t think either of us knows how to do that anymore.”

Emory was quiet for a few seconds.

“Then learn.”

The line disconnected shortly afterward.

I placed my phone on the nightstand and stared at the ceiling.

Rest.

The word sounded foreign.

Down the hall, Alice was probably having nightmares.

Alex was probably pretending he wasn’t scared.

Jason was carrying guilt that didn’t belong to him.

And somewhere out there, someone had decided that my family should die.

I closed my eyes.

Two days.

For the next two days, I would pretend that we were safe.

But deep down, I already knew the truth.

The war had only just begun.

Flamethrower

Amber POV

The castle was silent.

For the first time in days, there were no reporters outside the gates, no lawyers calling every ten minutes, no helicopters following us from above.

Only silence.

I had spent the evening checking on the children every hour.

Alice had kicked her blanket onto the floor at some point, while Alex was sleeping with the bedside lamp still on.

Neither of them wanted the darkness anymore.

Neither of them wanted to be alone.

I couldn't blame them.

By the time I returned to our room, Jason had just stepped out of the shower.

He looked exhausted.

Not the kind of exhaustion that sleep could fix.

The kind that settled into your bones after too much fear, too much guilt, and too many sleepless nights.

He sat on the edge of the bed to remove his watch, but halfway through the movement, his shoulders slumped forward.

For a second, I genuinely thought he was going to fall.

"Jason?"

He let out a tired laugh.

"I'm fine."

"That's the third time you've said that today."

"I know."

He leaned back against the headboard and closed his eyes.

Without saying a word, I climbed into bed beside him and rested my head against his shoulder.

For several minutes, neither of us spoke.

The silence wasn't uncomfortable.

It was simply the silence of two people who had run out of energy.

Finally, Jason broke it.

“I’m sorry.”

I lifted my head to look at him.

“For what?”

stared at the ceiling.

“For everything.”

1 frowned.

“Jason-”

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He swallowed hard.

“Ever since I proposed that marriage agreement, your life has been chaos.”

I opened my mouth to interrupt him, but he continued.

“You went from fighting with your grandfather to fighting my family.”

“Then Oscar and Amelie.”

“Then the board.”

“Then Nicole.”

“Then the Solys.”

“Then the Vincents.”

He laughed bitterly.

“And now, apparently, we’re uncovering an international trafficking organization.”

I couldn’t help smiling a little.

“When you put it like that, it does sound ridiculous.”

Jason shook his head.

“You were supposed to have a simple contract marriage.”

“Instead, someone tried to blow up the plane.”

I looked down at my stomach.

“Our plane, Mr. Sun. We are married, remember?”

He sighed and looked away.

“I dragged you into this mess.”

For a moment, I simply stared at him.

Then, despite everything-despite the exhaustion, the fear, and the tears I had shed over the past few days-I started laughing. 1

Not elegant laughter.

The kind of exhausted, half-delirious laughter that escapes when life becomes too absurd to process.

Jason looked at me, confused.

What’s so funny?”

I wiped away a tear.

“Do you remember what I told you?”

He frowned, trying to think.

“You said a lot of things.”

I smiled.

“I told you that if I was going to marry someone, I wanted something real. I wanted someone who would stand with me when everything was on fire. Someone who wouldn’t run away. Someone either pulled me out of the flames when I was hurting or made the flames rise even higher.”

Jason finally remembered and laughed softly.

“You did say that.”

I shifted closer to him.

“And you didn’t just stay when everything caught fire.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“What did I do?”

I rested my chin on his chest and smiled.

“You brought the military-grade flamethrower with you.”

For the first time that night, Jason genuinely laughed.

The sound echoed softly through the room.

“That’s unfair.”

“Is it?”

“You make it sound like I’m responsible for the explosions.”

I looked at him.

“Jason, you literally called the military, arrested fake pilots, found a bomb, and ordered an armored Hummer in the same afternoon.”

I poked his chest.

“You brought excitement into my life. Before you, I was working behind a desk, trying to rebuild my life after leaving a company that I helped create with your half-brother.”

I shook my head, half laughing.

“You made me live again.”

Jason stayed quiet for a moment, genuinely considering my words.

Then the corner of his mouth lifted.

Okay, maybe you have a point.”

He pulled me closer against his chest.

“Life was definitely less interesting without you.”

“Interesting?” I laughed. “That’s the word you’re going with? Not dangerous? Not chaotic? Not life-threatening?”

He pretended to think. 1

“Interesting sounds more romantic.”

“You’re impossible, Mr. Sun.”

“And yet, you married me.”

He smiled, but I could still see the guilt hiding behind his eyes.

“I’m serious, Amber. Sometimes I think about what your life would have been like if I had never proposed that

contract.”

I rested my hand against his cheek.

“I know exactly what my life would have been like.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“Oh?”

“I would have kept hiding behind work. I would have buried myself in meetings and spreadsheets and convinced myself that surviving was the same thing as living.”

I intertwined my fingers with his.

“Then you arrived with your military-grade flamethrower and set my entire life on fire.”

Jason laughed.

“That sounds strangely romantic and deeply concerning at the same time.”

“That’s basically our marriage.”

I laughed again and buried my face against his shoulder.

For a few minutes, we simply stayed there, holding each other.

Then his voice became quiet.

“Are you scared?”

The question hung in the darkness between us.

I thought about Alice crying in the airport.

About Alex pretending to be brave.

About the bomb beneath the plane.

About the twins growing inside me.

Terrified.”

Jason wrapped his arms around me.

“Me too.”

I closed my eyes. 1

“I don’t think I can do this alone anymore.”

He kissed the top of my head.

“Good.”

I looked up at him.

“Good?”

“Because you’re not alone.”

His hand moved gently to my stomach.

“We’re in this together.”

“You, me, Alice, Alex, Iris, Rose, the twins…”

He smiled weakly.

“And apparently half the military.”

I laughed quietly.

“Don’t forget Grandpa Asher. He’d be offended.”

“And my grandmother.”

“And Marcus.”

“And Emory.”

I shook my head.

“We have the strangest family in existence.”

Jason smiled.

“Maybe.”

Then his expression softened.

“But it’s ours.”

Outside, the wind rattled against the castle windows.

Somewhere in the distance, guards changed shifts.

Tomorrow, the problems would still be there.

The secrets.

The enemies.

The fear.

But for one night, lying in Jason’s arms, listening to his heartbeat and feeling our children safe under the same roof, I allowed myself to believe that maybe, just maybe, we would survive this.

Even if everything around us was burning.

At least we had each other.

And apparently, a military-grade flamethrower.

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Chapter 343

Bonus

Behind the computer

Amber POV

Two days after we returned to Sum, my phone rang while I was going through the twins' medical appointments.

I didn't even need to look at the screen.

"Mr. Stait?"

"Good morning, Amber."

I smiled and put the tablet aside.

"Please tell me you're finally calling with instructions. Jason volunteered me before even asking if I wanted to join.

Mr. Stait laughed on the other side of the line.

"He was surprisingly enthusiastic."

"Of course he was. He gets to sit comfortably in his office while I get recruited by the military."

"I'm sure he would disagree with that description."

I narrowed my eyes, immediately suspicious.

"That's exactly the kind of answer that makes me think he's hiding something."

Mr. Stait chuckled.

"Maybe."

I sat back in my chair.

"So, what are my orders?"

"There will be an international reconnaissance exercise in the Pacific. The best candidates from each allied

country will participate.”

“A military exercise?”

“Think of it as an oversized game of capture the flag.”

“That sounds suspiciously dangerous.”

“It is.”

I sighed.

“Go on.”

“The teams will be deployed across an abandoned island. Their objective is to gather intelligence, locate strategic positions, avoid enemy patrols, and recover targets hidden across the island.”

“And my role?”

“You’ll remain at headquarters.”

I instinctively placed a hand over my stomach.

“Good answer.”

You’re four months pregnant, Amber. You’re not setting foot on that island.”

“So I’ll be behind a computer?”

“Exactly. Analysis, satellite imagery, communication, strategy.”

I smiled.

“So, the fun part.”

“That’s one way to describe it.”

There was a brief silence before Mr. Stait added casually, “It’s possible that Jason was already recruited by Sum military years ago.”

I nearly dropped my phone.

“What?”

“We’re not completely sure, but there are records suggesting he participated in several operations.”

“And he never thought to mention that to his wife?”

“Apparently not.”

I looked toward Jason’s office.

The man had survived bomb attempts, international scandals, custody battles, and somehow still managed to keep secrets from me.

A smile slowly spread across my face.

“If he’s participating too, this is going to be much more entertaining.”

Mr. Stait laughed.

“I had a feeling you’d say that.”

“When do I leave?”

“The day after tomorrow.”

“Finally.”

“You already accepted the mission two weeks ago, Amber. You’ve been impatiently waiting for instructions ever since.”

“That’s because your military has an unhealthy obsession with suspense.”

“We prefer to call it operational secrecy.”

“Same thing.”

The rest of the day, I focused on organizing everything for the children.

Mrs. Sun immediately volunteered to stay at the castle.

Grandfather Asher announced that he would practically move in until I returned.

Marcus increased security around the estate.

Emory promised that the base was safer than most capitals.

Meanwhile, I had a much more important mission.

Finding evidence that my husband was secretly going to that island.

I found maps spread across his office desk.

“Planning to invade a neighboring country?”

Jason didn’t even look up.

“New shipping routes.”

Suspicious.

Later, I caught him reviewing weather reports for the Pacific.

“Interesting weather for someone who supposedly has no plans to leave Sum.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“Business trip.’

“Business trips usually don’t involve satellite maps.”

“Depends on the business.”

The man was infuriating.

That night, while he showered, I shamelessly searched through his desk.

Financial reports.

Contracts.

A notebook filled with numbers.

Nothing military.

Absolutely nothing.

“Most wives knock before conducting an investigation.”

I jumped and quickly closed the drawer.

“I wasn’t investigating.”

Jason crossed his arms.

“Oh?”

“I was auditing your office.”

He laughed.

“And what did the audit reveal?”

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Behind the computer

I smiled innocently.

That my husband is suspicious.”

He kissed my forehead.

“You’re imagining things.”

“That’s exactly what a guilty person would say.”

He laughed but never denied it.

Which only made me more suspicious.

Two days later, I stood outside the castle entrance with my bags ready.

Alice wrapped her arms around my waist.

“You’re coming back soon, right?”

I kissed her forehead.

“Very soon.”

Alex looked at me seriously.

“Will you really just be behind a computer?”

“That’s the plan.”

He narrowed his eyes. 1

“That’s what Dad says before everything explodes.”

I couldn’t stop laughing.

“Fair point.”

Mrs. Sun adjusted my jacket for the fifth time.

“Call every day.”

“I promise.”

Grandfather Asher hugged me tightly.

“Don’t let anyone boss you around.”

“I’ll do my best.”

Finally, I turned toward Jason.

He was standing a few steps away, hands in his pockets, looking far too calm for someone who was definitely hiding something.

I walked up to him.

“One last chance to confess.”

He smiled.

Noting the computin

“Confess what?”

That you’re secretly going to the Pacific.”

He leaned down and kissed my forehead.

“Amber, you’re watching too many spy movies.”

“Jason, someone literally tried to blow us up last week. We are living in a spy movie.”

That actually made him laugh.

“Have fun behind your computer.”

I narrowed my eyes.

“You too.”

For the briefest moment, he froze.

Only for a second.

But I noticed.

And as the military car drove away from the castle, I smiled to myself.

Jason Sun was definitely hiding something.

The only question was whether I would discover it before the exercise started... or after I beat him at his own game.

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mber POV

The military SUV arrived just after sunrise.

I kissed Alice and Alex goodbye one last time before stepping out of the castle, my bag hanging from one shoulder.

Jason stood beside me, one hand resting on my lower back

“Call me when you arrive.”

I smiled.

“You’re saying that as if I’m going to war.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“Knowing your luck, that’s still a possibility.”

“Comforting.”

He kissed my forehead before opening the door for me.

As I climbed into the vehicle, something caught my attention.

A white SUV was parked near the outer wall of the castle, partially hidden behind a row of trees.

It was too far away to recognize the driver, but close enough to make my stomach twist.

“Jason.”

He immediately followed my gaze.

“I see it.”

“Do you think-”

“I don’t know.”

His expression darkened.

“But they’re trying very hard not to be seen.”

Emory leaned out of the driver’s seat.

“We’ve already had people watching them since dawn.”

I blinked.

“You knew?”

Mr. Stait laughed from the passenger seat.

“Amber, after someone tried to blow up your plane, we don’t exactly leave things to chance anymore.”

That was reassuring.

Only slightly terrifying, but reassuring.

Jason squeezed my hand.

Be careful.”

“You too.”

For a brief moment, neither of us moved.

Then Emory cleared his throat dramatically.

“If the married couple is done acting like they’re in a romance movie, we have a six-hour drive ahead of us.”

I rolled my eyes and climbed into the SUV.

The first hour passed quietly.

Mr. Stait reviewed files while Emory drove, occasionally pointing out military checkpoints along the road.

I was halfway through reading the competition rules when the SUV stopped in front of a small bus station.

A girl climbed inside.

She couldn’t have been older than eighteen.

She wore black cargo pants, black boots, and a black jacket despite the heat outside.

At first glance, she looked delicate, almost fragile.

At second glance, she looked terrifying.

The kind of terrifying that came from absolute confidence.

Her dark eyes immediately scanned the vehicle before landing on me.

“You’re Amber?”

I nodded.

“Jasmine?”

She smirked.

“The pregnant billionaire. Nice to meet you.”

I laughed.

“Likewise.”

Without another word, she sat beside the window and crossed her arms.

Dangerous.

That was the first word that came to mind.

Dangerous and incredibly young.

Thirty minutes later, we stopped again.

This time, a man wearing sunglasses climbed inside.

I almost choked.

Wait.”

He removed his glasses and smiled politely.

“Please don’t tell me you recognized me from those terrible tabloids.”

I stared at him.

“Daniel Jones?”

The actor laughed.

“Guilty.”

He couldn’t have been older than twenty-six.

Every entertainment magazine in the country had written about him at some point.

Yet, somehow, here he was, boarding a military vehicle.

“I have so many questions.”

“You’ll have to wait until we’re officially teammates.”

Before I could answer, Emory stopped one last time.

The final passenger stepped inside.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, and carried himself with the kind of balance that immediately told me he was dangerous.

Not flashy.

Not intimidating.

Just dangerous.

He couldn’t have been older than thirty.

His eyes swept through the SUV before he nodded politely.

“Noah.”

Jasmine immediately moved her backpack off the seat next to her.

He sat down silently.

The atmosphere inside the vehicle shifted.

Jasmine looked dangerous.

Noah looked lethal.

An hour later, Mr. Stait finally turned around in his seat.

“Since all four of you are here, I might as well explain why I picked you up personally.”

Daniel straightened immediately.

“You’ve already assigned teams?”

Mr. Stait nodded.

“Not officially.”

Jasmine frowned.

“Then why are we together?”

“Because I want the four of you on the same team.”

Nobody objected.

That surprised me.

Daniel shrugged.

“Works for me.”

Jasmine simply nodded.

Noah crossed his arms.

“No complaints.”

Mr. Stait smiled.

“Good.”

He opened a folder and continued.

“Eight countries are participating.”

“Each country will send four teams.”

I quickly did the math.

“That’s thirty-two teams.”

“Correct.”

“And each team has four members.”

Mr. Stait nodded.

“A medic.”

Daniel raised his hand.

“That’s me.”

“A digital specialist who will act as guide and strategist.”

Everyone looked at me.

I sighed.

“Apparently, that’s me.”

“An offense specialist.”

Jasmine smiled.

“My favorite role.”

“And finally, defense.”

Noah simply nodded.

Emory laughed.

“You four are going to be interesting.”

Mr. Stait pointed at me.

“Introductions.”

I sighed dramatically.

“Fine.”

I straightened in my seat.

“Amber Asher. Businesswoman, analyst, accidental military recruit, four months pregnant.”

Daniel laughed.

“That’s certainly an introduction.”

Jasmine smirked.

“At least you’re honest.”

She leaned forward.

“Jasmine Park. Combat specialist.”

“You mean offense specialist?” Daniel asked.

She smiled sweetly. 1

“I mean offense specialist.”

For some reason, that answer terrified me.

Noah spoke next.

“Noah Reyes. Martial artist. Defense.”

Short.

Simple.

Terrifying. 1

Daniel pointed at himself.

“Daniel Jones. Actor, medic, and apparently the only normal person here.”

The entire SUV burst into laughter.

Jasmine looked at him.

“You’re an actor in a military competition.”

Daniel thought for a moment.

“Fair point.”

Two hours later, the gates of River City Military Base appeared in front of us.

Dozens of vehicles moved in every direction.

Soldiers ran across training fields.

Helicopters crossed the sky.

The moment we stepped out of the SUV, every conversation around us seemed to stop.

More specifically, every pair of eyes dropped to my stomach.

Daniel blinked.

“Wait.” 1

He looked at Emory.

“She’s actually pregnant?”

“Very much so,” Emory replied.

Noah immediately grabbed my bag before I could protest.

Jasmine stepped to my left.

Daniel moved to my right.

I looked around, confused.

“What are you three doing?”

Jasmine shrugged.

“Protecting the pregnant woman.”

“I’m not fragile.”

Daniel laughed.

“That’s exactly what someone carrying twins would say.”

Noah glanced at me.

“Middle.”

“What?”

“You’re walking in the middle.”

I opened my mouth to argue.

Then I looked at the three of them.

The dangerous eighteen-year-old.

The actor medic.

The martial artist built like a tank.

And somehow, all three had silently agreed to surround me.

For the first time since arriving, I laughed.

“Well, this is going to be interesting.”

None of them disagreed.

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 345

Volunteered my wife

Jason POV

An international military competition had been the last thing on my mind.

The president himself had called me two weeks earlier.

It hadn't been an order.

It had been a favor.

"Sum needs its best people."

That was what he had said.

Of course, I had tried to refuse.

I had a company to run, a wife who was four months pregnant, two children who had nearly died in a plane explosion, and an international scandal following my family.

Apparently, none of those reasons mattered.

"The country needs you."

I hated when politicians used that sentence.

So I had accepted.

The moment Mr. Stait told me that he had a job for me, I immediately thought it had something to do with the plane, the trafficking investigation, or the people who had tried to kill my family, I hadn't even considered that it could be the same competition.

Honestly, I had suggested Amber mostly because she was restless.

For two days, she had been wandering around the castle, reorganizing documents, redesigning school schedules, and terrifying the accounting department with "small improvements."

Keeping Amber busy was practically a public service.

Then, two days ago, I saw Mr. Stait's SUV arriving at the castle.

And Amber climbing inside.

That was the moment I realized my mistake.

She was competing too.

And I had lied to her.

Not because I wanted to deceive her, but because I didn't want her to worry.

Now, sitting in my office, I was significantly more worried about Amber's reaction when she discovered the truth than about the competition itself.

At least I had one advantage.

I knew almost every military player in River City.

And, according to the information I had received, Amber would remain behind a computer in the command center.

away from the actual field exercise.

Hopefully.

The sound of an engine outside interrupted my thoughts.

I walked toward the window and immediately recognized the white SUV parked in front of the castle

The president stepped out.

Of course.

Because apparently, my life couldn't be normal for even a single week.

Behind him emerged another man in his fifties, dressed in military uniform.

The president smiled as soon as he saw me.

"Mr. Jason Sun."

"Mr. President."

He shook my hand.

"I hope you're ready."

"That depends entirely on what you mean by ready."

He laughed.

"Good answer."

The man beside him stepped forward.

“Greg Peterson. Secretary of Defense.”

We shook hands.

“Nice to meet you.”

Peterson nodded.

“Likewise. We have a lot to discuss.”

A few minutes later, we were sitting at the Sums military conference room.

The president placed several files on the table.

“We’ve assigned your team.”

I opened the first folder.

Three generals.

Three people who, somehow, expected me to lead them.

Peterson sat across from me.

“We’d like you to act as the guide and strategist.”

Rooked up.

“You want me to direct three generals?”

The president smiled.

“We’re asking you to direct one team.”

“That’s somehow worse.”

Peterson laughed.

He made a call and fifteen minutes later, my team was sitting down.

“Let’s start with introductions.”

He pointed toward the woman sitting to my right.

“General Elena Vasquez. Defense specialist.”

She looked to be in her early thirties, athletic, with short black hair and the expression of someone who had broken bones professionally.

She crossed her arms.

“I protect people.”

“Good to know.”

Peterson pointed toward the man across from me.

“General Samuel Carter. Medic.”

He looked to be around forty, calm and collected.

“I’ll try to keep everyone alive.”

“A comforting goal.”

The last man smiled.

“General Marcus Reed.”

He couldn’t have been older than thirty-five.

“Offense specialist.”

Elena immediately rolled her eyes.

“Translation: he enjoys explosions.”

Marcus shrugged.

“Explosions solve many problems.”

I leaned back in my chair, this was going to be a long day.

We were taking to the briefing room, were the other three teams were allready waiting.

My team members were joking and laughing, nothing like the generals I was accustomed at the River City base.

m starting to think Amber would get along with all of you.”

Peterson smiled. 1

“Speaking of your wife…”

That sentence immediately worried me.

He stood and addressed not only us, but the other three teams.

“Eight countries are participating.”

The room fell silent.

“Each country will send four teams.”

A map appeared on the screen.

Peterson pointed toward Starlite. 1

“Alexander Vincent will participate as Starlite’s offense specialist.”

The entire room exchanged glances.

I frowned.

“Alexander?”

Peterson nodded.

“He specifically requested the position.”

Interesting.

Very interesting.

The president crossed his arms.

“Starlite considers this competition politically important.”

Peterson looked directly at me.

“At the moment, we consider two participants to be the greatest threats.”

The screen changed.

Amber’s photograph appeared on the left.

Alexander’s on the right.

I nearly laughed.

“My pregnant wife is considered one of your greatest rivals?”

Peterson stared at me.

“Jason, your pregnant wife created a financial algorithm that exposed three shell corporations in less than an hour.”

“She also hacked into a private network to save your children.”

frankly, we’re more afraid of Amber than we are of Alexander.”

The entire room laughed.

I shook my head.

“She’ll never let me hear the end of this.”

“Probably not.”

Peterson narrowed his eyes.

“Actually, we didn’t even contact Amber at first.”

I blinked.

“What?”

“She’s pregnant.”

“Naturally, we assumed she wouldn’t participate.”

The president snorted.

“Then Mr. Stait informed us that Jason Sun had volunteered his wife for military duty.”

The entire room turned toward me.

I immediately raised both hands.

“In my defense, I didn’t know it was this competition.”

Elena laughed.

“So, let me get this straight.”

“You accidentally volunteered your pregnant billionaire wife for an international military showdown?”

“When you say it like that, it sounds bad.”

Marcus burst out laughing.

“When do you think she’ll find out you’re competing too?”

I leaned back in my chair and stared at the ceiling.

Honestly?

+15 Behus

I wasn’t afraid of thirty-one enemy teams.

I wasn’t afraid of Alexander Vincent.

I wasn’t even afraid of losing the competition.

I was afraid of Amber Asher discovering that I had lied to her.

Because surviving an international military exercise sounded significantly easier than surviving my wife’s anger.

+15 8chus

He’s dead

Amber POV

The four teams from River City had been trapped inside the military auditorium for almost two hours.

Apparently, “waiting for assignments” in military language meant “stand around and socialize while people in another room decide your fate.””

Jasmine had disappeared somewhere fifteen minutes earlier, Noah was quietly reading through the competition rules, and Daniel had somehow managed to gather a crowd around him simply by existing.

Meanwhile, I was wandering around the auditorium when I recognized a familiar group near the coffee machines.

John.

And several of the soldiers Jason had introduced me to at the bar months ago.

“Amber!”

John walked over and hugged me carefully, avoiding my stomach.

“Is my boy here too?”

I laughed.

“Nope. Sum recruited him first.”

That immediately caught everyone’s attention.

“He what?”

“He was still trying to hide it from me when I left the castle, but I’m pretty sure he’ll be representing Sum.”

The entire group burst into laughter.

“Poor Jason.”

“He’s more afraid of your reaction than of the competition.”

“Honestly, that’s reasonable.”

I shook my head.

“He should know by now that I’ll figure it out eventually.”

One of the technicians who had helped Alex locate the missing teenagers raised his hand.

“We should recruit Alex next year.”

Another man immediately smacked the back of his head.

“There’s an age restriction, genius.”

“Right. Nobody under eighteen.”

I laughed.

“My son is six years old.”

“Details.”

Besides,” I added, “Alex shouldn’t be exposed to this kind of stress.”

The technician nodded seriously.

“Fair.”

I crossed my arms.

“He also has classes.”

That earned me several confused looks.

At that exact moment, Jasmine appeared beside us.

She raised an eyebrow.

“Wait, you’re more concerned about his classes than the possibility of him joining the military?”

I chuckled.

“Honestly? If he were here with me, at least I would know he was safe.”

Jasmine blinked.

“That’s not the answer I expected.”

I shrugged.

“I wouldn’t actually have a problem with either of my kids participating, provided they stayed in the same room

as me.”

Daniel, who had joined us at some point, laughed.

“That sounds incredibly unhealthy.”

I pointed toward the giant screen hanging above the stage.

“This exercise is supposed to happen without casualties, right?”

“That’s the idea,” Noah replied.

“Then I’d probably worry more if they skipped school.”

The actor laughed.

“You sound exactly like my mother.”

I grinned.

“I’ll take that as a compliment.”

Daniel smiled.

“She would absolutely love you.”

Before I could answer, the auditorium lights dimmed.

Every conversation stopped instantly.

Mr. Stait had stepped onto the stage with a microphone in his hand.

he military effect was immediate.

Hundreds of people fell silent.

I had to admit, it was impressive.

“Good morning, everyone.”

The giant screen behind him lit up.

“As all of you know, River City will send four teams to the Pacific exercise.”

The room remained perfectly silent.

“However, I want all of you to remember something important.”

He looked around the auditorium.

“You are not competing for personal glory.”

The screen changed to display River City’s flag.

“The winning team will not be remembered as Unit One or Unit Four.”

“It will be remembered as River City’s victory.”

He paused.

“That means I expect all four teams to cooperate.”

Murmurs spread through the room.

“The enemy countries will work together internally. If we want to win, we must do the same.”

The lights shifted again, and the team assignments appeared.

I wasn’t surprised to see my name beside Jasmine, Daniel, and Noah.

Apparently, Mr. Stait had gotten exactly what he wanted.

Daniel leaned over my shoulder.

“Looks like we’re stuck together.”

Jasmine smiled.

“Poor Amber.”

“I’m beginning to think you’re all the dangerous ones.”

Noah shrugged.

“Fair assessment.”

Then another name caught my attention.

Emory Carter.

Team Three. Medic.

ooked up in surprise just as Emory waved at me from the opposite side of the room.

“You’re competing too?”

He shrugged.

“Apparently, I wasn’t allowed to retire in peace.”

Mr. Stait cleared his throat.

“We’ve received confirmation regarding some of the competitors from the other countries.”

The screen changed again.

Alexander Vincent’s photograph appeared.

A collective murmur spread through the auditorium.

“Alexander Vincent will represent Starlite as one of their offense specialists.”

Jasmine whistled.

“Interesting.”

Mr. Stait nodded.

“He’s considered one of the most dangerous participants in the competition,”

The picture disappeared.

My heart nearly stopped when the next image appeared.

Jason.

The auditorium erupted into whispers.

“It has also been confirmed that Jason Sun will represent Sum as one of their guides and strategists.”

I crossed my arms.

“Oh, he’s dead.” 1

Daniel laughed. 1

“You really didn’t know?”

“No, i only suspected.”

Jasmine looked delighted.

“Oh, this is going to be entertaining.”

I was too busy imagining my husband’s funeral to answer.

The screen changed again.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 346

The screen changed again.

A younger face appeared.

Franklin.

I blinked.

No.

Absolutely not.

Mr. Stait continued.

“This participant has only recently turned eighteen.”

“We have very little information about him, but intelligence suggests that he possesses extraordinary analytical abilities.”

The screen displayed his name beneath the picture.

Franklin Owen, heir to the Owen family.

“He has already been categorized as a genius.”

I immediately raised my hand.

Mr. Stait looked genuinely confused.

“Yes, Amber?”

“I have a question.”

The entire auditorium turned toward me.

“Is this even allowed?”

Mr. Stait frowned.

“What do you mean?”

I pointed at the screen.

“Franklin Owen is my daughter Iris’s boyfriend-or, technically, her not-boyfriend boyfriend-and if I’m not mistaken, he’s turning eighteen today.”

The room erupted into laughter.

I crossed my arms.

“Seriously, wasn’t there a rule about participants having to be at least eighteen years old?”

“There is,” Mr. Stait replied, trying not to laugh.

“Then are we seriously recruiting people on their eighteenth birthday now?”

(P1)

Jasmine nearly choked beside me.

Daniel covered his face, laughing.

Mr. Stait adjusted his glasses.

“Mr. Owen meets the minimum age requirement as of today.”

I shook my head.

“That’s insane.”

“It is technically legal.”

I sighed dramatically.

“Wonderful. The military is now stealing students directly from high school.”

The laughter only grew louder.

“Also,” I added, pointing at the picture, “I was the one who trained him.”

The room fell silent for a moment.

“He goes to the school.”

Mr. Stait stared at me for several seconds before laughing into the microphone.

“Of course you trained him.”

The auditorium exploded.

He pointed at me dramatically.

“Amber, could you please stop training our adversaries?”

I raised both hands in surrender.

“In my defense, I didn’t know Sum was recruiting high-school heirs on their birthdays.”

Jasmine leaned toward me and whispered, “Your family is terrifying.”

“You’re just realizing that now?”

Daniel laughed.

“Wait, your daughter is dating the heir to the Owen family, your husband is competing for Sum, Alexander Vincent is competing for Starlite, and somehow you’re all in the same tournament?”

I thought about it for a moment.

“When you say it like that, it sounds like a reality show.”

Noah, who had been silent the entire time, finally spoke.

“A very expensive reality show.”

The entire auditorium burst into laughter once again.

Just as the laughter in the auditorium began to die down, Mr. Stait raised a hand and everyone’s attention

immediately returned to the stage.

Before we continue, there’s one more thing you should know.”

The giant map of the island reappeared behind him.

“We’ve decided to do something differently.”

The room immediately grew quiet.

Mr. Stait pointed at the four teams displayed on the screen.

“Most countries are following the traditional strategy. Their four guides will remain at their respective command centers while the rest of their teams operate on the ground.”

He paused and looked directly at me.

“River City will not.”

I narrowed my eyes.

That sentence never led to anything good.

“The other three guides will deploy with their teams on the island.”

A wave of whispers spread through the auditorium.

Daniel turned toward me.

“Wait, then who’s staying behind?”

Mr. Stait smiled.

“Amber.”

Every head in the room turned in my direction.

Jasmine blinked.

“So we’re losing our guide?”

“Not exactly,” Mr. Stait replied.

He switched to another image, showing the command center connected to four separate communication channels.

“Amber will be the only guide operating from headquarters.”

The auditorium exploded into murmurs.

“She will feed information to her own team, but also to the other three guides on the island.”

Noah frowned.

“Wouldn’t that put her in charge of the entire operation?”

Mr. Stait nodded without hesitation.

“Yes.”

The room fell silent.

I slowly raised my hand.

Question.”

Mr. Stait sighed, already looking exhausted.

“Go ahead, Amber.”

I pointed at the map.

“Let me see if I understand this correctly.”

He nodded.

“I’ll be feeding information to my own team, while simultaneously feeding information to the other three guides?

“Correct.”

“So, I’ll be responsible for my team, but also partially responsible for every other team on the island?”

“Also correct.”

I stared at him for several seconds.

“You’re putting the pregnant woman in charge of sixteen people?”

The entire auditorium burst into laughter.

Mr. Stait didn’t even look embarrassed.

“Essentially, yes.”

I crossed my arms.

“And if one of the teams ignores my instructions?”

“Then they’ll probably lose.”

Daniel leaned toward me.

“No pressure.”

“You’re not helping.”

Mr. Stait continued his explanation.

“The reason we’re doing this is simple.”

The map zoomed in, showing dozens of movement paths crossing the island.

“Having more guides on the ground will create confusion for the other countries.”

Jasmine tilted her head.

“Won’t they notice that Amber isn’t there?”

Mr. Stait smiled.

“No.”

and

“Why not?”

Because there is no written rule stating that guides must remain in the command center.”

The room became silent again.

“Every country has been assigned its own operations room. No one outside River City will know how we’re distributing information.”

Several people exchanged impressed looks.

Daniel raised an eyebrow.

+15 8cnus

“That’s actually brilliant.”

Noah nodded.

“We’ll look unpredictable.”

Mr. Stait pointed at me again.

“Everything will pass through Amber.”

I leaned back in my chair.

“Fantastic. My husband lied to me, my daughter’s almost-boyfriend was recruited on his eighteenth birthday, and now I’m apparently running a military operation.”

Jasmine laughed.

“You forgot the twins.”

“Right. I’m running a military operation while pregnant with twins.”

“Much better.”

The auditorium erupted into laughter once more.

Mr. Stait waited for everyone to calm down before speaking again.

“There’s one final thing.”

The screen changed, displaying the flags of the eight participating countries.

“Most countries are offering rewards to their winning teams.”

He began reading from the list.

“Cash bonuses.”

“Military promotions.”

“Scholarships.”

“Government contracts.”

The room buzzed with excitement.

Then Mr. Stait smiled.

“River City has decided to offer something else.”

The image zoomed in on the island.

“If we win, the sixteen of you will each receive land rights on the island.”

The entire auditorium froze.

Daniel was the first to react.

“Wait.”

Jasmine blinked.

“Actual land?”

Mr. Stait nodded.

“Equal shares.”

Noah crossed his arms.

“You’re serious.”

“Completely serious.”

The room exploded into noise.

People stood up from their seats, talking excitedly among themselves.

I looked at Jasmine.

“Well.”

She grinned.

“I suddenly care a lot more about this competition.”

Daniel laughed.

“You own half a city. Why do you care about more land?”

I shrugged.

“Because if I win, Jason will never hear the end of it.”

That earned another wave of laughter.

Mr. Stait raised his microphone one final time.

“Then I suggest all sixteen of you start getting along.”

He pointed at the island behind him.

“Because from this moment on, it is in everyone’s best interest to win.”

And, judging by the expressions around me, everyone in the room had just become a lot more motivated.

+15 8chus

Mosquitos

Amber POV

The auditorium had finally emptied, and for the first time since arriving at the base, I found myself alone in one of the hallways.

Well, alone except for the dozens of soldiers running around and the fact that I was apparently responsible for an entire military operation.

I pulled out my phone and called home.

Alice answered on the second ring.

“Mommy!”

I smiled immediately.

“Hi, princess.”

“Mommy, Daddy left!”

I blinked.

“Really?”

“Yes! He left with the president and a handsome man.

I covered my mouth to stop myself from laughing.

“A handsome man?”

“Very handsome.”

“Did Daddy say where he was going?”

There was silence on the other side.

Then Alice whispered dramatically, “He told us not to tell you that he left.”

I burst out laughing.

“Did he now?”

“Yes.”

“Well, thank you for betraying your father for me.”

Alice giggled.

“I love you, Mommy.”

“I love you too, sweetheart.”

“Can you put me on speaker?” I asked.

A few seconds later, chaos erupted through the phone.

“Mom!”

“Amber!”

Teacher!”

“Mommy!”

I smiled as all the voices mixed together. Alex, Rose, Iris, even little noises in the background.

Good. 1

They were all together.

They were safe.

“Okay, everyone quiet for a second.”

That bought me approximately two seconds of silence.

“Iris, are you there?”

“Hello, Amber.”

I smiled.

“Do you know where your boyfriend is?”

“He is not my boyfriend.”

I leaned against the wall.

“Interesting.”

“Because I didn’t say anyone’s name.”

There was complete silence.

On the other side of the line, I could practically hear Iris realizing her mistake.

“Amber-”

“Then how did you know who I was talking about?”

Alex started laughing loudly in the background.

“Mom got you!”

“I hate all of you,” Iris muttered.

“Anyway,” I continued, “Franklin Owen is apparently representing Sum in the military game.”

“What?”

That answer came so quickly that I almost laughed again.

“You didn’t know?”

“No!”

“Apparently, your not-boyfriend boyfriend was recruited.”

NA

Bonus

“He’s not my boyfriend!”

Alice shouted into the phone, “I think he’s your boyfriend!”

“I’M HANGING UP.”

The entire room on my end erupted into laughter.

Before Iris could actually disconnect the call, someone tapped my shoulder.

Jasmine.

“We’re boarding the jet.”

I nodded.

“One minute.”

Alice’s voice immediately returned.

“Mommy?”

“Yes?”

“You have to win.”

I smiled.

“That’s a lot of pressure.”

“You promised.”

“I didn’t promise anything.”

“Promise now.”

I laughed softly.

“Fine. I’ll do my best.”

“No.”

I could practically see her pouting.

“You have to win.”

I closed my eyes for a moment.

“Okay, princess. I’ll win.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

“Love you, Mommy.”

“I love all of you.”

I hung up and slipped the phone back into my pocket.

For some reason, the promise felt heavier than any military mission.

The military jet was already waiting for us on the runway.

The moment we boarded, Mr. Stait stood up from his seat and looked directly at me.

“Amber, planning is yours.”

I blinked.

“You’re just giving me control?”

He shrugged.

“You’re the strategist.”

Daniel laughed from across the cabin.

“Poor decision.”

“Terrible decision,” Jasmine agreed.

Mr. Stait ignored them and sat down.

Wonderful.

I opened the files spread across the table and began reviewing every participant.

Alexander Vincent’s name immediately caught my attention.

I frowned.

“He isn’t here for the competition.”

The entire cabin fell silent.

Emory looked up.

“What do you mean?”

I placed Alexander’s file in the middle of the table.

“Alexander Vincent doesn’t do anything without a reason.”

“So?”

“So he’s here for something.”

Jasmine crossed her arms.

“Or someone.”

I nodded.

“Exactly.”

The room became quiet.

Daniel leaned forward.

“You think he’s here because of you?”

think Alexander wants something on that island.”

Emory frowned.

“Or he heard that you were participating.”

I sighed.

“That’s not impossible either.”

Emory thought for a moment before speaking.

“Then we should place two defense specialists around the command center as a precaution.”

Noah immediately nodded.

“Agreed.”

One of the other team leaders stood up.

“If Alexander wants Amber, we protect the command center first.”

For the next hour, all four River City teams planned together.

Eventually, we reached a decision.

Team Three-my original team-would receive most of our support.

And Team Four would keep the flag.

Daniel frowned.

“Can we actually do that?”

I reread the rules.

“There isn’t a single rule saying the flag can’t be moved.”

Jasmine smiled.

“We’re cheating legally.”

“We’re adapting strategically,” I corrected.

“Same thing.”

Noah actually laughed.

That was mildly terrifying.

Hours later, the island finally appeared beneath us.

Calling it an airport would have been generous.

It was little more than a strip of land carved between the jungle and the ocean.

As the plane descended, we could already see the other countries’ aircraft parked nearby.

FYIL

“They’re already here,” Daniel muttered.

ooked through the window and froze.

Standing near one of the runways, hands in his pockets, was Jason.

Of course.

The liar.

Our eyes met for a brief moment as I stepped off the plane.

I simply smiled.

Jason immediately looked concerned.

Good. 1

Let him suffer.

Jasmine glanced between us.

“Your husband looks terrified.”

“He should be.”

The four River City teams gathered together, while the other countries seemed completely separated.

Different groups.

Different strategies.

Different commanders.

They weren’t working together.

They were competing against each other despite representing the same country.

Daniel whistled.

“They’re going to destroy themselves.”

“Let’s hope they do it quietly,” Noah replied.

Suddenly, soldiers directed all two hundred and fifty-six participants toward a large enclosed structure built near the beach.

It looked like a forum, recently constructed but strangely old-fashioned.

Hundreds of chairs surrounded a central platform.

An elderly man slowly climbed onto the stage and took the microphone.

The entire forum fell silent.

The man smiled sadly.

“This island belongs to me.”

No one spoke.

“I once had eight children.”

The room became even quieter.

“They’re all dead now.”

I felt Daniel stiffen beside me.

The old man continued.

“They were born in the eight countries represented here today.”

Murmurs spread through the crowd.

“And since none of them are here to inherit the island, I proposed this little game.”

The giant map behind him lit up.

“You will each receive a backpack containing the essentials necessary to survive.”

Workers began carrying dozens of backpacks into the room.

“Food. Water purification tablets. Medical supplies. Basic tools.”

He paused.

“Except for the guides, who will remain inside one of the eight command centers on the island.”

I smiled in relief.

Finally.

Safety.

“The first objective is simple.”

Assistants began distributing maps.

“Reach your country’s command center.”

My smile disappeared.

I looked down at the map.

The command center was hidden somewhere in the middle of the jungle.

Several kilometers away.

I groaned loudly.

“I was promised safety.”

Jasmine laughed beside me.

“You are safe.”

I stared at the giant forest separating us from the command center.

“I was expecting a chair and air conditioning.”

Daniel patted my shoulder.

Songratulations.”

Noah looked at the map.

“You’re getting mosquitoes instead.”

I looked toward the jungle, then toward the command center marked on the map.

I was supposed to be behind a computer.

Not hiking through the Pacific while pregnant with twins.

Somewhere nearby, I heard Jason laugh.

I slowly turned my head toward him.

He immediately stopped laughing.

Good. 1

Because the competition had officially begun.

And my first mission was apparently surviving the jungle long enough to reach the place where I was supposed to

rest.

U

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 347

Amber POV

I was still glaring at the map, trying to calculate how many kilometers of jungle stood between me and the command center, when someone suddenly grabbed my waist.

Before I could react, Jason kissed me.

Hard.

The entire world disappeared for a few seconds.

Then, just as quickly as he had appeared, he let go and sprinted away.

It took my brain a solid three seconds to process what had just happened.

“Did-”

“Did he just-”

“Was that allowed?”

The soldiers from Sum and River City exploded into whistles and cheers.

“GO, JASON!”

“THAT’S OUR GUIDE!”

“SHE’S GOING TO KILL HIM LATER!”

I stood there, completely frozen.

Then reality returned.

“Oh, he’s dead.”

Jasmine burst out laughing.

Daniel nearly dropped his backpack.

Noah, somehow, looked disappointed.

“I thought she’d punch him.”

“I was considering it,” I admitted.

Jasmine immediately stepped to my left, while Noah moved to my right and Daniel positioned himself behind me.

Without saying a word, they placed me in the middle of their group.

“Protection detail activated,” Daniel announced.

“Protection from enemy countries?” I asked.

Jasmine smirked.

“No. Protection from your husband.”

I rolled my eyes just as the other countries began organizing themselves.

15 Bonus

Unlike River City, they immediately separated into their four individual teams and headed toward different parts of the island.

No communication.

No coordination.

No cooperation.

Exactly what Mr. Stait had expected. 1

Then I saw him.

Alexander Vincent.

He stood at the edge of the clearing, his team already waiting for him.

He wasn’t looking at the map.

He wasn’t looking at the jungle.

He was looking straight at me.

Our eyes met across the crowd.

Then he smiled.

It wasn’t a friendly smile.

It wasn’t even an arrogant smile.

There was something deeply wrong about it.

As if he knew something I didn’t.

As if the competition itself wasn’t the reason he was there.

A chill ran down my spine.

Without saying a word, Alexander turned around and led his team into the forest.

I shuddered.

Jasmine immediately noticed.

“What?”

I kept my eyes on the trees where Alexander had disappeared.

“His smile.”

Daniel frowned.

“What about it?”

“It looked wrong.”

Noah followed my gaze into the jungle.

For the first time since I had met him, he looked genuinely concerned.

“Then let’s make sure he never gets close enough for you to see it again.’

Nook a deep breath and forced myself to focus.

Fear could wait.

Planning couldn’t.

I immediately turned toward the leaders of the other three River City teams.

“New orders.”

All four teams looked at me.

“We stay together.”

One of the offense specialists frowned.

“The command centers are in different directions.”

“Not for now.”

Jasmine crossed her arms.

“You think something’s wrong?”

I looked back toward the beach.

“I think everyone assumes that the competition starts once we reach the command centers.”

Daniel adjusted his backpack.

“And you don’t.”

I shook my head.

“No.”

I looked at the dozens of footprints already disappearing into the jungle.

“I think the competition started the moment our feet touched this island.”

The four team leaders exchanged glances.

Even Emory seemed surprised.

“You think people are already moving toward the enemy flags?”

“I think the smart ones are.”

Without wasting another second, I sat on the ground and emptied my backpack.

Jasmine blinked.

“What are you doing?”

“Improvising.”

Food.

Rope.

Batteries.

Emergency radio.

Flashlight.

Metal wire.

Perfect.

Ten minutes later, after combining half the electronics with my phone, I managed to create a crude signal

enhancer.

Daniel stared at the device in my hands.

“Did you just build military equipment with camping supplies?”

“Probably.”

“Should I be impressed or terrified?”

“Both.”

Noah looked up from the map.

“Can it connect to the satellite feed?”

I smiled.

“Already did.”

The image on my phone flickered before stabilizing.

A rough satellite view of the island appeared on the screen.

Gasps spread through the group.

Jasmine crouched beside me.

“You’re kidding.”

I zoomed in, identifying rivers, cliffs, and elevation changes.

“Nope.”

One of the team leaders frowned.

“How did you even think of doing that?”

I shrugged.

“Pregnancy gives you strange hobbies.”

Daniel laughed.

“Your hobbies are terrifying.”

I ignored him and focused on the map.

Most of the teams had already spread out.

ncluding Sum.

Including Jason.

I smiled to myself.

My dear husband clearly believed that the competition began at the command center.

Poor man.

He had married me and still underestimated my paranoia.

I stood up.

“All right.”

Sixteen people immediately looked at me.

“We move now.”

Emory frowned.

“Already?”

“Already.”

I pointed toward the northeast section of the jungle.

“Our command center is there.”

One of the soldiers adjusted his backpack.

“And if we run into another team?”

I smiled.

“Then we’ll know that I was right.”

Jasmine grinned.

“I like this plan.”

Noah nodded.

Daniel sighed dramatically.

“I miss civilization already.”

The sixteen of us stepped into the jungle together.

Behind us, the beach disappeared.

Ahead of us, dense trees blocked the sunlight.

Somewhere inside that forest, Jason was marching toward his own command center, completely unaware that his wife had started playing the game hours before everyone else.

And somehow, I couldn’t shake the feeling that Alexander Vincent had done exactly the same.

The competition had begun.

at the command centers.

Not when the flags were hidden.

Not tomorrow.

It had begun the second we stepped off the plane.

And I intended to prove it.

+15 Benus

Not :t the fueY

Not against the rules

Amber POV

Eight hours.

Eight entire hours and seven short breaks later, the four River City teams finally reached the point where their paths separated.

A massive crossroads stood in the middle of the jungle, with four different trails leading toward the command centers assigned to each team.

The moment we stopped, the exhaustion hit everyone at once.

One of the team leaders unfolded his map.

“Team One goes north.”

“Team Two, east.”

“Team Four, southwest.”

I looked down at my own route and immediately regretted every decision that had led me there.

Daniel leaned over my shoulder.

“Please tell me that’s a mistake.”

Unfortunately, it wasn’t.

Our command center was hidden inside a cave carved into the side of the mountains.

Jasmine looked up toward the rocky cliffs towering above us.

“Who designed this? A psychopath?”

Noah took the map from my hands.

“No, a military strategist.”

“Same thing,” Daniel muttered.

Emory walked over and looked at our route.

“Oh, you guys definitely got the worst one.”

“Thank you for the emotional support,” I replied.

He grinned.

“You’re welcome.”

The four teams exchanged a few final instructions before séparating.

“Keep your radios on.”

“Report every two hours.”

“If you see Alexander Vincent, run.”

That last one came from Daniel.

Surprisingly, nobody disagreed.

After saying goodbye, the sixteen of us split apart, each team disappearing into a different section of the jungle.

The deeper we ventured into the mountains, the more impossible the path became.

The ground turned rocky, the air colder, and the trees slowly disappeared, replaced by steep cliffs.

After another hour of walking, we finally saw it.

The command center.

Or rather, the cave hiding it.

Built directly into the side of the mountain, the entrance sat at least fifteen feet above the ground, accessible only through a narrow ledge.

I stared at it in disbelief.

“You have got to be kidding me.”

Daniel dropped his backpack onto the ground.

“We walked nine hours for a cave?”

Jasmine was already studying the rock face.

“There’s no way you’re climbing that.”

I crossed my arms.

“Thank you for the vote of confidence.”

“No, seriously. You’re pregnant with twins.”

Noah nodded in agreement.

“We’re not risking it.”

Before I could protest, Jasmine grabbed the climbing rope from her backpack.

“Give me five minutes.”

Without waiting for an answer, she started climbing.

And climbed.

And climbed.

The girl moved across the cliff as if gravity simply didn’t apply to her.

Daniel shook his head.

“Remind me never to annoy her.”

Five minutes later, Jasmine reached the entrance of the cave.

She secured the rope around a large rock and leaned over the edge.

“Ready!”

Noah immediately stepped beside me.

“You are absolutely not climbing by yourself.”

“I wasn’t planning to.”

He tied the rope around my waist while Dantel climbed halfway up to support us from above.

“This is humiliating.”

“It’s called surviving,” Noah replied.

With Jasmine pulling from above and Noah supporting me from below, I slowly made my way up the cliff.

For a brief moment, I looked down and immediately regretted it.

“Nope. Terrible idea.”

Prev

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 348

“Focus on the rock, billionaire lady.”

“Easy for you to say. You’re not carrying two future shareholders.”

Jasmine burst out laughing and pulled harder on the rope.

A few minutes later, Noah practically lifted me onto solid ground.

The second my feet touched the cave entrance, I sat down dramatically.

“I’ve decided I live here now.”

Daniel climbed up beside me and collapsed against the wall.

“Honestly, same.”

Noah untied the rope from my waist.

“Welcome to headquarters.”

I looked inside the cave.

Surprisingly, it was enormous.

Generators hummed in the distance, lights illuminated the stone walls, and several computers had already been installed deeper inside.

It wasn’t just a cave.

It was an entire underground command center.

Jasmine walked in and whistled.

“Okay, I’ll admit it.”

I looked up.

“This place is actually kind of cool.”

I smiled and followed them inside.

he relief of finally sitting in front of a computer lasted exactly three minutes.

Because the first thing I did was connect my phone to the satellite feed.

And the first thing I saw was Alexander Vincent’s team standing outside Stilus country’s command center.

We had just spent nine hours crossing mountains and climbing cliffs.

Alexander had spent those same nine hours stealing someone else’s flag.

And unfortunately for everyone involved, there wasn’t a single rule preventing him from doing it.

Hidden weapons

Amber POV

The first thing I did after entering the cave was claim a corner and declare it my office.

Daniel called it “the queen’s command station.”

Jasmine called it “the nerd cave.”

Noah simply dragged three extra chairs and a table toward me without saying a word..

An hour later, cables covered half the room, three screens displayed satellite images, and my phone was connected to enough military equipment to make several governments uncomfortable.

I leaned back in my chair and studied our surroundings.

Compared to the other command centers we had seen on the satellite feed, ours was almost impossible to reach.

No roads.

No clear paths.

A mountain on one side and a cliff on the other.

Honestly, from a strategic point of view, it was probably the safest location on the island.

Of course, the safest option would have been staying home with my children and refusing to participate in an international military competition while pregnant with twins.

But apparently, nobody wanted to hear that truth.

As I organized the maps, Daniel opened a metal door hidden in the back of the cave.

“What the ”

Jasmine immediately stood up.

“What did you find?”

“Either a storage room or the military is preparing for the apocalypse.”

The three of us walked inside and froze.

Shelves.

Dozens and dozens of shelves.

Boxes of military rations stacked from floor to ceiling.

Crates of bottled water.

Medical supplies.

Blankets.

Enough food to feed an entire battalion.

I blinked.

“How long were they expecting us to stay here?”

Noah inspected one of the boxes.

“At least a month.”

Daniel whistled.

“That’s enough food for an entire fleet.”

“Wonderful,” I muttered. “If civilization collapses, at least we’ll survive.”

I returned to the computers and opened the map again.

Now that all the teams had reached their destinations, the pattern became obvious.

Most countries had established only one command center.

Their four teams had reached it separately and then spread out across the island.

The only exception was Sum.

Just like River City, they had assigned one command center to each team.

I frowned.

Interesting.

The difference, however, was that River City’s strategy was far more aggressive.

Every team had already received my orders.

Bring all four flags here.

Bring them to the mountain.

Bring them to me.

Because in a few hours, I would be completely alone.

Jasmine, Noah, and Daniel would leave to hunt enemy flags, while I remained behind as the only guide coordinating the operation.

The thought wasn't exactly comforting.

I was about to open another satellite feed when one of the computers suddenly flashed red.

ENCRYPTED FILE DETECTED.

Daniel walked over.

"Please tell me that's normal."

"It's military equipment. Nothing is normal."

The file required three separate security keys.

Fortunately for everyone involved, I had too much free time as a teenager.

Ten minutes later, the encryption disappeared.

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Jasmine smil

“We found it.”

Forward it to me. I’ll decrypt it and send you the coordinates.”

Team Three answered immediately afterward.

“Already sending.’

As the files arrived, Jasmine grabbed her backpack.

“We’re going after the weapons?”

“We are.”

Noah nodded.

“The faster we secure them, the better.”

Daniel let out a dramatic sigh.

“I was hoping that reaching the command center meant I could finally sit down.”

“You can sit down after we win the island,” Jasmine said.

“That’s a terrible motivational speech.”

An hour later, Jasmine, Noah, and Daniel stood at the entrance of the cave, ready to leave.

The radio crackled.

Team Two’s leader spoke first.

“We’re sending one defense specialist your way.”

A few seconds later, Team Three answered.

“Same here. Amber shouldn’t stay alone.”

I frowned.

“You’re leaving me with guards?”

“You’re coordinating the entire operation,” Team Three’s leader replied. “If something happens to you, the whole strategy falls apart.”

Daniel adjusted his backpack.

“Besides, Jason would probably declare war if we lost his wife.”

“That’s not reassuring.”

“It’s not supposed to be.”

Two defense specialists arrived at the cave entrance a few minutes later, immediately taking positions near the only path leading to the command center.

One watched the mountain trail while the other secured the interior entrance.

Jasmine smiled at me.

“Try not to leave the cave while we’re gone.”

make no promises.”

“You absolutely should.”

Noah gave the two guards a final look.

“If anything moves, call us immediately.”

One of the soldiers nodded.

“Understood.”

And just like that, Jasmine, Noah, and Daniel disappeared down the mountain path, joining the other teams in their search for the hidden crates and enemy flags.

For the first time since arriving on the island, the cave became silent.

Well, silent except for the sound of generators and the two guards pacing near the entrance.

Three hours later, the radios exploded with messages.

“Team One secured the first cache.”

“Team Three found another crate.”

“Team Two is heading back with equipment.”

I smiled and zoomed in on the satellite feed.

Five crates.

Five entire crates of military equipment.

The last one had been my idea.

Earlier, while scanning the island, I had noticed Alexander Vincent leaving an abandoned base near the eastern coast. Something about it had seemed wrong, so I redirected one of our teams there before anyone else could investigate.

I had been right.

The fifth crate was now safely in River City's possession.

Unfortunately, there were still two people I couldn't find.

Jason.

And Franklin. 1

No matter how many times I scanned the island, they were nowhere to be seen.

Then I realized why.

I leaned back in my chair and groaned.

"That idiot."

One of the guards looked over.

Main upon

"What happened?"

ason figured out how to hide from my satellites."

The guard frowned.

"How?"

I rubbed my forehead.

"Using technology inspired by something my six-year-old daughter built."

Of course he did.

Luckily, before leaving River City, I had created a blocker tracker of my own. I couldn't see exactly where my teams were, but I could confirm whether they were still safe.

I opened the program.

Four green lights immediately appeared on the screen.

Team One.

Team Two.

Team Three.

Team Four.

All safe.

I smiled and finally relaxed in my chair.

Jason and Franklin could hide all they wanted.

At least I knew my people were alive.

The only problem was that I still had absolutely no idea where Alexander Vincent was or what his plan is.

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5 teams

Amber POV

Alexander Vincent had disappeared.

Again.

I stared at the satellite feed, zooming in and out of Starlight's territory for what had to be the tenth time in the last hour.

His team members were there.

Three heat signatures.

Three backpacks.

Three people moving through the jungle.

But Alexander himself was nowhere to be found.

“That’s impossible.”

One of the guards looked up from the cave entrance.

“What is?”

I pointed at the screen.

“Unless the man suddenly learned how to teleport, he should be somewhere on this island.”

The soldier approached the monitors.

“Could he be underground?”

I shook my head.

“No. But I’m starting to think that our computers aren’t the same as everyone else’s.”

That thought had been bothering me for hours.

Team Three was currently lying in wait in the middle of an open clearing, pretending to guard their flag in the hope of attracting another team.

The problem was that no one had shown up.

Not a single person.

Not even scouts.

And Team Three wasn’t exactly hidden.

I switched between satellite feeds, frowning.

“There should be someone there.”

The guard crossed his arms.

“Maybe the other countries are being cautious.”

“Maybe.”

But I didn’t believe it.

The island was too large.

The teams were too scattered.

Someone should have stumbled into Team Three by now.

Unless the other command centers had access to different technology.

Or worse.

Better technology.

The sound of footsteps echoed through the cave, and I immediately looked toward the entrance.

Emory walked inside, carrying four flags over one shoulder.

I smiled.

“Please tell me everyone followed the plan.”

He dropped the flags onto the table.

“Every single order.”

I stood up and looked at the four River City flags spread across my desk.

Hours earlier, after realizing that every country had four command centers, I had made the decision myself.

Keeping our flags scattered across the island made no sense.

If one team lost its command center, we would lose one flag.

But if all four flags were hidden in the safest location on the island-the cave command center protected by mountains and cliffs-we could concentrate our defenses while the other teams focused entirely on offense.

So I had given the order. 1

Bring me every flag.

Empty the other command centers.

Leave nothing behind.

And make sure everyone believes that another country got there first.

Emory sat across from me and laughed.

“You should have seen Team Two’s faces when you told them to destroy their own headquarters.”

“I said to stage an attack, not destroy them.”

“We may have gotten a little carried away.”

I looked up from the satellite feed.

“How bad?”

“Broken windows, overturned tables, fake footprints, damaged equipment, burned supplies.”

e of the guards blinked.

“You burned supplies?”

Emory shrugged.

“We wanted it to look convincing.”

I rubbed my forehead.

“Remind me never to leave any of you unsupervised.”

“The good news is that every other country will assume our flags were stolen hours ago.”

I smiled.

“Exactly.”

For the first time since landing on the island, River City no longer had four command centers.

We had one real headquarters.

The cave.

Everything else was bait.

I looked at the flags again.

The irony wasn’t lost on me.

The four teams had spent eight hours crossing mountains and jungles, only for me to order them to abandon their bases less than an hour later.

Still, it was the safest option.

Jasmine, Noah, and Daniel were already hunting enemy flags.

Team One and Team Two were scouting.

Team Four was creating distractions.

And my own team had been chosen for the worst assignment of all.

We would attack and defend at the same time.

I grabbed the radio.

“Status report.”

Team Three answered immediately.

“Orders completed. Command center evacuated.”

“Good.”

Team Two spoke next.

“Fake attack staged successfully.”

Emory grinned beside me.

We even left blood.”

I slowly turned toward him.

“You left what?”

“Fake blood.”

I sighed.

“Of course you did.”

At that moment, the satellite feed updated.

Three members of a Starlight team had hidden two flags beneath the hollow trunk of a giant tree.

I immediately grabbed the radio.

“Team One, do you copy?”

Jasmine answered.

“Go ahead.”

“Twenty meters northeast of your position. Hollow tree trunk.”

There was silence for several seconds.

Then Noah’s voice came through.

“Enemy team?”

“Gone.” 1

“And the flags?”

I smiled.

“Congratulations. You just found Starlight’s hiding place.”

Jasmine laughed over the radio.

“You’re terrifying.”

I looked down at the growing pile of flags inside the cave and grabbed one of Daniel’s medic backpacks.

“New order. Every enemy flag we capture goes into a medic’s backpack.”

There was a long silence.

Then Daniel finally answered.

“I spent years studying medicine just to become a glorified treasure chest.”

“Life is full of surprises.”

PAS TROP

five teams

Jason POV

Most countries had misunderstood the purpose of the command centers.

Or perhaps they simply weren't using them correctly.

Each country had four command centers.

Four guides.

Four teams.

Leaving three of those command centers empty would have been a complete waste of resources.

Which was why Sum had done the opposite.

Each guide had claimed one command center.

The medics remained behind to coordinate logistics and monitor supplies.

The guides, meanwhile, had gone into the field.

I looked down at the enhanced tablet in my hands.

Connected to the command center's database, it displayed a holographic image of the entire island floating above my desk.

Tiny blue lights represented my teammates.

I had secretly hidden trackers inside every backpack before we left River City,

Not because I didn't trust my team.

But because there were people waiting for us at home.

People who expected us to come back alive.

Marcus walked into the room carrying a map.

"Team Two reached their checkpoint."

I nodded and moved one of the holographic markers.

“Good.”

Samuel looked up from his medical supplies.

“Anything from Franklin’s team?”

I frowned.

“No.”

That was strange.

Franklin usually answered within minutes.

I zoomed into his team’s last known position.

How t

Nothing.

movement.

No communication. i

Just static.

Then, suddenly-

The hologram flickered.

A red warning flashed across the room.

Marcus stepped forward.

“What happened?”

Before I could answer, the cave entrance darkened.

Someone had stepped inside.

I looked up.

And my blood ran cold.

Alexander Vincent stood at the entrance, one hand casually gripping the back of Franklin's neck. Francis-normally loud, sarcastic, and impossible to intimidate-looked terrifyingly pale.

Alexander smiled.

Amber POV

I hated admitting it, but Mr. Stait had been right.

Having a single guide coordinating all four teams was, without a doubt, the best decision River City could have made.

Every movement, every route, every attack, every retreat-I could see all of it at the same time. Team One was heading north, Team Two was circling Starlight's territory, Team Three was preparing an ambush, and Team Four was transporting supplies back to the cave.

No other country had that advantage.

At least, not that I could tell..

But I doubted even Mr. Stait knew the truth.

He had assigned me as the guide for four teams.

I had quietly created a fifth one.

A hidden team.

One that existed only in my head.

Me.

The two guards stationed at the entrance.

+158gnus

And Emory.

Although Emory would leave soon enough, for now, we were still an extra unit protecting the most important place on the island.

And that gave us an advantage no one else had.

I leaned back in my chair, staring at the satellite feed, when one of the moving markers suddenly caught my

attention.

“Wait.”

The figure wasn’t heading toward one of the flags.

He wasn’t retreating either.

He was moving directly toward Noah.

Fast.

“Dammit.”

I grabbed the radio.

“Noah, someone’s behind you. Eleven o’clock, moving fast.”

Noah reacted instantly, spinning around and stepping back.

But he wasn’t fast enough.

The enemy soldier was already less than five meters away.

Then another shadow dropped from the trees.

Jasmine.

She slammed the base of her gun into the man’s neck before he could reach Noah.

The soldier stumbled forward.

Jasmine didn’t hesitate.

She raised her weapon and fired.

A loud crack echoed through my headset.

The man screamed and collapsed to the ground, clutching his leg.

For a split second, I thought she had actually shot him.

Then I zoomed in.

Blue paint covered his pants.

I blinked.

“Paint?”

Noah crouched beside the unconscious man.

“These aren’t real bullets.”

Jasmine picked up one of the cartridges and inspected it.

“They’re paint rounds.”

I immediately turned back to the encrypted file.

For one team to win, all of its members had to remain unmarked.

Now it finally made sense.

Paint bullets.

Marks.

Elimination.

The competition wasn’t about survival.

It was about avoiding being tagged.

I leaned back in my chair.

“Well, that’s one less problem.”

Jasmine laughed through the radio.

“Why?”

“Because your friend Alexander Vincent just lost a teammate.”

Noah’s voice came through next.

“Meaning Starlight can’t win anymore.”

“Not exactly, Alexander can’t,but another team could.”

At least one thing was going our way.

Then Jasmine suddenly stopped laughing.

“Amber.”

Something in her tone made me sit up.

“What?”

“I can hear fighting.”

I switched to her camera feed, but the area around her was covered by enormous trees.

The canopy was so dense that the satellite couldn’t see through it.

“How far?”

“Less than two hundred meters.”

“Noah, stay with-”

“I’m going to check.”

Nosed my eyes.

“Jasmine-”

But she was already moving.

The radio filled with the sound of branches snapping beneath her feet.

For nearly thirty seconds, no one spoke.

Then Jasmine whispered.

“Oh, you’ve got to be kidding me.”

My heart skipped.

“What do you see?”

There was silence for a moment.

Then:

“Alexander Vincent.”

The entire cave went silent.

One of the guards stepped closer to my desk.

“What is he doing?”

Jasmine’s voice became quieter.

“He’s got a kid trapped.”

I froze.

“A kid?”

“Young. Maybe eighteen. Dark hair.”

My mind immediately jumped to Franklin.

No.

No, Franklin wasn’t a kid anymore.

At least, legally.

Still-

Before I could say another word, a gunshot echoed through the radio.

“Jasmine!”

Another shot.

Then footsteps.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 349

Fast footsteps.

Pally, Jastnine Spoke again, breathing heavily.

“I shot Alexander.”

“You what?”

“Relax. Paint rounds.”

I stood up so quickly that my chair nearly fell backward.

“Jasmine, are you insane?”

“Probably.”

Noah’s laughter echoed in the background.

“What happened?”

“I distracted him long enough for the kid to run.”

I grabbed the edge of the table.

“Did Alexander see you?”

“No.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’m already gone.”

The radio crackled as Jasmine ran through the forest.

“He was focused on the boy. By the time he realized where the shots came from, we were already moving.”

I forced myself to sit back down.

“Okay. Good. Keep moving and don’t engage.”

Jasmine laughed softly.

“Too late for that.”

I rubbed my forehead.

Somewhere on the island, Alexander Vincent had cornered a young competitor for reasons I didn't understand.

Jasmine had just shot him.

And somehow, I had the feeling that things were about to become much, much worse.

Because there was only one person on this island reckless enough to provoke Alexander Vincent and laugh while doing it.

And unfortunately for me, she was on my team.

+15 Benus

Bullets

Amber POV

Jasmine, Noah, and Daniel were running through the forest, and honestly, I wasn't entirely convinced Jasmine understood that we were in danger.

Because all I could hear through the comms was laughter.

Actual laughter.

"Jasmine, could you please take this seriously for five minutes?"

Her laugh echoed through my headset.

"I am taking it seriously."

"You're laughing."

"Running through the jungle while shooting people with paint bullets is fun, Amber."

Noah sighed on the other end of the line.

"Please ignore her."

"I heard that!"

Daniel's voice cut through the argument.

"Can we focus on not dying?"

I smiled despite myself and turned back to the screens.

The satellite feed showed dozens of heat signatures scattered across the island. Team Two was moving south, Team Four had stopped near a river, and several foreign teams were converging near the eastern side of the island.

Then something caught my attention.

A command center.

Hidden at the foot of a hill, partially concealed by trees.

I quickly enlarged the image.

“Guys, I found-”

The words died in my throat.

The entire structure exploded.

The shockwave threw dirt and debris into the air, and the screen shook violently as flames engulfed the building.

For a moment, I simply stared.

“What the hell?”

One of the guards rushed toward my desk.

“What happened?”

I zoomed in on the burning remains.

e command center was gone.

Completely gone.

I grabbed my radio.

“Everyone, be careful. One of the command centers just exploded.”

There was a moment of silence.

Naturally, Noah interpreted my warning as some sort of challenge.

“Coordinates?”

I blinked.

“That wasn’t the point of my message.”

Jasmine burst out laughing.

“See? Noah wants to investigate.”

Daniel immediately interrupted.

“We should make sure nobody was hurt.”

I switched to Daniel’s body camera just in time to see the three of them sprinting toward the smoke rising above the trees.

The closer they got, the worse it looked.

The entire front wall had collapsed.

Flames licked at the remains of the structure.

Then movement.

Someone stumbled out of the smoke carrying an injured man over his shoulder.

Daniel accelerated.

“There’s someone alive!”

Without hesitation, Jasmine and Noah rushed past him and disappeared into the ruins.

“Jasmine, Noah, get out of there!” I shouted.

No answer.

A few seconds later, Noah emerged carrying another unconscious man.

Jasmine followed, dragging a third soldier behind her just as the remaining support beams gave way.

The entire structure collapsed.

Dust and smoke filled Daniel’s camera.

For several seconds, nobody spoke.

Finally, Jasmine coughed.

Okay, that was close.”

Daniel immediately knelt beside the injured men.

“Who are you?”

One of them, a blond man with blood covering half his uniform, struggled to sit up.

“We’re… Team Two from Sum.”

My heart skipped.

Sum.

I leaned closer to the screen.

Then I recognized him.

He was one of the officers from the hospital when grandfather was attacked.

Daniel quickly examined his injuries.

And then my blood ran cold.

Those weren’t paint marks.

Those were bullet wounds.

Real bullet wounds.

Daniel looked up, horrified.

“These aren’t from the competition.”

The man coughed violently.

“We were ambushed.”

Noah frowned.

“By who?”

The soldier shook his head.

“I don’t know. They came into the command center…”

He swallowed painfully.

“They didn’t even take the flag.

Jasmine stopped smiling.

“What?”

“They shot us and left.”

The cave around me became completely silent.

Daniel looked down at the wounds again.

hese are real bullets.”

The soldier nodded weakly.

“Not paint rounds.”

I stared at the screen, unable to process what I was hearing.

This was supposed to be a game.

A ridiculous military game to determine who would inherit an island.

The weapons they had given us shot paint.

The rules specifically forbade serious injuries.

Nobody was supposed to die.

And yet someone had just blown up an entire command center.

Someone had entered, ignored the flag, shot four soldiers with real ammunition, and left.

I forced myself to think.

Alexander Vincent.

No.

It couldn’t be him.

Not right now.

Jasmine had just shot him and one of his teammates, the last time we had seen him, he had been busy holding Franklin hostage.

Unless he could somehow be in two places at once, someone else was responsible.

Someone was using the competition as cover.

Not to win the island.

Not to steal flags.

To eliminate military personnel from the other countries.

I slowly leaned back in my chair.

One of the guards looked at me.

“Do you know who did this?”

I shook my head.

“No.”

For the first time since arriving on the island, I wasn’t thinking about strategy.

I wasn’t thinking about flags.

I wasn’t thinking about winning.

Because somewhere on this island, hidden among two hundred and fifty-six competitors, someone had brought real weapons.

Someone had decided that this wasn’t a game.

And suddenly, the island felt much, much smaller.

The question was no longer who would win.

The question was who was trying to destroy us all.

And more importantly-

Who would be next?

D

Scapegoat

Amber POV

At first, I thought the satellite feed was malfunctioning.

One command center exploding could have been an accident.

Two was suspicious.

Three was impossible.

I stared at the screen as another red marker vanished, replaced by smoke rising above the jungle

“What the hell is happening?”

One of the guards stepped closer to my station.

Before either of us could say anything else, every screen in the cave suddenly turned black.

A deafening alarm echoed throughout the island.

WARNING. WARNING. WARNING.

Even the radios on my desk began to emit the same sound.

Then the face of the island’s owner appeared on every monitor.

The old man looked pale.

Far paler than before.

“Ladies and gentlemen, due to an emergency, the competition is hereby suspended.”

My stomach dropped.

Around me, the alarms continued to ring.

“I repeat: the competition is suspended.”

The old man looked down at something off-screen before continuing.

“All participants are ordered to immediately return to the original landing site. Evacuation procedures are now in effect.”

One of the guards cursed under his breath.

The old man took a deep breath.

“We have confirmed that one of Evermore country’s teams has gone rogue.”

The entire cave fell silent.

“There are already four reported casualties.”

My blood ran cold.

Four casualties.

Not injuries.

Not eliminations.

Casualties.

“The military forces of all participating countries are already mobilizing. You are ordered to avoid any confrontation and proceed directly to the evacuation point.”

The transmission ended.

For several seconds, nobody spoke.

Then the radios exploded with voices.

“What happened?”

“Did he say casualties?”

“Is this real?”

I grabbed my headset.

“Everyone, quiet.”

The comms immediately fell silent.

I switched channels until all three River City team leaders were connected.

“Listen carefully.”

Jasmine’s voice was the first to answer.

“We’re here.”

Team Two answered next.

“Go ahead.”

Finally, Team Four joined.

“Connected.”

I took a deep breath.

“The competition has been suspended.”

Daniel cursed quietly.

“What?”

“The island owner confirmed that one of Evermore country’s teams has gone rogue.”

Silence.

Then Noah spoke.

“Define rogue.”

I looked at the smoke rising from another command center in the distance.

“They’re killing people.”

58gnus

The words tasted bitter.

There are already four confirmed casualties.”

Nobody spoke for several seconds.

Even Jasmine had gone quiet.

I continued.

“Drop everything. Forget the flags. Forget the competition.”

One of the team leaders interrupted.

“What about the command centers?”

“Abandon them.”

“The supplies?”

“Leave them.”

“The island?”

“I don’t care about the island.”

The words came out harsher than I intended.

“What matters right now is getting everyone home alive.”

Jasmine finally spoke.

“What about Sum?”

I froze.

Jason.

Franklin.

The thought hit me like a punch to the chest.

I pushed it aside.

“We’re not splitting up.”

“But-”

“That’s an order.”

The cave fell silent again.

I opened the satellite feed, trying to locate my teams.

“Team One, your position?”

“Two kilometers east of the river.”

“Team Two?”

CNyQ*

“Southwest ridge.”

Ream Four?”

“Near the northern cliffs.”

I quickly calculated the routes in my head.

“New plan. Everyone heads toward the landing site, but nobody travels alone.”

The team leaders immediately understood.

“We regroup first.”

“Exactly.”

Daniel’s voice suddenly cut through the comms.

“Amber…”

My heart skipped.

“What?”

“I don’t think we’re dealing with a single rogue team.”

I turned back to the screens.

Three more explosions lit up the island.

One in the north.

One near the coast.

One close to the center.

Too coordinated.

Too fast.

Too precise.

“No,” I whispered.

One rogue team couldn’t do that.

Which meant one of two things.

Either Evermore had come to the island with an army.

Or someone was lying.

And suddenly, I couldn’t decide which possibility terrified me more.

I stared at the satellite feed as another plume of smoke rose above the trees.

It didn’t make sense.

Not strategically.

Not politically.

Not internationally.

One rogue team could not possibly destroy command centers scattered across the entire island in such a short amount of time.

This had been planned.

Carefully.

Methodically.

I leaned back in my chair, my mind racing through every possibility.

The targets weren’t random civilians.

They weren’t medics.

They weren’t guides.

The attacks were focused on command centers and military personnel-the special forces sent by the eight

countries.

A terrifying thought crossed my mind.

What if Evermore wasn’t trying to win the island at all?

What if their objective was to wipe out the elite military forces of the other nations?

My blood ran cold.

Because if that was true, then this wasn't a competition gone wrong.

It was a declaration of war.

A war disguised as a game.

A war that had begun long before any of us had stepped onto this island.

I looked back at the message the island owner had transmitted.

A team from Evermore has gone rogue.

But had they?

Or was someone simply using Evermore as a convenient scapegoat?

I clenched my fists.

No.

We couldn't afford to jump to conclusions.

Not yet.

Before River City, Sum, or any other country reacted, we needed answers.

We needed proof.

Because there was a very real possibility that Evermore was responsible for the attacks.

But there was also the possibility that someone else was hiding in the shadows, using Evermore as cover while preparing to drag eight countries into a war.

And if Evermore was innocent, accusing them without evidence could start the very conflict we were trying to avoid.

For now, there was only one thing I knew for certain.

Someone on this island wanted us all dead.

And until we discovered who that someone was, nobody was safe.

P

X

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 350

Amber POV

The cave had become eerily quiet.

The alarms had stopped almost ten minutes ago, leaving only the hum of the generators and the occasional crackle from the radios. The two guards stood near the entrance, watching the darkness outside, while Emory prepared to leave with the others.

Meanwhile, I had stopped using the command center's computers entirely.

If someone had infiltrated the island's systems, I wasn't about to trust anything connected to them.

Instead, I pulled out my phone.

"Please tell me you're not about to hack an entire country from your phone," one of the guards said.

I didn't even look up.

"Don't worry. I'm planning to hack eight."

The man blinked.

"I was joking."

"I wasn't."

My fingers moved across the screen as I broke into Evermore's military servers first.

If the island owner was telling the truth, there had to be signs.

Mobilization orders.

Secret communications.

Anything.

But there was nothing.

No evidence of an operation.

No preparations for an attack against the other countries.

No secret orders.

Nothing that suggested Evermore had planned to eliminate hundreds of foreign soldiers.

“That’s strange.”

I dug deeper.

Government archives.

Military records.

News reports from decades ago.

And then I found something unexpected.

One of the island owner’s sons had died in Evermore while serving in the military.

rowned.

That couldn’t be a coincidence.

Immediately, I opened files from the other seven countries.

Sum.

River City. 1

Starlight.

One after another.

And my blood slowly turned to ice.

All eight of the old man’s children had died.

One in each of the countries participating in the competition.

And every single death could be blamed, at least partially, on the government involved.

I opened the file from Sum first.

His son had died from appendicitis.

Ordinarily, that wouldn't have been anyone's fault.

Except that he had spent three hours trapped in an ambulance.

The highway had been blocked by protesters demanding that the government abandon plans to build new roads and redirect the money toward housing improvements.

Total nonsense.

The ambulance never reached the hospital.

The young man died before surgery.

I switched to River City's files.

A car accident.

The old man's son and his wife had been driving home when a truck crossed into their lane.

The driver had fallen asleep behind the wheel.

Both of them died instantly.

I read the trial records, unable to believe what I was seeing.

Community service.

That was the sentence.

Two lives lost, and the man responsible walked away with community service.

I clenched my jaw.

Then I opened Starlight's records.

d immediately wished I hadn't.

A family of six.

The island owner's son.

His wife.

His elderly mother.

Three children.

Murdered inside their own home.

The police had caught the killer within days.

Gene Vincent.

I stared at the surname.

Vincent.

The same surname as Alexander Vincent.

The same family.

According to the records, the prosecution had collapsed because the police had contaminated the crime scene.

Every sample.

Every fingerprint.

Every piece of evidence.

The case had been thrown out.

Gene Vincent had walked free.

Months later, he had supposedly taken his own life.

I leaned back in my chair.

"I don't believe that for a second."

The guard looked over.

"What is it?"

I turned the phone toward him.

“The island owner’s children.”

He frowned as he read the reports.

“Oh, my God.”

“He lost all eight of them.”

The realization hit me like a truck.

he competition.

The island.

The rules.

The military personnel.

The countries involved.

This had never been about inheritance.

The old man never intended to give the island away.

This was revenge.

Pure and simple.

He had invited the elite soldiers of the countries he blamed for his children’s deaths and trapped them on an

island.

Evermore could still be involved.

But there was also the possibility that they were nothing more than another victim.

I grabbed the radio.

“All River City teams, answer immediately.”

One by one, the responses came through.

“Team One here.”

“Team Two listening.”

“Team Four online.”

I took a deep breath.

“Change of plans. Nobody goes to the landing site.”

Silence.

Then Jasmine spoke.

“What?”

“The evacuation point is compromised.”

Noah immediately understood.

“You think the island owner is behind this.”

“I do.”

Daniel’s voice came through next.

“You think this whole thing was a trap?”

“Yes.”

ooked down at the files one last time.

“He never intended to give us the island.”

The cave fell silent.

“This competition was revenge.”

Emory spoke for the first time.

“Against whom?”

I stared at the names of the eight countries on my screen.

“Against all of us.”

I swallowed hard.

“But listen carefully: we still don’t know whether Evermore is responsible or whether someone is using them as cover.”

“So what do we do?” Noah asked.

“For now, we stay hidden.”

“And after that?”

I looked toward the dark jungle outside the cave.

“After that, we find out who turned this island into a battlefield.”

Because if I was right, the island owner had spent decades planning his revenge.

And if I was wrong, then someone else was using the deaths of eight innocent people to start a war.

Neither option made me feel any safer.

P

Gone

Amber POV

I grabbed the radio and switched to the channel connecting all four River City teams.

“New orders.”

The chatter immediately stopped.

“If you encounter teams from other countries, inform them about what we found.”

For a few seconds, nobody answered.

Then Jasmine’s voice came through.

“Even Starlite?”

I looked at the satellite feed, at the dozens of markers moving through the jungle, and sighed.

“Yes. Even them.”

“The people trying to steal our island?”

“Jasmine, at this point, I don’t care who gets the island.”

Daniel’s voice cut in.

“We’re prioritizing not dying. Got it.”

“Exactly.”

Noah simply replied, “Understood.”

After ending the transmission, I looked at the command center’s computers.

They were too slow.

Too restricted.

Too easy to track.

“Please tell me you’re not about to dismantle military equipment,” one of the guards said.

I grabbed a screwdriver.

“Unfortunately, that’s exactly what I’m about to do.”

Three hours later, the original computer no longer existed.

Its processors, memory modules, antennas, and satellite uplink were scattered across my desk, connected to my modified phone, which now served as the center of an entirely new system.

The guard stared at the mess.

“That was government property.”

“It still is.”

“You took it apart.”

“I improved it.”

rubbed his forehead.

“I hate that those are apparently the same thing to you.”

The new system came online.

Immediately, dozens of signals appeared on my screen.

Tablets.

Communication devices.

Military trackers.

I smiled.

“Perfect.”

Using the command center’s antennas and my phone as a base, I began hacking into the nearest tablets one by one, activating their cameras remotely.

The first face to appear on my screen made me sit upright.

Franklin.

Covered in dirt, holding a rifle, arguing with one of his teammates.

I immediately opened the communication channel.

“Franklin.”

He froze.

The tablet almost slipped from his hands.

“What the-”

“Franklin, listen to me.”

His eyes widened.

“Amber?”

“Yes.”

He shook his head.

“Nice try. She’s probably safe at home.”

I sighed.

“Your mother still has the sapphire necklace I gave her, even though she claimed she was not worthy of jewelry and you are dating my daughter.”

He stared at the screen for several seconds.

“Oh my God. It is you.”

+15 8çnus

“Listen carefully. The evacuation is a trap.”

mediately, his expression changed.

“What?”

I quickly explained everything: the destroyed command centers, the casualties, the island owner’s children, and my suspicion that someone was using the competition to eliminate the special forces of the other countries.

Franklin’s face paled.

“So what do we do?”

“Don’t spread panic. If you see other team leaders, inform them. And if you run into Evermore, proceed with extreme caution.”

“You think they’re behind it?”

“I think they might be. Or someone wants us to believe they are.”

Franklin nodded.

“I’ll spread the message.”

The connection ended.

For the next hour, I contacted team after team.

Cloud Country.

Two teams from Sum.

One from Starlite.

Two from Snake Nest.

One from Lakeview.

Every conversation was the same.

Don’t panic.

Avoid the beach.

Stay hidden.

Trust nobody.

Finally, a familiar face appeared on my screen.

Jason.

He frowned immediately.

“Amber?”

“Jason.”

His expression softened for half a second before becoming serious again.

“What’s wrong?”

uickly explained everything.

The old man’s children.

The explosions.

The trap.

The casualties.

When I finished, he was silent.

“So don’t go to the landing zone,” I said.

Jason looked away from the camera.

“That’s a problem.”

My heart skipped.

“Why?”

“The beach is within sight.”

I stood up so fast that my chair crashed into the floor.

“What do you mean, within sight?”

“We’re on a ridge overlooking the landing site.”

“Jason, get away from there.”

He shook his head.

“We’ll hide, but I’m close enough to see what’s happening.”

“Jason-”

Suddenly, his expression changed.

He looked toward the horizon.

“I can smell blood.”

Every muscle in my body tensed.

“What?”

He grabbed his radio.

“Everyone, fall back. Now.”

Behind him, Marcus immediately turned around.

Samuel dropped his medical bag and started running.

“Move!” Jason shouted.

The camera shook violently as they sprinted into the forest.

Gunshots.

My blood froze.

“Jason!”

More gunshots.

Branches snapping.

Someone shouting.

Then silence.

The connection died.

“No, no, no, no…”

I immediately tried to reconnect.

Nothing.

Again.

Nothing.

Again.

Nothing.

One minute passed.

Then five.

Then ten.

The guards had stopped speaking.

By minute fifteen, I was pacing around the cave.

By minute eighteen, I was considering sending every River City team to find him.

At minute nineteen, the screen flickered back to life.

Jason’s face appeared.

Covered in dirt.

Alive.

I nearly collapsed back into my chair.

“Jason!”

He was breathing heavily.

“Amber…”

What happened?”

For several seconds, he didn’t answer.

Then he looked straight into the camera.

“There are bodies on the beach.”

My stomach dropped.

“How many?”

“At least six teams.”

The cave became silent.

Jason swallowed.

“They were waiting for them.”

“What?”

“They weren’t evacuating anyone.”

His voice shook for the first time since I’d met him.

“They waited for the teams to arrive and opened fire.”

I covered my mouth.

“They weren’t shooting at us. We were too far away.”

He looked away from the camera.

“They were shooting at one of Starlite’s teams. They had just reached the beach.”

For several seconds, neither of us spoke.

Then Jason said something that made my blood run cold.

“Amber.”

“What?”

“All four Evermore teams are gone.”

I stared at him.

“What do you mean, gone?”

“I recognized them. They were all at the beach.”

He looked back toward the distant coastline.

“And now they’re nowhere to be seen.”

The connection remained silent.

Because there were only two possibilities.

Ether Evermore had just slaughtered dozens of soldiers.

Or someone had made sure they would take the blame.

And somehow, I had the feeling that the truth was even worse than either of those options.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 351

First contact

Amber POV

For a few seconds after Jason’s transmission, neither of us spoke.

The only sounds coming from his side were hurried footsteps, heavy breathing, and Marcus quietly giving orders. to the rest of the team.

Jason was the first to break the silence.

“Where are you?”

I blinked, momentarily caught off guard.

“What?”

“Amber, where are you?” he repeated, more firmly this time. “Are you safe?”

For a moment, the strategist in me disappeared, replaced by the wife who had just spent nineteen minutes imagining the worst possible scenarios.

“I’m at the cave command center,” I finally answered. “The mountain one.”

Jason visibly relaxed.

“The impossible one to reach?”

“The very same.”

“Good.”

I almost laughed.

“That’s your definition of good? I’m trapped inside a cave on an island where people are getting shot.”

“Exactly. Nobody sane would climb that mountain.”

“That’s surprisingly reassuring.” 1

Behind him, Marcus interrupted.

“Tell her we’re moving farther north.”

Jason nodded before looking back at the tablet.

“What are you doing?”

I turned the camera toward the dismantled computers spread across my desk.

“I’m trying to contact Mr. Stait and the governments.”

Jason frowned.

“Have you managed to reach anyone?”

“Not yet.”

“Keep trying.”

“I intend to.”

e connection flickered as Jason lowered his voice.

“And Amber?”

“Yes?”

“Don’t leave the cave,”

I smiled weakly.

“I wasn’t planning to.”

For the next hour, I tried every secure frequency I could think of.

Mr. Stait’s military number.

His private line.

The emergency channels.

Nothing

No response.

Not even an automated message.

That worried me more than I cared to admit.

Mr. Stait wasn’t the type of man to ignore an emergency.

Unless he couldn’t answer.

I pushed that thought aside and redirected my efforts toward the other countries.

The first breakthrough came from Sum.

The face of Secretary of Defense Greg Peterson appeared on my screen.

He looked exhausted.

And, judging by the people running behind him, absolute chaos had erupted outside the island.

“Mrs. Sun.”

“Secretary Peterson.”

He immediately leaned closer to the camera.

“How are you contacting us?”

I blinked.

“Through the command center’s satellite.”

The secretary exchanged a look with someone off-screen.

“We lost all contact with the island almost two hours ago.”

My heart skipped.

What?”

“The military satellites stopped transmitting, the emergency channels went silent, and every command center disappeared from our network.”

I stared at him.

“You couldn’t contact anyone?”

He slowly shook his head.

“No.”

The secretary took a deep breath.

“Mrs. Sun, you’re the first person to reach the mainland since communications were lost.”

For a moment, the cave became completely silent.

Even the guards stopped moving.

I tightened my grip on the table.

“Then listen carefully.”

And so I explained everything.

The explosions.

The destroyed command centers.

The false evacuation.

The bodies on the beach.

The missing Evermore teams.

And my suspicion that the island owner had orchestrated the entire disaster.

Peterson listened without interrupting me once.

When I finished, he rubbed his forehead.

“The island owner is still talking to the media.”

I frowned.

“What is he saying?”

“That the competition is still underway.”

I blinked.

“You’re kidding.”

“He claims that the explosions are part of the game and that all participants are safe.”

I stood up so quickly that my chair fell backward.

“Safe? There are bodies on the beach!”

Peterson nodded grimly.

“He keeps repeating that everyone is fine and that the competition is entering its final phase.”

The secretary looked genuinely disturbed.

“He also insists that nobody should interfere with the island until the game ends.”

That was enough for me.

Every doubt I still had vanished.

“He knows.”

Peterson remained silent.

“He has to know,” I continued. “There’s no way command centers are exploding and military personnel are dying while he keeps telling the world that everything is normal.”

The secretary nodded slowly.

“We’re beginning to think the same thing.”

I sat back down, trying to calm my breathing.

“He never intended to give anyone the island.”

Peterson didn’t disagree.

“What do you think his objective is?”

I looked at the reports about his children scattered across my desk.

“Revenge.”

The secretary’s expression darkened.

“I’ll immediately contact the other countries, including River City, and explain the situation.”

“Good.”

“We’ll organize a rescue mission.”

I shook my head.

“Don’t accuse Evermore yet.”

Peterson frowned.

“You still think they might be innocent?”

“I think it’s possible that they’re guilty.”

I glanced at the smoke rising on my satellite feed.

“But it’s also possible that someone is using them as cover.”

The secretary nodded.

“Understood.”

Before ending the call, he asked one last question.

“Mrs. Sun... are you safe?”

I looked around the cave, at the two guards protecting the entrance and at the dozens of screens surrounding me..

“Safer than most.”

Peterson sighed.

“Stay alive. Right now, you’re our only source of information from the island.”

The screen went dark.

I leaned back in my chair, suddenly realizing the weight of what he had just said.

The mainland knew nothing.

The governments knew nothing.

The military knew nothing.

As far as the world was concerned, the competition was still happening.

And somehow, out of the hundreds of soldiers trapped on this island, I was the first person to tell them that the game had become a massacre.

Don’t

Don’t

Amber POV

For the twentieth time, I tried Mr. Stait’s number.

For the twentieth time, Lexpected silence.

Instead, the screen suddenly lit up.

“Amber?”

I almost dropped my phone.

“Mr. Stait!”

The old man looked exhausted. His tie was loose, and there were at least four military officers arguing in the background.

“Thank God,” I whispered.

He frowned immediately.

“How are you contacting me?”

“The island’s command center.”

His expression changed from confusion to outright alarm.

“That’s impossible.”

“What do you mean impossible?”

“The island’s communication channels were blocked hours ago.” He glanced at someone beside him. “The owner himself assured us that nobody on the island could contact the outside world.”

I felt my stomach twist.

“Well, he lied.”

Mr. Stait rubbed his forehead.

“I just spent the last hour talking to him. Amber, the man looked deeply suspicious.”

“You talked to him?”

“He’s insisting that the competition is still underway, that the explosions are controlled exercises, and that nobody should interfere.”

I let out a humorless laugh.

“Meanwhile, people are dying on the beach.”

The color drained from his face.

“What?”

I quickly explained everything.

The destroyed command centers.

Dont

The false evacuation.

The bodies Jason had seen.

The missing Evermore teams.

The fact that I had already managed to contact Sum’s Secretary of Defense.

“And I told him we need an emergency evacuation immediately.”

Mr. Stait was silent for several seconds.

“How many casualties?”

“I don’t know.”

“How many survivors?” 1

“More than we thought.”

He leaned closer to the screen.

“What about River City?”

At least that was one question I could answer.

“At the moment, all River City participants are safe.”

The relief on his face was immediate.

“They’re all alive?”

“They’re on their way to me.”

As if summoned by my words, Jasmine’s face suddenly appeared in the corner of my screen.

“Amber!”

I switched the audio to the cave speakers.

“Jasmine, where are you?”

“About an hour away.”

Behind her, I could hear dozens of footsteps and people talking.

“We ran into other teams along the way.”

“How many?”

Jasmine grinned.

“You were right. The beach was a trap.”

My heart sank at the confirmation.

“Who did you find?”

She began counting on her fingers.

AN

“Jason’s team. Franklin’s team. Two teams from Cloud Country. One from Snake Nest. One from Lakeview. Another team from Sum.”

I blinked.

“That’s...”

“Eight teams total, including ours.”

Even Mr. Stait looked stunned.

“You have eight teams heading toward the cave?”

Jasmine nodded proudly.

“We told everyone what you discovered.”

Mr. Stait suddenly straightened in his chair.

“Amber, is there any way to obtain proof?”

“What kind of proof?”

“The massacre on the beach.”

The cave fell silent.

“We need evidence against the owner. Photographs. Videos. Anything.”

Nobody spoke for several seconds.

Then Jasmine immediately raised her hand.

“I’ll do it.”

“No.”

The answer came from six different voices at once.

Jasmine frowned.

“Come on-”

“No,” I repeated.

Daniel practically snatched the radio from her.

“Absolutely not.”

Noah added, “That’s suicide.”

Jason’s voice came through next.

“You’re not going anywhere near that beach.”

Jasmine rolled her eyes.

“You’re all dramatic.”

“People are shooting each other!” Daniel shouted. “This is literally the correct amount of drama!”

+15 Agus

For the first time in hours, I almost smiled.

Almost.

Then another voice interrupted the conversation.

Calm.

Amused.

Dangerously relaxed.

“I’ll do it.”

Every hair on my body stood up.

I recognized that voice instantly.

Alexander Vincent.

Jasmine turned her camera, revealing him walking beside his team as if they weren’t trapped in the middle of a

massacre.

Mr. Stait frowned.

“Alexander?”

Alexander shrugged.

“Someone has to get the footage.”

“No,” Jason said immediately.

Alexander ignored him.

“I’ll bring back proof of what happened on the beach.”

“Why?” Noah asked suspiciously.

Alexander smiled.

“Two conditions.”

Of course there were conditions.

I crossed my arms.

“Let’s hear them.”

He raised two fingers.

“First, I get full credit for obtaining the evidence.”

Jasmine groaned.

“Unbelievable.”

“Second, my team leaves the island with all of you.”

The cave fell silent.

Mr. Stait was the first to answer.

one.”

Jason immediately protested.

“Mr. Stait-”

“No.” The old man shook his head. “If he can bring us proof of what happened, we need it.”

I looked at Alexander on the screen.

He wasn’t smiling anymore.

For the first time since I had met him, he looked serious.

“Then we have an agreement.”

“Alexander-” I began.

He looked at me.

“Yes?”

“Don’t die.”

For a moment, genuine surprise crossed his face.

Then his usual arrogant grin returned.

“I wasn’t planning to.”

The transmission ended.

And somehow, despite everything that had happened that day, watching Alexander Vincent voluntarily walk toward a beach full of corpses and gunmen was the thing that terrified me the most.

␣

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 352

Wunted

Hunted

Amber POV

Alexander didn’t even bother saying goodbye.

One second, his team was standing with Jasmine and the others, and the next, the four of them had disappeared into the darkness of the forest, heading straight toward the beach.

Jason was the first one to break the silence.

“He’s insane.”

“No argument there,” Jasmine replied.

Daniel sighed. “We’re really letting Alexander Vincent walk into a massacre because he asked nicely.”

“He didn’t ask nicely,” Noah corrected. “He negotiated.”

“That’s somehow worse.”

Mr. Stait cleared his throat from the screen in front of me.

“Amber, don’t close this call.”

“I wasn’t planning to.”

“I’m requesting an emergency meeting with the other countries’ representatives. The Secretary of Defense from

Sum already contacted several governments, but we need everyone in the same room."

I nodded and adjusted the phone against the remains of the dismantled computer.

"Fine."

The old man typed furiously on another screen while military officers ran behind him.

For a moment, neither of us spoke.

Then I said the thing that had been bothering me for hours.

"Mr. Stait, I don't think Alexander came to this island for the competition."

That got his attention immediately.

"What do you mean?"

I glanced at the map.

"He's looking for something."

"Or someone?"

I nodded.

"Ever since this started, he's been disappearing from the satellite feed. His movements don't match anyone else's. He wasn't interested in the flags, he wasn't interested in the command centers, and even now, he volunteered to go to the beach when every sane person is running away from it."

Mr. Stait leaned back in his chair.

"You think whatever he's looking for is interfering with his plans?"

"And you believe it has something to do with the island?"

"I think that's why he's here."

Before Mr. Stait could answer, he suddenly frowned.

"Amber, what's behind you?"

I turned around.

Behind the desks and the emergency batteries was a metal cabinet labeled EMERGENCY SUPPLIES.

“Food, water, blankets…”

“No, behind it.”

I walked closer.

Hidden behind the shelves, partially concealed by shadows, was a thick steel door.

“What the hell?”

One of the guards approached.

“That wasn’t on the map.”

I pulled the cabinet aside and found a heavy latch.

The door groaned as I opened it.

A cold gust of air hit my face.

Stone stairs descended into darkness.

An emergency exit.

“Well, that’s comforting,” I muttered.

Then I heard it.

Soft crying.

I froze.

The guards exchanged glances.

“Did you hear that?” I whispered.

The crying came again.

Faint.

Far away.

But unmistakably human.

One of the guards stepped forward.

We should investigate.”

I shook my head immediately.

“No.”

“Amber-”

“We don’t know what’s down there.”

I looked at the darkness stretching beneath us.

“We wait for the others.”

Just then, footsteps echoed from outside the cave.

Weapons were raised instantly.

“Relax!” a familiar voice shouted.

Emory.

He entered the cave, breathing heavily.

Unlike the others, he had only left two hours before the explosions and hadn’t gone nearly as far into the forest.

The moment he saw my face, he frowned.

“What happened?”

I pointed toward the open door.

“We found something.”

Emory walked over and looked down the staircase.

“What is this?”

“An emergency exit.”

“And we heard crying.”

He didn’t hesitate for even a second.

“I’m going down.”

“Emory-”

He turned toward the two defense specialists guarding the cave.

“You two, with me.”

One of them blinked.

“You’re not even asking?”

“No.”

Munter

The medic grabbed a flashlight.

(someone’s down there, we’re wasting time.”

Before I could argue, the three of them disappeared into the darkness.

The cave suddenly felt much emptier.

Mr. Stait had gone completely silent on the screen.

Ten minutes passed.

Then fifteen.

And finally, footsteps echoed from below.

Emory emerged first.

He looked pale.

And furious.

The moment he stepped into the light, I knew whatever he had seen was bad.

“What happened?” I asked.

He stared at me for several seconds before answering.

“There are women down there.”

The cave fell silent.

“What?”

“There are women hidden beneath the island.”

Mr. Stait stood up so quickly that his chair crashed behind him.

“How many?”

“At least six.”

I felt my blood run cold.

Emory ran a hand through his hair.

“The place…” He swallowed. “Amber, the description matches the last location Elizabeth Vincent said she remembered.”

For a moment, neither of us breathed. 1

Elizabeth Vincent.

The woman who had disappeared.

The woman whose memories had ended in darkness and stone walls.

“No…” I whispered.

Emory looked sick.

“They’re being hidden down there.”

Nlowly sat down.

Suddenly, everything we thought we knew no longer made sense.

Either Alexander Vincent was working with the island owner…

Or we had been wrong about him from the very beginning.

Mr. Stait’s voice broke the silence.

“Tell me everything.”

Emory nodded.

“I brought them water.”

“What did they say?”

The medic looked at us, horrified.

“They escaped.”

A chill ran down my spine.

“Escaped from what?”

He took a deep breath.

“From the hunting grounds.”

Nobody spoke.

“The women said that people are brought to the island and hunted.”

One of the guards swore under his breath.

“They found a hatch near the ocean and climbed until they reached the emergency exit.”

I shook my head.

“No, no, that’s impossible-”

“Amber.” Emory’s voice cracked. “They believe they’re the prey.”

The room spun.

Mr. Stait had gone completely white.

“Who are they?”

“Six women.”

“And?”

Emory stared at me.

“And a boy.”

N

A knot formed in my stomach.

How old?”

“Eleven.”

The entire cave fell silent.

“And his name?”

Emory looked down at the bottle of water still clutched in his hand.

“He says his name is Oliver Vincent.”

For the first time that night, I completely forgot about the explosions, the massacre, and the missing Evermore

teams.

Because there was only one question left in my mind.

Why was an eleven-year-old Vincent hidden beneath an island where people

P

Looking

Amber POV

For several minutes after Etnory revealed Oliver’s name, nobody in the cave spoke.

Mr. Stait was the first to recover.

“Amber, are you absolutely certain there’s an exit leading to the ocean?”

I looked back at the open steel door, at the staircase disappearing into darkness.

“We haven’t reached the end yet, but according to the women, they escaped through a hatch by the sea.”

Mr. Stait immediately turned to someone off-screen.

“Get the naval maps. Every cave system, every natural entrance, every underground current around that island. Now.”

The officers behind him scattered.

He turned back to me.

“Show me the coordinates.”

I pulled the map onto my phone and marked the location of the cave and the emergency tunnel.

Mr. Stait studied it for a few seconds.

“If the exit is accessible, I can have a boat there in approximately twelve hours.”

“Twelve hours?” Jasmine shouted from somewhere outside the cave.

Mr. Stait grimaced.

“It’s the fastest option. Everything closer belongs to the island owner. We’d have to mobilize military vessels from the mainland.”

Twelve hours.

Under normal circumstances, that wasn’t much.

On an island where people were being hunted, it felt like an eternity.

“We’ll hold out,” I said.

Mr. Stait nodded.

“Keep everyone hidden.”

As if the universe had decided that one terrifying revelation wasn’t enough for the night, voices suddenly echoed from outside.

Dozens of them.

Jasmine burst into the cave first.

“We made it!”

Behind her came Noah, Daniel, Franklin, Jason, and dozens of exhausted soldiers from seven different countries.

The cave, which had felt enormous just minutes ago, suddenly became overcrowded.

eyes immediately found Jason.

For a second, neither of us moved.

Then he crossed the distance between us in three long steps and wrapped his arms around me.

I buried my face in his chest.

For the first time since the explosions had started, I allowed myself to breathe.

“You’re okay,” he whispered.

“Apparently.”

He pulled back just enough to look at me.

“You look terrible.”

I stared at his dirt-covered face and raised an eyebrow.

“That’s rich coming from you.”

Franklin walked past us, coughing loudly.

“Some of us are traumatized and single. Please stop being adorable.”

Jasmine nodded.

“Şeriously. Read the room.”

Jason rolled his eyes and kissed my forehead anyway.

“You scared me.”

“I spent nineteen minutes thinking you were dead.”

He smiled softly.

“Same.”

For a moment, the island disappeared.

There were no explosions.

No massacres.

Just Jason’s heartbeat against my cheek.

Unfortunately, reality returned quickly.

“Amber!” Franklin shouted.

I sighed.

“See? The universe hates romance.”

Jason laughed and reluctantly let me go.

“What happened?” Franklin asked.

walked back to the improvised computer.

“First, we need to find Alexander.”

Jasmine frowned.

“You think he made it to the beach?”

“I don’t know.”

Jason approached the desk, immediately understanding what I was trying to do.

“You want his body camera.”

I nodded.

“Can you help?”

Franklin cracked his knuckles.

“Oh, finally, something illegal.”

“Franklin, you’ve spent the last twelve hours trespassing into military installations.”

“Yes, but now it’s cybercrime. Variety is important.”

Jason snorted and sat beside me.

With Jason handling the encryption and Franklin trying random passwords that somehow worked disturbingly often, it only took us fifteen minutes to break into Alexander’s camera feed.

The screen flickered.

Jasmine immediately leaned over my shoulder.

“Please tell me he’s doing something stupid.”

The image stabilized.

And everyone in the cave went silent.

Alexander wasn’t at the beach.

He was close enough to hear the waves, but he wasn’t anywhere near the massacre.

Instead, he was moving along the cliffs, flashlight in hand, searching for something.

“See?” I whispered to Mr. Stait, who was still connected to the call. “He’s looking for something.”

Jason crossed his arms.

“Or someone.”

The image shook as Alexander climbed over rocks, muttering to himself.

“What the hell is he doing?” Noah asked.

“I have no idea.”

Before anyone could speculate further, Emory walked to the center of the cave.

We need everyone’s attention.”

The conversations stopped.

The medic exchanged a glance with me before speaking,

“We found people hidden beneath the island.”

The cave erupted.

“What?”

“Hidden where?”

“How many?”

“Are they prisoners?”

Emory raised his voice.

“Six women and an eleven-year-old boy.”

The outrage was immediate.

“Are you kidding me?” one of the Snake Nest soldiers shouted.

“Who hides children underground?” someone from Cloud Country asked.

Jasmine looked genuinely horrified.

“Wait, what do you mean hidden?”

I stepped forward.

“We found an emergency exit beneath the command center. The women say they escaped from somewhere below the island.”

Daniel’s face turned pale.

“Escaped from what?”

Emory hesitated.

Then he said the words that silenced everyone.

“They claim the island is a hunting ground.”

Complete silence.

One of the Sum soldiers laughed nervously.

“That’s insane.”

“Is it?” Jason asked quietly.

Nobody answered.

Franklin slowly sat down on the floor.

“The explosions.”

The fake evacuation,” Noah added.

“The bodies on the beach,” Jasmine whispered.

Daniel shook his head.

“No. No, there has to be another explanation.”

Emory looked at him sadly.

“I hope so.”

I looked around the cave.

At the terrified faces.

At the exhausted soldiers.

At the children who had somehow become trapped in a nightmare.

And then my eyes drifted back to Alexander’s body-camera feed.

He was still searching the cliffs.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 353

The child

Amber POV

For almost twenty minutes, everyone in the cave watched Alexander’s body camera in complete silence.

The image shook as he climbed over rocks, crossed narrow paths, and cursed under his breath every time his flashlight slipped.

Jasmine was the first to notice.

“He’s giving up.”

Jason frowned. “On what?”

“Whatever he was looking for.”

And she was right.

Alexander stopped searching the cliffs and, after one last look toward the ocean, simply sighed.

“Fine,” his voice came through the speakers. “Beach it is.”

Franklin, sitting beside me, crossed his arms.

“That man sounds disappointed that he has to investigate a massacre.”

“To be fair,” I said, “he does sound disappointed about everything.”

The cave fell silent again as Alexander and his team descended toward the beach.

The sound of the waves reached us first.

Then the smell.

Even through the microphone, people could hear his teammates coughing.

“Jesus Christ…”

The flashlight moved.

And suddenly the beach came into view.

Several soldiers gasped.

Bodies.

Dozens of them.

Some scattered across the sand, others piled beneath a large military tent, almost as if someone had tried to hide them in a hurry.

Daniel immediately covered his mouth.

“Oh my God.”

Alexander slowly approached the tent and lifted part of the fabric.

The entire cave froze.

The uniforms weren’t from Starlight.

Rey weren’t fron River City.

They belonged to Evermore.

“Those are Evermore soldiers,” Noah whispered.

Jasmine stared at the screen.

“But… everyone thought they had disappeared.”

“No,” Jason said quietly.

“They didn’t disappear.”

For a moment, nobody spoke.

“They’re gone.”

Alexander’s camera slowly scanned the pile of bodies.

The four Evermore teams hadn’t escaped.

They hadn’t betrayed the others.

Someone had killed them and hidden them beneath the tent.

Alexander silently took picture after picture, recording every face, every insignia, every bullet wound.

Mr. Stait’s expression darkened on the screen.

“Keep recording,” he muttered.

Without another word, Alexander lowered the tent and walked away from the beach.

No jokes.

No sarcastic comments.

Just silence.

Meanwhile, I returned my attention to Mr. Stait.

“We need to coordinate the rescue.”

The old man nodded.

“The boat is still twelve hours away.”

“Can it approach from the escape tunnel?”

“We’re studying the maps.”

And then something clicked in my mind.

Elizabeth Vincent.

The last thing she remembered.

The hatch near the ocean.

The tunnel.

The escape route.

I slowly straightened in my chair.

“Wait.”

Jason looked at me.

“What?” 1

“If Elizabeth remembers being near the ocean hatch…”

Emory immediately understood where I was going.

“…then the hunters know about it.”

My stomach twisted.

I stood up so abruptly that several people turned toward me.

“The hatch isn’t an escape route.”

The cave fell silent.

“What?” Franklin asked.

I began pacing.

“The women escaped through that tunnel, but if the hunters use it too…”

Jasmine’s eyes widened.

“Then they’re letting the women think they’re safe.”

“Exactly.”

Mr. Stait frowned on the screen.

“You think the escape route is compromised?”

“I think it always was.”

The realization sent chills through me.

For all we knew, the tunnel wasn’t an exit.

It was another cage.

“Emory,” I said.

The medic immediately stood up.

“We need the women and the boy up here.”

He nodded.

The chat

“I’ll get them.”

Take soldiers with you.”

Within seconds, Emory disappeared down the stairs with four volunteers.

I lowered my voice and turned back toward Mr. Stait.

“I think we’re looking at two different crimes.”

The old man frowned.

“What do you mean?”

“The trafficking operation and the families we came here to rescue-they don’t seem connected.”

Mr. Stait remained silent.

“The women downstairs were hunted. But Elizabeth Vincent wasn’t hidden with them.”

Jason slowly crossed his arms.

“And Oliver wasn’t with them either.”

I nodded.

“Exactly.”

The trafficking victims may have been prisoners of the island owner.”

“But the Vincents?” Mr. Stait asked.

I looked back at Alexander’s body camera.

The feed showed him silently walking away from the beach, not toward safety, but back toward the cliffs he had been searching before.

A horrible possibility formed in my mind.

“Maybe Alexander wasn’t looking for evidence.”

Jason looked at me.

“Then what was he looking for?”

I swallowed.

“Maybe he was looking for Oliver.”

Nobody said a word.

Because suddenly Alexander’s behavior made sense.

He hadn’t cared about the competition.

He hadn’t cared about the flags.

He hadn’t cared about the massacre.

From the moment he stepped onto the island, he had been searching for something.

Or someone.

And downstairs, hidden beneath the island, was an eleven-year-old boy named Oliver Vincent.

A boy that nobody had known existed.

A boy Alexander might have crossed an entire island to find.

Just then, footsteps echoed from the staircase.

Emory returned first.

Behind him came the women.

And the little boy.

The moment Oliver stepped into the cave, every soldier fell silent.

Because the child looked exactly like Alexander Vincent.

5 Bonu

Should have

Amber POV

The cave had become a small city.

Soldiers sat against the walls, medics treated cuts and bruises, and people from countries that had been competing against each other less than twenty-four hours earlier were now sharing water bottles and emergency

blankets.

At some point, the competition had ceased to exist.

Survival had become the only objective.

I stood in front of the map, trying to keep track of everyone.

“Status report,” Jason said, kneeling beside me.

I nodded and looked at my notes.

“Starlite has two teams accounted for. Three, if Alexander’s team makes it back.”,

Jasmine let out a tired whistle.

“That’s better than I expected.”

I continued.

“Sum has all four teams.” 1

Franklin raised a hand from the back of the cave.

“Miraculously.”

“Snake City has three teams.”

One of the Snake City soldiers nodded.

“Cloud City has two.”

A woman in a blue uniform lifted her hand.

“Lake View has all four teams.”

That caused several people to sigh in relief.

!

“And River City…” I looked at Jason, Jasmine, Noah and Daniel. “…all four teams are accounted for.”

For the first time that night, the cave erupted into quiet applause.

Not because we had won.

But because we were still alive.

Noah sat beside the wall and crossed his arms.

“So, what’s the plan?”

“The plan,” Jasmine said, “is to get off this cursed island before someone tries to hunt us again.”

“Surprisingly reasonable.”

Stait’s voice Came from the speakers.

“We’re working on it.”

The cave immediately fell silent.

“The navy is preparing an evacuation, but we’ve decided to send helicopters as well.”

“How many?” Jason asked.

“Enough.”

“And the owner won’t notice military helicopters approaching his island?” Daniel asked.

Mr. Stait smiled for the first time since the call began.

“Oh, he’ll notice.”

That got everyone’s attention.

“We’ll send decoys.”

Jasmine blinked.

“Decoys?”

“Several helicopters will approach from different directions. Some will be empty. Others will turn back before reaching the island.”

Franklin frowned.

“To confuse whoever is waiting for us?”

“Exactly.”

I studied the map.

“And the real helicopters?”

Mr. Stait’s smile disappeared.

“They’ll come in fast, land, and leave as quickly as possible.”

Noah looked toward the entrance of the cave.

“So the plan is to survive another twelve hours.”

“More or less.”

“Wonderful.”

Three hours later, people were still awake.

Nobody trusted the darkness outside enough to sleep.

Then footsteps echoed from the mountain path.

Weapons were raised instantly.

“It’s us!” a voice shouted.

Jasmine lowered her rifle.

“About time.”

Alexander Vincent walked into the cave, followed by the rest of his team.

Covered in dirt.

Exhausted.

Silent.

The body camera hanging from his chest had stopped transmitting nearly an hour earlier.

The entire cave relaxed as soon as they entered.

Three Starlight teams accounted for.

One more group alive.

Alexander didn’t even acknowledge anyone.

He simply walked toward the corner of the cave, as if preparing to continue his search.

I intercepted him.

“You took your time.”

He grunted.

“You’re welcome.”

“I’m serious.”

“So am I.” 1

I crossed my arms.

“Can we help you?”

That finally made him stop.

“Help me with what?”

“Whatever you’ve been looking for since you arrived on the island.”

Alexander adjusted the strap on his backpack.

“I’ve got it.” 2

I stared at him for a moment.

Then I stepped aside.

Until that moment, my body had been blocking Oliver from view.

The little boy sat beside Emory, wrapped in a blanket that was far too large for him.

+15 8chus

Alexander froze.

completely.

The cave, which had been buzzing with conversations seconds earlier, became silent.

Oliver looked up from his cup of water.

And Alexander’s face said everything.

Shock.

Disbelief.

Relief.

For the first time since I had met him, the arrogant mask disappeared.

“How?” he whispered.

I folded my arms.

“We found them by chance.”

Alexander couldn’t take his eyes off the child.

Oliver, meanwhile, was staring back at him with the exact same gray eyes.

The resemblance was impossible to ignore.

Jason slowly stepped beside me.

“You knew.”

I shook my head. 1

“No. I suspected.”

Alexander finally looked away from Oliver and toward me.

“Where?”

“The emergency tunnel.”

His jaw tightened.

“And now,” I said quietly, “you’re going to start talking.”

The entire cave waited.

Nobody interrupted.

Nobody moved.

I looked at Alexander Vincent and remembered every story I had ever heard about his family.

Children kidnapped and exchanged like property.

Women disappearing.

Entire families treated as bargaining chips.

wasn’t stupid.

I knew Alexander wasn’t a good man.

Maybe none of the Vincents were.

But as terrible as he might be, I was absolutely certain of one thing.

He would never have harmed his own family. 1

And Oliver looked far too much like him to be anything other than his son.

Alexander slowly walked toward the boy.

Oliver stood up instinctively, clutching the blanket tighter.

The silence became suffocating.

Finally, Alexander stopped a few feet away.

He swallowed.

And for the first time since any of us had met him, his voice sounded genuinely broken.

“Oliver...”

The boy blinked.

“Do... do I know you?”

Alexander closed his eyes for a second.

When he opened them again, the arrogance, the mockery and the confidence were gone.

“No,” he whispered.

“You should have.”

Nobody in the cave dared to speak.

Because whatever secret Alexander Vincent had spent the entire competition chasing-

it had just walked out of the darkness and into the light.

P

Chapter 354

Amber POV

Nobody spoke for what felt like an eternity.

Oliver was still clutching his blanket, looking at Alexander as if he were a complete stranger.

Because, in many ways, he was.

Alexander took a deep breath and sat down on the opposite side of the cave, as far away from the boy as possible.

“Start talking,” I said.

For once, he didn’t make a sarcastic remark.

For once, he looked tired.

Not physically tired.

Broken.

He stared at the floor for several seconds before finally speaking.

“The old man has been blackmailing me for six months.”

That immediately got everyone’s attention.

Jason crossed his arms.

“Blackmailing you with what?”

Alexander laughed bitterly.

“With my family.”

The cave fell silent.

“He asked for money. Ridiculous amounts of money. Every month, the price increased.”

“Why didn’t you go to the authorities?” Franklin asked.

Alexander looked at him as if he had asked the stupidest question imaginable.

“Because every time I refused, another member of my family disappeared.”

The smile vanished from his face.

“I already lost my aunt.”

He swallowed.

“And my younger sister.”

Nobody interrupted him.

“Three weeks ago, he contacted me again.”

Alexander finally looked toward Oliver.

“Only this time, the amount wasn’t ten times higher.”

He laughed humorlessly.

“It was a hundred times higher.”

Jason frowned.

“Why?”

“Because he knew.”

“Knew what?”

Alexander’s expression darkened.

“That I had a son.”

The cave erupted into whispers.

“I didn’t even know myself.”

He rubbed his face with both hands.

“A woman I was involved with requested a DNA test online. The old man intercepted it somehow.”

I looked at Oliver. 1

“He told me that I valued my bloodline too much to let my heir die.”

The words left a bad taste in my mouth.

“He said that if I didn’t pay, he’d kill him.”

Oliver lowered his head, clearly not understanding half of the conversation happening around him.

Alexander continued.

“He knew exactly where to hurt me.”

Franklin snorted.

“So you came here to save your son?”

Alexander turned toward him.

“I came here because I had no choice.”

I crossed my arms.

“Let’s not pretend you’re some innocent victim.”

Alexander didn’t even argue.

“I’m not.”

The honesty of his answer surprised me.

I knew exactly who he was.

ACT

Everyone in that cave did.

Alexander Vincent wasn’t a good man.

He wasn’t rescuing Oliver because of some sudden moral awakening.

He wasn’t risking his life out of kindness.

He was doing it because Oliver carried his blood.

Because the Vincent family legacy mattered to him more than anything else.

And somehow, that made the situation even sadder.

Jason finally broke the silence.

“So what now?”

Nobody answered immediately.

Then Noah spoke.

“Now we stop trying to kill each other and focus on surviving.”

One by one, people nodded.

Cloud Country.

Snake Nest.

Sum.

Lake View.

River City.

Even Starlight.

For the first time since arriving on the island, nobody cared about borders, money, companies, or old grudges.

There was only one objective.

Get off the island alive.

“Fine,” Jasmine said, standing up. “Then let’s start by finding another way out of this death trap.”

Emory immediately volunteered.

“I’ll go.”

A tall man from Snake Nest stood beside him.

“Héctor. Offense specialist.”

Jasmine smiled.

“Perfect. Let’s climb a mountain.”

Daniel looked horrified.

“Why do you say dangerous things with so much enthusiasm?” 1

Because life is short.”

“Incredibly reassuring.”

Within minutes, Jasmine, Emory, and Héctor disappeared into the darkness outside the cave, determined to see whether there was another exit farther up the mountain.

As soon as they were gone, Jason sat beside me.

He waited until nobody was paying attention before lowering his voice.

“I don’t like this.”

“You’ll have to be more specific.”

He glanced toward Alexander, who was sitting several meters away from Oliver.

“I’m not comfortable having him here.”

I sighed.

“Neither am I.”

“Especially not near a child who doesn’t even know him.”

I followed his gaze.

Oliver was asleep against Emory’s backpack, completely unaware that the man watching him claimed to be his father.

“I know.”

Jason turned toward me.

“Amber, he’s dangerous.”

I looked at him.

“I know exactly what Alexander is.”

Monster.

Kidnapper.

Trafficker.

Manipulator.

There were dozens of words I could have used.

“We’re going to do everything we can to free the people he took.”

Jason’s expression hardened.

“If we ever get off this island.”

“Exactly.”

I lowered my voice even further.

But right now, we don’t have evidence.”

Jason frowned.

“We know he did it.”

“We suspect it.”

“Amber-”

“Listen to me.”

I leaned closer.

“Alexander still doesn’t know that Sum and River City suspect he’s behind the trafficking operation.”

Jason’s eyes widened slightly.

“He thinks we’re angry because he tried to take power away from us.”

“Exactly.”

“He thinks we’re angry because of the companies.”

“Yes.”

“And because of the children.”

I nodded.

“But he has no idea that the governments already suspect he’s the one running everything.”

Jason looked back toward Alexander.

“So what do we do?”

I forced myself to smile.

“We act.”

Jason blinked.

“Act?”

“We act like spoiled billionaires who hate him for ruining our companies, stealing influence, and causing chaos.”

“And pretend we don’t know anything else?”

“Exactly.”

Jason groaned.

“You realize I’m a terrible actor.”

I raised an eyebrow.

“You hid an international military competition from your pregnant wife for weeks.”

He opened his mouth.

Closed it.

Then sighed.

“Fair point.”

I patted his shoulder.

“So you’d better start practicing.”

Jason looked at Alexander and muttered under his breath.

“I preferred it when the biggest problem in my life was quarterly reports.”

For the first time in hours, I laughed.

Then, from somewhere high above the mountain, a scream echoed through the night.

And every single person in the cave stood up at once.

Survive

Amber POV

The scream echoed through the mountain a second time.

Every conversation Inside the cave died instantly.

One of the guards was already halfway to the entrance when Jason grabbed his arm and pulled him back.

“Don’t.”

The man frowned. “Someone could be hurt.”

Jason shook his head, lowering his voice.

“That’s the oldest hunting trick in the book.”

The guard blinked.

“What?”

Jason pointed toward the darkness outside.

“If you’re hunting prey, you don’t go looking for it. You make the prey come to you.”

The cave fell silent.

I crossed my arms and nodded.

“He’s right.”

Everyone looked at me.

“It’s a classic kidnapping tactic. Serial killers have used it for decades.”

Franklin looked horrified. “You know way too much about serial killers.”

I ignored him.

“They pretend to need help. A broken car. An injury. Someone crying in the woods. People naturally want to help.”

Daniel slowly nodded.

“And when the victim approaches…”

“They’ve already lost.”

The guard stepped away from the entrance.

“That’s disturbing.”

“Human beings are disturbing,” Jasmine had once told me.

Unfortunately, she wasn’t there to say it now.

Nobody moved.

Nobody left the cave.

Instead, I grabbed Daniel’s tablet and opened the live feed from one of the body cameras he had hidden outside the mountain hours earlier.

The image appeared on the improvised screen.

Three soldiers,

Military uniforms.

Weapons.

Walking at the base of the mountain. 1

The camera’s microphone crackled to life.

One of the men was clutching his leg and limping dramatically.

“Help!” he shouted weakly.

A second later, he burst out laughing.

“Told you that one still works.”

The man beside him snorted.

“It worked perfectly on the Rou Country team.”

The entire cave froze.

The third soldier laughed.

“Two countries down. Straight out of the game.”

Noah immediately sat beside me.

“They think nobody’s here.”

I increased the volume.

The man pretending to be injured straightened his back.

“We should check the mountain base.”

The second man shrugged.

“Fine.”

The third laughed.

“Maybe River City did what the other idiots did and abandoned one of their command centers.”

My blood ran cold.

Of course they knew the locations, the islands owner gave us the map, with out command centers.

The three soldiers disappeared from the camera’s view for a few seconds.

Then, to everyone’s surprise, they walked into a building.

A building at the base of the mountain.

Noah’s eyes widened.

Jason stood up.

“That’s not our command center.”

I opened the map.

It only took me a few seconds to realize the truth.

“Oh, you’ve got to be kidding me.”

Franklin walked over.

“What?”

I pointed at the screen.

“That’s the real command center, the map was not accurate and I found this cave with the satellite, so it turns out this cave was never part of the game.”

The realization hit River City’s teams at exactly the same time.

We had climbed the wrong mountain.

The silence lasted for almost five seconds.

Then Jasmine’s voice echoed from the cave entrance.

“You’re telling me we climbed the wrong mountain?”

Everyone turned.

Jasmine, Emory, and Héctor had finally returned.

Covered in dirt.

Exhausted.

And apparently arriving at the perfect moment.

Noah nodded.

“Completely wrong mountain.”

Héctor blinked.

“So… we’re safe?”

I couldn’t stop myself from smiling.

“Apparently.”

On the screen, the three men walked back out of the abandoned command center.

The one who had pretended to be injured laughed.

“Told you. Deserted.”

The second man shrugged.

Maybe River City used only one command center like the other teams.”

The third stretched his arms.

“Works for me. Less walking.”

The three disappeared back into the forest.

Jasmine immediately dropped her backpack.

“We’re going after them.”

Jason looked at her as if she had lost her mind.

“Absolutely not.”

Héctor stepped forward.

“They know too much.”

Emory nodded.

“And they just admitted to killing people.”

Noah crossed his arms.

“If they find this place, we’re done.”

Jason stared at the map for several seconds before finally sighing.

“Fine.”

Jasmine grinned triumphantly.

“But-“Jason continued, pointing at her. “You take them as far away from this mountain as possible before engaging.”

Héctor nodded.

“Understood.”

“You don’t fight near the cave.”

“Understood.”

“You don’t play heroes.”

Jasmine immediately opened her mouth.

“No promises.”

“Jasmine.”

“Fine. Understood.”

Just as they began gathering supplies again, my phone vibrated.

Mr. Stait.

I answered immediately.

Please tell me the helicopters are close.”

The old man’s expression was grim.

“Amber…”

That single word was enough.

“What happened?”

“The weather changed.”

I frowned.

“What do you mean?”

“There is now a hurricane alert covering the entire area.”

The entire cave went silent.

Franklin stood up.

“A hurricane?”

Mr. Stait nodded.

“It formed less than an hour ago.”

Daniel stared at the screen.

“That’s impossible.”

“Apparently not.”

I swallowed.

“What about the helicopters?”

The old man looked away for a second.

“They’re grounded.”

Nobody moved.

“They can’t leave the mainland.”

Jasmine slowly sat back down.

“So we’re stuck.”

Mr. Stait didn’t answer.

Because he didn’t need to.

We all understood.

The rescue boats were still hours away.

+158cnus

The helicopters couldn’t fly.

e storm was coming.

And we were trapped on an island full of murderers.

For several seconds, the cave remained silent.

Then Héctor loaded his rifle.

Jasmine smiled.

And Noah stood beside them. 1

I looked at the three disappearing dots on Daniel's camera feed.

The hunters believed they controlled the island.

They believed we were trapped.

They believed we were prey.

I slowly stood up.

"Then it's time they learn something."

Jason looked at me.

"What?"

I stared at the approaching storm on the satellite feed.

"The prey outnumbers them."

Lightning illuminated the clouds in the distance.

At that moment we stopped thinking about escaping and started to think about staying alive by whatever means necessary. 1

Because now, it was time for the hunters to be hunted.

. Support

Fight back

Amber POV

The cave became strangely quiet after Noah, Jasmine, Héctor, and Daniel disappeared into the darkness.

Nobody liked the idea of splitting up again, but letting those three soldiers continue roaming around the mountain was even worse.

For the next hour, everyone tried to keep busy.

Some soldiers inventoried ammunition, others checked the medical supplies, while Jason and I spread the island map across one of the tables.

“We have food for several days,” Daniel had calculated before leaving. “Water isn’t a problem either.”

“The hurricane is,” Franklin muttered.

He wasn’t wrong.

Outside, the wind had already started to whistle through the mountain paths, carrying the unmistakable smell of rain.

“We need to cover the entrance,” one of the Lakeview soldiers said.

I nodded. “If the storm gets worse, the cave will flood with wind and debris.”

Emory crouched beside several metal crates stacked against the wall.

“Maybe whoever built this place prepared for hurricanes.”

Jason looked around.

“An island owner who built secret tunnels and underground chambers probably didn’t forget about storms.” That was unsettlingly reasonable.

So everyone split into groups and began searching the cave.

About twenty minutes later, Franklin’s voice echoed from the back of the chamber.

“Guys, I found something!”

Half the cave rushed toward him.

Hidden behind a shelf full of emergency blankets was another steel door, much smaller than the one leading / underground.

“How many secret doors does this place have?”

Jason grabbed the handle and pushed.

The door resisted for a moment before opening inward.

The room beyond made everyone stop.

It wasn’t a storage room.

It was a safe house.

NK

+15 8cnus

Several bedrooms extended into the rock, complete with bunk beds, showers, a kitchen, medical equipment, and enough space for dozens of people.

Franklin stared at the place in disbelief.

“Okay, that’s definitely suspicious.”

One of the Snake Nest soldiers walked farther inside.

“This could fit everyone.”

Emory opened one of the cabinets.

“Canned food.”

Another soldier checked the lights.

“Backup generators too.”

Jason let out a long breath.

“At least we won’t be crushed by a hurricane.”

Oliver, who had spent most of the evening hiding behind Emory, cautiously stepped into the room and looked around.

“It looks like a house.”

I forced a smile.

“For now, let’s pretend it is.”

Three hours earlier, we had been competing for an island.

Now we were dividing beds inside a hidden bunker beneath it.

Life was strange.

Very, very strange.

Before anyone could settle down, footsteps echoed from the tunnel outside.

Weapons were raised instantly.

“It’s us!” Jasmine shouted.

The tension disappeared immediately.

Jasmine entered first, looking more irritated than exhausted, while Héctor walked behind her with an expression that looked suspiciously close to admiration.

Daniel followed, carrying his medical bag, while Noah calmly closed the rear of the group.

Franklin frowned.

“Why do you look angry?”

Jasmine threw her backpack onto the floor.

“Because apparently Noah has been carrying around terrifying secrets this entire time.”

Noah raised an eyebrow.

hat’s dramatic.”

“You had a poison with you!”

That sentence immediately caught everyone’s attention.

Héctor burst out laughing.

“You should have seen her face.”

Jasmine pointed at Noah.

“He casually pulls out a brown powder and tells us he brought it ‘just in case.’”

Daniel sat down heavily.

“In my defense, I was equally horrified.”

Noah crossed his arms.

“It’s an illegal military toxin. I never intended to use it.”

Franklin blinked. 1

“You just carry that around?”

“Apparently.”

Jasmine shook her head.

“I’ve spent days thinking you were the normal one.”

“That was your first mistake.”

Jason sighed and rubbed his temples.

“Can we focus on the important question?”

Everyone looked at him.

“Did you stop the three soldiers?”

Noah nodded once.

“They won’t be coming back.”

The cave fell silent.

Nobody asked for details.

Nobody wanted them.

Instead, Héctor looked around the newly discovered bunker.

“Did we miss something?”

Franklin pointed proudly toward the rooms.

“We found a secret house.”

smine blinked.

“Of course you did.”

“No, seriously.”

She walked inside, looked at the beds, the kitchen, and the showers, then turned back toward me.

“Amber, why does every place you enter turn out to have hidden rooms?”

“I’d like to remind everyone that this isn’t my cave.”

“Yet somehow you became the owner of it.”

“Temporary owner.”

Jason wrapped an arm around my shoulders.

“Don’t give her ideas.”

Despite everything-the massacre, the storm, the hunters, the secrets hidden beneath the island-people laughed.

Only for a moment.

But it was enough to remind us that we were still human.

Outside, thunder rolled across the sky.

Inside, dozens of survivors prepared for the longest night of their lives.

And somewhere on that island, hidden beneath the sound of the approaching hurricane, someone was still hunting.

The difference was that now, we had found a place to hide.

And perhaps, a place to fight back.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 355

No mercy

Amber POV

Nobody stepped into the hidden rooms.

Not yet.

Considering everything we had discovered on the island-the tunnels, the hidden women, the command centers, and the fact that people had apparently been hunted there for years-blindly entering an underground bunker seemed like a terrible idea.

Jason was the first one to voice it.

“Before anyone goes in, we need to make sure there aren’t any cameras.”

Franklin immediately nodded.

“Or microphones.”

Maurice, one of Cloud Country’s guides, stood up from the corner where he had been studying the cave map.

“I’ll help.”

Jasmine stretched on one of the chairs.

“You three have fun with your spy movie.”

Jason ignored her and grabbed a flashlight.

“Nobody enters until we’re done.”

For the next twenty minutes, the three of them inspected every wall, every vent, and every light fixture.

At first, they found nothing.

Then Franklin suddenly cursed.

“Found one.”

Everyone crowded around him.

Hidden behind a ventilation grate was a small black camera.

Jason immediately began looking around the room.

“If there’s one, there are more.”

He was right.

Maurice found another one above the kitchen entrance.

Jason discovered one hidden inside a smoke detector.

Franklin found the last camera near the hallway leading to the bedrooms.

Four cameras.

All aimed at the entrance of the safe house.

Daniel frowned.

Are they active?”

Maurice connected his tablet to one of them and shook his head.

“They don’t appear to be transmitting.”

“That doesn’t mean they won’t start transmitting later,” Jason said.

Nobody argued.

Within minutes, the cameras had been dismantled and placed in a box near the entrance.

Jasmine poked one of them with her boot.

“I don’t know what’s creepier: the fact that someone installed cameras here or the fact that Franklin looks Kappy while dismantling them.”

Franklin shrugged.

“I have many talents.”

“Being suspicious isn’t a talent.”

“It absolutely is.”

The conversation shifted as soon as Emory walked in with the six women and Oliver.

The atmosphere immediately changed.

One of the women looked exhausted, another could barely stand, and Oliver was holding onto Emory’s hand as if letting go would make the entire world collapse.

Lakeview’s captain stood up.

“They should take one of the bedrooms.”

Nobody objected.

One by one, the soldiers began nodding.

“The women and the child stay together.”

“Agreed.”

“They’ve been through enough.”

Oliver looked around nervously.

“Will someone stay nearby?”

Emory smiled softly. 1

“Of course.”

The boy nodded and walked into the room with the others.

The remaining soldiers began discussing how to divide the space.

River City took one room.

Som took another.

Cloud Country shared with Snake Nest.

The atmosphere altnost felt normal.

Almost.

My phone suddenly vibrated.

Mr. Stait.

I answered immediately.

“Please tell me you have good news.”

The old man’s face appeared on the screen, illuminated by flashing lights and dozens of monitors.

“I don’t.”

That wasn’t promising.

“The hurricane will reach the island in less than thirty minutes.”

Around me, the wind outside howled through the mountain entrance.

It had already become strong enough to shake some of the loose metal sheets near the cave.

Franklin looked outside and swallowed.

“It already feels bad.”

Mr. Stait shook his head.

“It just got worse.”

My stomach sank.

“What happened?”

“The hurricane center updated their report five minutes ago.”

The old man removed his glasses.

“It’s now classified as a category five hurricane.”

The entire room went silent.

Even Jasmine stopped joking.

“A category five?” Daniel repeated.

Mr. Stait nodded.

“The winds have intensified much faster than expected.”

Nobody needed an explanation.

Bonus

Category five meant devastation.

Buildings destroyed.

Trees uprooted.

Entire roads erased.

And we were trapped on an island in the middle of the ocean.

Jason stood up immediately.

“Move everything inside.”

The cave erupted into action.

Boxes of food.

Medical supplies. 1

Water containers.

Blankets.

Generators.

Weapons.

Everyone worked together, carrying everything into the hidden safe house as the wind outside continued to grow stronger.

I was helping Noah move emergency rations when Jason’s voice echoed from the hallway.

“Amber!”

I dropped the box.

“What happened?”

Jason was standing near the back wall of the bunker, holding open yet another steel door.

I stared at him in disbelief.

“Another one?”

He laughed nervously.

“Apparently, the people who built this place really liked secret exits.”

I walked over.

Beyond the door was a narrow tunnel leading upward, eventually connecting back to the cave.

An emergency exit.

A second way out.

Maurice shook his head.

“How many escape routes does one bunker need?”

Franklin looked at the tunnel and shrugged.

Enough to escape a category-five hurricane, apparently.”

Thunder exploded outside.

The lights flickered.

the traffickers, and the island owner were no longer our biggest problém.

Nature itself had decided to join the fight.

And judging by the sound of the wind outside, it wasn’t planning to show mercy to anyone.

D

Buried the truth

Amber POV

The hurricane reached the island fifteen minutes later.

At first, it sounded like distant thunder.

Then the entire mountain began to shake.

The wind howled through the tunnels like some ancient creature trapped beneath the earth, slamming against the cave entrance with enough force to make the walls tremble.

Oliver jumped awake at the first deafening gust.

Several of the women instinctively covered their ears.

Nobody said a word.

Nobody complained.

The safe house was cold, damp, and uncomfortably crowded. Blankets covered the floor, soldiers slept sitting against the walls, and the air smelled of wet clothes and exhaustion.

Still, nobody dared complain.

Because outside, nature itself was tearing the island apart.

The first night was the worst.

The second was simply endless.

And by the third day, we had all stopped asking when it would end.

Communication with Mr. Stait became sporadic.

Sometimes we managed to talk for ten minutes.

Sometimes only for thirty seconds.

The signal disappeared constantly, forcing us to reconnect over and over again.

During one of those calls, Mr. Stait looked more exhausted than I had ever seen him.

“The other countries are asking for you.”

I frowned.

“For me?”

“They want to speak with their teams.”

So, for hours, my phone became the only bridge between the island and the outside world.

Cloud Country’s president spoke with Maurice.

Snake Nest’s military command contacted Héctor.

Lakeview’s defense minister spoke with all four teams.

The leaders of Sum nearly cried when they saw Franklin alive.

And every single call ended exactly the same way.

“Do you know anything about Evermore?”

At first, nobody had answers.

Then the truth slowly began to spread.

Two entire teams had disappeared.

One from Rou Country.

All four teams from Evermore.

And for the first time since the massacre, the governments realized that Evermore had not escaped.

They had died alongside everyone else.

The silence on the other side of the calls was always the same.

Heavy.

Uncomfortable.

Ashamed.

Because for three days, people had blamed Evermore for everything.

And now, it seemed they had been victims too. 1

The secretary of defense from Sum was the first to say it aloud.

“We accused dead men.” 1

Nobody answered.

Because there was nothing to say.

Between calls with governments and military officials, I contacted my family.

The moment my grandfather appeared on the screen, he immediately started shouting.

“Amber Asher, when you get back, I’m locking you inside the estate for the next ten years!”

I laughed for the first time in days.

“Hello to you too, Grandpa.”

“You disappeared in the middle of a game!”

“You say that as if it had been my idea.”

“I knew you were alive.”

“I’m okay.”

“Are the children safe?”

“They’re fine.”

Mrs. Sun burst into tears the moment she saw Jason.

“You idiot!”

Jason smiled weakly.

“Good morning, Mother.”

“Don’t ‘good morning’ me!”

Mr. Sun leaned into the camera.

“Son, next time you want to participate in a military competition, try golf instead.”

Jason actually laughed.

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

For the next three days, I helped every team contact their families. 1

Soldiers who had spent years pretending to be fearless cried while speaking to their parents.

One of the Lakeview girls spent two hours talking to her younger brother.

Franklin had to reassure his mother at least six times that he still had all his limbs. 1

And Oliver…

Oliver never made a call.

Because there was nobody to call.

That realization hurt more than I expected.

On the morning of the fourth day, the silence woke us up.

No wind.

No thunder.

No mountain shaking beneath our feet.

Just silence.

Jasmine was the first one to open the bunker door.

“The hurricane’s over.”

People slowly emerged from the rooms.

Everyone looked exhausted.

Three days underground had made time meaningless.

My phone vibrated almost immediately.

Mr. Stait.

newid the truth

I answered before the first ring ended.

Please tell me that’s good news.”

For the first time in days, the old man smiled.

“Helicopters.”

The entire room froze.

“What?”

“They’ll arrive in five hours.”

Nobody moved.

“Five hours?” Daniel repeated.

Mr. Stait nodded.

“The weather finally cleared. The rescue operation is ready.”

For a moment, nobody reacted.

Then the cave exploded.

People hugged.

Others cried.

Franklin collapsed into a chair.

Jasmine screamed loud enough to wake the dead.

Jason simply closed his eyes in relief.

Mr. Stait raised his voice over the celebration.

“Stay where you are.”

The room immediately quieted.

“Do not leave the cave. Do not investigate the island. Just wait.”

I nodded.

“We understand.”

Before ending the call, Mr. Stait hesitated.

“There’s something else.”

The celebration died instantly.

“The island owner has been speaking to the media throughout the hurricane.”

I frowned.

“What is he saying?”

Mr. Stait looked disgusted.

He claims that everyone survived.”

The room went silent.

“He told the world that all participants were safely sheltered and waiting for the storm to pass.”

Franklin stared at the screen in disbelief.

“People died before the hurricane even started.”

Mr. Stait nodded.

“I know.”

Jasmine crossed her arms.

“So he lied.”

“No.”

I looked toward the cave entrance, at the island that had become a graveyard.

“He didn’t lie.”

Everyone turned toward me.

“He buried the truth.”

Outside, sunlight finally reached the mountain again.

And in five hours, if everything went according to plan, we would leave that island behind forever.

At least, that’s what we all hoped.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 356

Open ocean

Amber POV

We waited.

That was possibly the hardest part.

After three days trapped underground listening to a category-five hurricane tear the island apart, knowing that helicopters were finally coming for us made every minute feel like an hour.

Still, Mr. Stait had been very clear.

Do not move until thirty minutes before extraction.

So we didn't.

Everyone packed quietly.

Nothing unnecessary came with us.

Water.

Medical supplies.

Weapons.

The evidence we had collected.

Alexander's recordings from the beach.

Anything that could prove what had actually happened on the island.

When my timer finally reached thirty minutes, I stood.

"Time."[1]

Nobody needed to be told twice.

Jasmine went first.

She opened the emergency exit Jason had discovered and disappeared into the narrow passage.

Héctor followed.

Then Noah.

One by one, we moved.

I kept Mr. Stait on the phone until we reached the exit.

The sunlight almost hurt my eyes after three days underground.

The island looked completely different.

Trees had been ripped from the ground.

Branches covered everything.

Entire sections of jungle were flattened.

In the distance, smoke still rose from what remained of several command centers.

Nwallowed.

“Mr. Stait, we’re outside.”

“Good. Put me on with Emory.”

I handed him the phone.

Emory immediately switched to military mode.

“Stait.”

“Listen carefully,” Mr. Stait said through the speaker. “You’re going up the mountain. There will be three helicopter fleets.”

Everyone listened.

“The first fleet will head directly toward the beach.”

“Decoys?” Emory asked. 1

“Partially.”

I frowned.

Partially wasn’t a word I particularly enjoyed hearing during an evacuation.

“The second fleet will head east. Every helicopter will pass over your location before separating.’

“And the third?” Emory asked.

“The third fleet is yours.”

That got everyone’s attention.

“They’ll approach from the south, pass over the ridge and descend directly onto the extraction zone. You will have very little time.”

“How little?”

“Minutes.”

Jasmine grinned.

“Plenty.”

Of course she thought that.

We started climbing.

Nobody complained.

Not the injured.

Not the exhausted soldiers.

Not the women who had spent God knew how long trapped on this island.

Not even Oliver.

Everyone knew what was waiting if we failed.

We reached the extraction point with minutes to spare.

Then we heard then.

Helicopters.

Dozens.

The first fleet appeared over the ocean.

Everyone instinctively ducked.

They flew directly above us before continuing toward the beach.

Nothing happened.

“Fleet One clear,” Emory said.

Mr. Stait answered through the phone.

“Confirmed.”

A minute later, the second formation appeared.

They crossed over our position and separated toward the eastern side of the island.

I watched them disappear.

Ten seconds.

Twenty.

Thirty.

Then-

BOOM.

The eastern side of the island erupted.

A massive explosion sent smoke and debris into the sky.

Several people dropped instinctively.

“What the hell was that?” Franklin shouted.

Emory grabbed the phone.

“Stait!”

“We saw it!”

Another explosion followed.

Smaller.

+15 8chus

Farther away.

Jason grabbed my arm and pulled me closer.

“They thought we were there.”

My stomach turned.

The island owner.

If he believed the survivors were hiding somewhere east, then he had just tried to eliminate everyone before the helicopters could reach them.

Jasmine stared toward the smoke.

“That wasn’t part of the game.”

“No,” I whispered.

It was attempted murder.

Again.

Then another sound filled the sky.

Helicopters.

Our helicopters.

The third fleet.

“Positions!” Emory shouted.

Everything changed instantly.

Nobody panicked.

Nobody argued.

The teams separated exactly as instructed.

The helicopters descended almost simultaneously.

The moment the first one touched the ground, the doors opened.

“GO!”

Chaos became coordination.

River City moved toward the first helicopter.

Sum toward another.

Cloud Country and Snake City split between two more.

Lake View moved together.

Starlight followed.

Nobody stopped.

Nobody looked back.

Less than a minute.

That was all it took.

People climbed inside with military precision.

Then came the women.

I watched one of them hesitate when she reached the helicopter.

She stared inside.

Then back toward the island.

As if she couldn't believe she was actually allowed to leave.

"Go!" Emory shouted.

That broke whatever spell held her.

She climbed inside.

The others followed immediately.

Oliver was last.

The boy practically threw himself into the helicopter.

He didn't need anyone to tell him twice.

None of them did.

They moved with the desperation of people terrified that the doors might close before they reached them.

Less than a minute later, all seven were aboard.

I climbed into our helicopter with Jason directly behind me.

The door slammed shut.

“Clear!”

The helicopter lifted immediately.

My stomach dropped as the ground disappeared beneath us.

Jason grabbed my hand.

I squeezed his so hard that I probably hurt him.

Neither of us cared.

Then I looked across the cabin.

And froze.

Mr. Stait was sitting there.

Open ocean

Beside him was Greg Peterson, Sum’s Secretary of Defense. 1

ou came personally?” I shouted over the engines.

Mr. Stait gave me a tired smile.

“Did you genuinely think I was trusting someone else with this?”

Peterson looked out the window toward the island.

Another explosion erupted in the distance.

“Everyone accounted for?”

A soldier checked his tablet.

“All extraction helicopters confirm passengers aboard.”

Nobody celebrated yet.

Not until we were farther away.

Not until that island disappeared behind us.

Jason wrapped an arm around me.

I looked down.

The beach became smaller.

The mountains became smaller.

The island became nothing more than a damaged piece of green surrounded by endless ocean.

Three days.

We had survived three days trapped beneath that place.

People had died there.

Women and a child had been hunted there.

And whoever owned the island had tried one final time to make sure nobody escaped to tell the truth.

I looked toward Mr. Stait.

“We have the footage.”

He nodded.

“Alexander’s?”

“Everything.”

“The bodies?”

“Yes.”

“The attacks?”

“Some of them.”

The women?”

“They’ll testify.”

Peterson’s expression hardened.

“Then the owner has a problem.”

I looked out the window again.

“No.”

Jason turned toward me.

I watched the island disappear beneath the clouds.

“He has several countries’ worth of problems.”

Mr. Stait almost smiled.

Then Oliver’s helicopter appeared beside ours.

And something else occurred to me.

“Where’s Alexander?” 1

Mr. Stait looked toward another aircraft.

“Starlight helicopter. With his team.”

Good.

Separate from Oliver.

For now, that was exactly where I wanted him.

Alexander might claim to be the boy’s father.

He might even be telling the truth.

But Oliver had spent years being treated like prey.

The last thing that child needed was to be handed directly to another man simply because they shared blood.

We would deal with Alexander later.

We would deal with the Vincents later.

For now, Oliver was safe.

The women were safe.

Jason was beside me.

there was nothing beneath my feet except open ocean.

We had made it off the island alive.

Now came the difficult part.

Poving exactly who had tried to make sure we didn’t.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 357

Congratulation

Congratulations

Amber POV

We were far enough from the island that I had finally stopped watching it.

That was when the explosion came.

Even through the roar of the helicopter blades, we heard it.

A deep, violent sound that seemed to travel across the ocean itself.

Everyone turned toward the windows.

“What was that?” I asked.

Mr. Stait was already speaking into his headset.

“All aircraft, report.”

One by one, the pilots responded.

Nobody had been hit.

Then Jason pointed through the window.

“Amber.”

I looked.

A massive cloud of smoke was rising from the island.

From the direction of the beach.

My stomach twisted.

“That was bigger than the others.”

Secretary Peterson stared at the smoke.

“Much bigger.”

Mr. Stait said something quietly into his radio before looking at us.

“The beach.”

Nobody needed him to explain further.

The place where the bodies had been.

The evidence.

Possibly the people responsible.

Gone.

Jason tightened his hand around mine.

“At least we’re not there anymore.”

+15 8cnus

I rested my head against his shoulder.

once, I had absolutely nothing sarcastic to say.

It took hours before we reached the mainland.

By then, I was exhausted enough that all I wanted was a shower, food, and approximately three days of sleep.

Apparently, the universe disagreed.

The moment the helicopter doors opened, flashes exploded in my face.

Reporters.

Dozens of them.

“Mrs. Sun!” 1

“President Sun!”

“How many people died?”

“Was Evermore responsible?”

“Is it true people were being hunted?”

“What happened on the island?”

“Mrs. Sun, did the competition become a military attack?”

I stared at Mr. Stait.

“You couldn’t clear the landing area?”

He grimaced.

“We tried.”

Jason climbed down first and immediately reached for me.

I accepted his hand.

The moment my feet touched the ground, another reporter shouted something that made me stop.

“Mrs. Sun! Have you seen the island owner’s final statement?”

I turned.

“Final statement?”

Mr. Stait’s phone rang.

He answered.

His expression changed almost immediately.

“What?”

Secretary Peterson approached him.

Congranagram

Mr. Stait listened for several seconds.

Then he lowered the phone.

“The island owner is dead.”

Silence. 1

Even some of the reporters stopped shouting.

“What happened?” Jason asked.

Mr. Stait looked toward the smoke still visible on the horizon.

“He took his own life.”

My stomach dropped.

“And before he did,” Mr. Stait continued, “he released a prerecorded statement.”

One of the journalists held up a tablet.

“It’s broadcasting everywhere.”

I looked at Jason.

He nodded.

So we watched.

The old man appeared on the screen.

He looked completely different from the cheerful host who had welcomed us to his island.

Older.

Exhausted.

Empty.

“You were told this was a game.”

His voice was remarkably calm.

“It was.”

“But the soldiers were never the ones being tested.”

The camera moved closer.

“The game was for your governments.”

The reporters around us fell completely silent.

“I wanted to know which countries protected their people when there was nothing to gain.”

My chest tightened.

Then documents appeared beside him.

+158gnus

Military records. 1

Photographs.

Death certificates.

“Evermore took my son.”

More documents appeared.

“And then they took my grandsons.”

Two photographs appeared.

Children.

Tiny children.

My hand flew toward my mouth.

They couldn’t have been older than toddlers.

“They were three years old when they were placed into a special military program.”

Someone behind me whispered, “Jesus.”

The old man’s expression didn’t change.

“I asked for them back.”

Another document appeared.

“They returned them to me in urns.”

Nobody around me moved.

I had known pieces of the story.

I had read the files.

I had seen the reports.

But hearing it from him was different.

Facts became people.

Documents became children.

And suddenly the madness on that island had a face.

Not justification.

Never justification.

But pain.

He continued.

Country after country.

+15 Borus

He showed evidence of what had happened to his family.

The son who died after an ambulance couldn’t reach a hospital because protesters had blocked the road.

The couple killed by a truck driver whose punishment amounted to almost nothing.

The family murdered in Starlight, whose killer walked free because the investigation had been destroyed by incompetence.

Gene Vincent.

The name appeared on the screen.

I felt Jason stiffen beside me.

Then the old man changed subjects.

“But governments were not the only ones who used my island.”

My attention sharpened.

Pictures appeared.

Private jets.

Boats.

People arriving at night.

Some faces were blurred.

Others weren’t.

“For years, wealthy families used this island as a hunting ground.”

The crowd erupted.

“What?”

“Hunting what?”

The old man answered before anyone could process it.

“People.”

My blood went cold.

“Men. Women. Sometimes children.”

Jason’s jaw clenched.

“They paid for access.”

Bank transfers appeared.

“And I accepted their money.”

At least he admitted it.

“Sometimes because I was greedy.”

Congratulations

He paused.

Sometimes because I was afraid.”1

More documents appeared.

“Eventually, I was told very clearly that if I refused them access, I would lose my life as well.”

The video continued.

Names.

Dates.

Payments.

Families.

Not everything was there.

But enough.

Enough to start investigations.

Enough to destroy reputations.

Enough to make governments ask questions they could no longer ignore.

Then the old man leaned toward the camera.

“I have one final decision to announce.”

A document appeared.

Property transfer.

I barely looked at it.

Until Jason squeezed my hand.

Hard.

“Amber.”

“What?”

“Look.”

I looked.

Then blinked.

AMBER ASHER SUN.

“No.” 1

Jason stared at the screen.

“Apparently yes.”

Congratulate

“No.” 1

Stait looked suspiciously amused.

I pointed at the tablet.

“No.” 1

The old man’s prerecorded voice continued.

“After considerable thought, I decided that no government will inherit my island.”

I stared at the document.

“None of you deserve it.”

That caused an uncomfortable reaction among the government officials present.

“Instead, ownership will transfer to the only person on that island who reminded me that genuinely good people may still exist.”

My mouth fell open.

Jason started laughing.

“This isn’t funny.”

“It’s a little funny.”

“Jason!”

The old man’s face returned.

“Amber Asher.”

Every camera around me immediately turned in my direction.

Wonderful.

“You discovered the truth.”

I stopped breathing.

“And when you did, you could have protected only yourself.”

Images appeared from the communications system.

My messages.

My warnings.

The teams I had contacted.

“You could have warned River City and abandoned everyone else.”

Another transmission played.

My voice telling Francis to warn the other teams.

“You could have protected your husband and your own country.”

Another.

telling the Starlight team that the beach was compromised.

“Instead, you warned everyone you could reach.”

Cloud Country.

Snake City.

Lake View.

Sum.

Starlight.

Everyone.

“Even people you considered enemies.”

Alexander.

Of course.

Jason leaned toward me.

“He has a point.”

“Not helping.”

The old man continued.

“You did not ask what country they represented.”

“You asked whether they were alive.”

That shut me up.

His expression softened slightly.

“Perhaps I spent too many years surrounded by people who taught me that humanity was selfish.”

He looked directly into the camera.

“You proved me wrong.”

The property document appeared again.

“Therefore, upon my death, the island and everything legally attached to it will transfer to Amber Asher.”

I stared at the screen.

The reporters stared at me.

Jason stared at me.

Mr. Stait stared at me.

Secretary Peterson stared at me.

Congratu

I slowly turned toward Jason.

don’t want it.”

He burst out laughing.

“I’m serious!”

“I know.”

“People were hunted there!”

“Yes.”

“There are probably bodies everywhere!”

“Probably.”

“Stop agreeing with me!”

His laughter only got worse.

The video wasn’t finished.

The old man looked into the camera one final time.

“Do with it what I failed to do.”

“Make it something better.”

The screen went black.

For approximately three seconds, there was complete silence.

Then every reporter started shouting at once.

“Mrs. Sun!” 1

“Are you accepting the island?”

“What will you do with it?”

“Did you know about the transfer?”

“Will River City claim jurisdiction?”

“Will Sum recognize your ownership?”

“Mrs. Sun!” 1

I closed my eyes.

Three days inside a hurricane.

A massacre.

A trafficking operation.

Alexander Vincent.

Congratulations

A hidden child.

And now I owned an island.

Jason leaned toward my ear.

“Congratulations.”

I opened my eyes and glared at him.

“Don’t.”

“You’re a landowner.”

“Jason.”

“Technically an island owner.”

“Jason.”

He kissed my temple.

“I married very well.”

I elbowed him.

Hard.

And surrounded by soldiers, government officials, survivors, and approximately a hundred screaming reporters, Jason laughed.

Apparently surviving the island hadn’t ended the nightmare.

It had simply made the island mine.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 358

Wrong monster

Amber POV

I didn’t want the island.

That had been my first thought when I saw my name un the transfer documents.

Several hours later, after a shower, two meals, a medical examination, and enough sleep to make me feel marginally human again, my opinion hadn’t changed.

Unfortunately, the island was mine whether I wanted it or not.

I sat in one of the conference rooms at the River City military base, staring at a copy of the owner’s will.

Jason sat beside me.

Emory and Mr. Stait were across from us.

Three lawyers had already explained the same thing in increasingly complicated ways.

I still didn’t like the answer.

“So I can’t sell it.”

“No,” the lawyer answered.

“Rent it?”

“No.”

“Donate it?”

“No.”

I stared at him.

“What exactly can I do with it?”

“You can use it.”

I dropped my forehead against the table.

Jason patted my back.

“There, there.”

I lifted my head just enough to glare at him.

“Don’t.”

He was enjoying this far too much.

“I own an island where people were hunted for entertainment.”

“Technically-”

“If you say technically one more time, I’m divorcing you.”

His mouth snapped shut.

Bnu

Emory coughed suspiciously into his fist.

Stait didn’t even bother hiding his smile.

I sat upright again and looked at the document.

The clause was annoyingly specific.

The island could only pass through inheritance.

It couldn't be sold.

It couldn't be leased.

It couldn't be rented.

And it couldn't be donated.

Apparently, the old man had wanted to make absolutely certain that I couldn't simply sign a document and make his final gift somebody else's problem.

"I thought about giving it to the eight countries," I admitted.

Mr. Stait nodded.

"As a joint military training ground?"

"Exactly. Eight countries participated in the competition. Let them use it together. Turn the place into something useful."

The lawyer shook his head.

"You can permit people onto your property, Mrs. Sun. You can establish facilities there. You can even personally fund projects on the island. But ownership has to remain with you."

"So I could allow the militaries to train there."

"Potentially, yes."

"But I can't give them the island."

"Correct."

I sighed.

Pros.

There were definitely pros.

The island was enormous.

It had several command centers, underground infrastructure, natural caves, a landing strip, access to the ocean,

and enough land to establish training facilities for multiple countries.

It could become exactly what the old man had claimed he wanted at the end.

Something better.

Then there were the cons.

+15 Bon

People had died there.

People had been hunted there.

We didn't even know how many bodies remained undiscovered.

And I had absolutely no desire to add management of horrifying murder island to my list of responsibilities.

Jason leaned closer.

"You're doing the thing."

"What thing?"

"The thing where you pretend you're trying to get rid of something while mentally developing a five-year investment plan for it."

I stared at him.

"I hate that you know me."

He smiled.

"You love that I know you."

Unfortunately, he was right.

Before I could respond, Mr. Stait's tablet started ringing.

He answered, listened for several seconds, and then turned the screen toward us.

“Speaking of the island…”

The news had exploded.

Not because I owned it.

That had lasted approximately six hours as the biggest story.

Then the names started coming out.

The families.

The island owner’s final confession had included financial records, private flight logs, photographs, payments, and years of documentation.

Families from multiple countries had paid for access to the island.

And not for vacations.

Not for hunting animals.

For people.

Some of the world’s wealthiest families had apparently treated human beings like prey.

The footage was everywhere.

Private planes arriving.

+15 B

Boats docking at night.

Men and wonen carrying weapons.

Payments disguised through shell companies.

The public reaction was immediate.

Companies connected to those families began losing value.

Board members resigned.

Politicians demanded investigations.

Governments froze accounts.

Several people whose names appeared in the documents immediately claimed they had merely vacationed on the island and knew nothing about the hunting grounds.

Nobody believed them.

I scrolled through the list.

Then stopped.

Went back.

Read it again. 1

“That’s strange.”

Jason looked over my shoulder.

“What?”

I searched the names again.

Nothing.

Emory apparently noticed the same thing because he took out his own tablet.

“Wait.”

Mr. Stait frowned.

“What?”

Emory looked at him.

“The Vincents aren’t here.”

Silence.

Jason immediately took the tablet from me.

He searched.

Vincent.

Nothing.

He tried several subsidiaries.

Nothing.

Then aliases.

Nothing.

The Vinnys.

The Beckers.

Companies we already knew belonged to the Vincent network.

Nothing.

Jason’s expression changed.

“That doesn’t make sense.”

“No,” I whispered. “It really doesn’t.”

The Vincent family had connections everywhere.

Governments.

Military officials.

Banks.

Corporations.

Families.

They had bought people.

Kidnapped children.

Moved women between households as if they were property.

If there was one family I would have expected to find on a list of people who paid to hunt human beings...

It was them.

Mr. Stait picked up his phone.

“Maybe their records were removed.”

Emory shook his head.

“Why remove only them?”

“Maybe the owner was protecting them.”

“Then why blackmail Alexander?” Jason asked.

Nobody answered.

I looked through the list again.

The Vincents weren’t there.

at once.

Not indirectly.

Not through any company we knew belonged to them.

Nothing.

And judging by the information coming from Sum, we weren’t the only ones who had noticed.

The Sum government had already started cross-referencing the island owner’s evidence against their own investigation into the Vincent network.

They had found the same thing.

No overlap.

Emory slowly sat back.

“Amber…”

“I know.”

We had assumed everything was connected.

The missing women.

The trafficking network.

The families controlled by the Vincents.

The island.

The hunting grounds.

But what if we'd been wrong?

I thought about what the women had told us.

They had escaped from the hunting grounds.

Elizabeth Vincent's memories had led us to a similar place, but not necessarily the same organization.

Then there was Alexander.

The island owner had been blackmailing him.

He had taken Oliver.

He had threatened Alexander's family.

Alexander hadn't been using the island.

He had been trying to get someone off it.

That didn't make Alexander innocent.

Not even close.

I knew what kind of man he was.

new what his organization had done.

But perhaps we had made one dangerous mistake.

We had taken two monstrous operations and assumed there could only be one monster behind them.

Jason apparently reached the same conclusion.

"There are two networks." 1

Emory nodded slowly.

"At least."

Mr. Stait’s expression hardened.

“And we’ve been investigating them as if they were one.”

I stared at the list of families again.

That changed everything.

L

Because if the Vincents weren’t behind the hunting operation, then another organization powerful enough to traffic human beings across international borders had been operating right beside them.

Possibly for decades.

And we had no idea who was actually in charge.

I looked at Jason.

“We’ve been watching the wrong monster.”

Jason shook his head.

“No.”

His eyes remained fixed on the list.

“We’ve been watching one of them.”

That was worse.

.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 359

get it

Tonight

Amber POV

It took less than twenty-four hours for the accused families to fight back.

I wasn't surprised.

People with that much money didn't quietly accept being called murderers.

They hired lawyers.

Public-relations firms.

Digital-forensics experts.

And, apparently, anyone willing to stand in front of a camera and say the words artificial intelligence often enough to create doubt.

The first statement came from one of the families whose private aircraft appeared repeatedly in the island owner's records.

They claimed the footage showed safari expeditions.

Not human hunts. 1

According to them, the videos had been deliberately edited to remove context.

The weapons?

For animals.

The armed groups?

Safari parties.

The payments to the island owner?

Private hunting fees.

The people running through the forest?

That footage, they claimed, wasn't real.

Al-generated.

Within hours, the others followed.

Different lawyers.

Different families.

Almost identical explanations.

Some admitted visiting the island but denied knowing anything about people being hunted there.

Others claimed they had never visited at all.

Several insisted their faces had been digitally inserted into the videos.

15 8cnus

+15 8çnus

And then, somehow, they dragged me into it.

was sitting beside Jason in one of the military base conference rooms when the headline appeared.

AMBER ASHER CONSPIRED WITH ISLAND OWNER TO OBTAIN MULTIBILLION-DOLLAR PRIVATE ISLAND, FAMILIES CLAIM

I stared at it.

Then at Jason.

Then back at it.

“Seriously?”

Jason took the tablet.

His expression darkened.

“They’re saying you helped fabricate the evidence.”

I grabbed it back.

“They’re saying I orchestrated an international massacre to acquire real estate?”

Emory, sitting across from us, grimaced.

“Essentially.”

“While four months pregnant.”

“Apparently.”

“After getting trapped in a category-five hurricane.”

“Amber-”

“And apparently my master plan included almost getting shot, hiding underground for three days, and trusting helicopters to reach us before somebody blew up another section of the island.”

Jason leaned back.

“When you say it like that, it doesn’t sound like a particularly good plan.”

“Because it wasn’t my plan!”

“I know.”

I stood.

“No.” 2

Jason recognized that tone.

“Amber.”

“No. I’m answering this.”

The reporters were still gathered outside the military base.

Tonight

I didn’t organize a press conference.

Nidn’t need one.

I walked outside.

Jason came with me, as did Mr. Stait and several officers.

The shouting started immediately.

“Mrs. Sun!” 1

“Did you know the island owner before the competition?”

“Did you make an agreement with him?”

“Were the videos manipulated?”

“Did you know you would inherit the island?”

I stopped in front of the microphones.

“No.” 2

The questions stopped for approximately half a second.

Then started again.

I raised my hand.

“You want my response? Fine.”

The reporters quieted.

“I had never met that man before arriving on his island.”

Cameras flashed.

“I did not know I would inherit anything. I didn’t ask for the island, and frankly, when I discovered I had inherited it, my first reaction was to try to give it away.”

A few reporters laughed.

I didn’t.

“As for the accusations that I somehow colluded with him…”

I looked directly at the cameras.

“I was trapped on that island too.”

The crowd became quieter.

“People died around us. Command centers exploded. Armed men were killing participants. A false evacuation order directed survivors toward a beach where people were waiting to shoot them.”

I placed a hand over my stomach.

“I spent three days underground during a category-five hurricane while pregnant.”

Jason stepped slightly closer to me.

My husband was there.”

I pointed toward the military base behind us.

“Soldiers from multiple countries were there. Survivors from families I had never met were there. Kidnapping victims were found beneath that Island.”

I shook my head.

“So if someone’s defense is that I somehow orchestrated all of that because I wanted an island, they are welcome to make that argument in court.”

One reporter shouted, “What about claims that the footage is AI-generated?”

I looked at him.

“Then investigate it.”

That seemed to surprise everyone.

“Don’t believe me because I’m Amber Asher. Don’t believe the accused families because they’re wealthy. Examine the original recordings. Examine the cameras. Examine the financial transactions. Interview the survivors.”

I paused.

“Evidence doesn’t need popularity.”

Another reporter shouted, “Will you keep the island?”

“Legally, I don’t have much choice at the moment.”

That caused another wave of questions.

I turned around.

I’d said enough.

Let the investigators do the rest.

When I returned inside, Emory was waiting.

“That went well.”

“I feel better.”

“I noticed.”

Jason smiled.

Then Emory’s expression became serious.

“There’s something else.”

I immediately knew it involved Oliver.

“What happens to him?”

Emory nodded.

“He’s going with Mr. Stait.”

son frowned.

“Where?”

“Somewhere protected ”

“Alexander isn’t taking him?”

“No.” 2

I released a breath I hadn’t realized I was holding.

Whatever Alexander’s biological connection to Oliver might be, nobody was handing an eleven-year-old child to him simply because he claimed to be his father.

“Does Alexander know?” I asked.

“He knows Oliver is under government protection.”

“And he’s okay with that?”

Emory gave me a look.

“No.” 2

That sounded more believable.

“But at the moment, he doesn’t have much choice.”

I nodded.

Oliver was more than a frightened child rescued from beneath an island.

He was a piece of the puzzle.

Possibly the only living person connecting the island owner, Alexander, the Vincent family, and whatever second trafficking network we had just discovered.

But first and foremost, he was eleven.

Whatever information he had could wait until he was safe.

By the time Jason and I finally returned to Sum, it was late.

The castle was almost completely dark.

Mrs. Sun met us downstairs and immediately pressed a finger against her lips.

“They’re sleeping.”

“Where?” Jason whispered.

“Iris’s room.”

That surprised me.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 360

She smiled.

of them.”

Jason and I went upstairs quietly.

Iris’s door was partially open.

We didn’t enter.

We simply stood there.

Alice was sprawled sideways across the bed, one leg hanging over the edge.

Alex was sleeping beside her.

Rose had apparently fallen asleep on the floor before someone covered her with a blanket.

And Iris was trapped against the headboard because the younger children had somehow taken over her entire bed

Jason leaned against the doorframe.

I felt his hand find mine.

Nobody had been kidnapped.

Nobody had been hurt.

They were home.

Safe.

For tonight, that was enough.

We watched them for several minutes before quietly closing the door.

Later, when Jason and I finally climbed into bed, neither of us immediately slept.

I could feel him staring at the ceiling.

“What?”

He didn’t answer.

“Jason.”

“I’m sorry.”

I turned toward him.

“We’ve already had this conversation.”

“I know.”

“Then stop apologizing.”

“I can’t.”

He looked at me.

“I volunteered you for that mission.”

eighed.

“Jason–”

“I thought you’d be behind a computer.”

“So did I.”

“Amber.”

His voice cracked slightly.

“I put you in danger.”

He placed his hand against my stomach.

“And them.”

I covered his hand with mine. 1

“You didn’t create the island.”

“But I sent you there.”

“And I agreed to go.”

“You didn’t know what it was.”

“Neither did you.”

He looked away.

“The children could have lost both of us.”

That one hurt.

Because he was right.

For a moment, I didn’t answer.

Then I moved closer and rested my forehead against his.

“We came home.”

“Barely.”

“But we did.”

Jason closed his eyes.

I touched his cheek.

“We can’t change what happened. We can only learn from it.”

His hand remained protectively over my stomach.

“No more volunteering you for military missions.”

I smiled.

That’s probably a reasonable marriage rule.”

“I’m serious.”

“So am I.”

He opened his eyes.

“And no more islands.”

“That one might be difficult.”

He stared at me.

I couldn’t help it.

I laughed.

Jason groaned and pulled me against him.

Somewhere down the hall, our children were sleeping together because apparently none of them wanted to be alone.

Tomorrow, we would deal with the Vincents.

Oliver.

The second trafficking network.

The accusations.

And the island I couldn’t get rid of.

But tonight, I was home.

Jason was home.

Our children were safe.

One day

Amber POV

+15 8enus

I didn’t even get one full day.

That was all I wanted.

One day.

Twenty-four uninterrupted hours in which nobody was kidnapped, nobody tried to kill us, nobody demanded custody of one of our children, and nobody uncovered another international criminal organization.

Apparently, that was too much to ask.

I woke up to my phone vibrating against the nightstand.

Jason groaned beside me.

“Ignore it.”

“I can’t.”

“You absolutely can.”

I reached for it.

He grabbed my wrist without opening his eyes.

“Amber.”

“What?”

“We survived an island, a massacre, and a category-five hurricane. We deserve one morning.”

The phone stopped.

I smiled.

“See? Problem solved.”

It immediately started ringing again.

Jason opened his eyes.

“I hate our lives.”

I checked the screen.

Pamela.

That meant I couldn’t ignore it.

“Hello?”

“Turn on the news.”

Of course.

Ten minutes later, Jason and I were downstairs with coffee, watching Alexander Vincent give a press conference.

“My son is currently being held by the River City military.’

Jason nearly choked.

“His son?”

I stared at the screen. J

Alexander stood surrounded by reporters and lawyers.

“For three weeks, I believed my child was being held somewhere on that island. I went there because I was being blackmailed with his life.”

He paused.

“I found him alive.”

Cameras flashed.

“And now River City’s military refuses to release him to me.”

I put down my coffee.

“Technically, they aren’t refusing to release him. They’re refusing to hand an traumatized eleven-year-old to a stranger.”

Jason nodded.

“Important distinction.”

Alexander continued.

“They will not even allow me to meet him privately.”

A reporter shouted, “Has the child been confirmed as your biological son?”

Alexander’s expression hardened.

“We are working on confirmation.”

“So you don’t know?”

“I know.”

Jason rolled his eyes.

“Apparently DNA is optional when you’re a Vincent.”

Before Alexander could continue, the broadcast changed.

Mr. Stait appeared.

And unlike Alexander, he didn’t bring lawyers.

He brought evidence.

“Oliver Vincent is not a prisoner.”

Behind him appeared photographs from the island.

The tunnels.

he underground rooms.

The hatch.

The women.

Then Oliver's rescue record appeared with identifying information censored.

"This eleven-year-old child was discovered alongside six women who had escaped an area of the island used as á human hunting ground."

The reporters became silent.

Mr. Stait continued.

"He had been kidnapped."

Another photograph appeared.

"He was terrified, dehydrated, and unaware that Alexander Vincent claimed to be his father."

Alexander's narrative collapsed almost instantly.

"The child does not know Mr. Vincent," Mr. Stait said. "Whatever biological relationship may exist between them does not change that."

I nodded slowly.

"Good."

Jason smiled.

"He isn't giving Alexander an inch."

"He shouldn't."

Mr. Stait looked directly into the cameras.

"Our responsibility is to protect the child, establish his identity, investigate his kidnapping, and help him process what happened."

Another reporter shouted, "Will Alexander Vincent eventually be allowed access?"

"That decision will be made according to the child's welfare and the investigation."

Simple.

Clean.

And considerably more reasonable than Alexander's accusation that the military had stolen his son.

Unfortunately, Alexander wasn't our biggest problem that morning.

Because the accused families had started talking.

And this time, they weren't only defending themselves.

They were pointing fingers.

One family released a statement claiming that while the Vincents had never personally participated in a hunt, they had helped organize access to the island.

Another claimed introductions had been arranged through intermediaries connected to the Vincent network.

A third went further.

They accused the Vincents of helping identify wealthy clients interested in the hunts.

I stared at the television.

"There it is."

Jason's expression hardened.

"The connection."

"Maybe."

I wasn't accepting anything without evidence anymore.

Not after everything we had gotten wrong.

The families accusing the Vincents were desperate.

Desperate people lied.

But desperate people also exposed each other.

Emory called less than an hour later.

“The island has officially been declared a crime scene.”

I sighed.

“My island.”

“Unfortunately.”

“I hate saying that.”

“You’ll get used to it.”

“I absolutely will not.”

He laughed.

“River City and Sum are submitting formal requests for access.”

“For what?”

“Full forensic investigation.”

I immediately became serious.

“Together?”

“Joint operation. River City wants to investigate the hunting grounds. Sum wants access because of the possible Vincent connection and the trafficking investigation.”

“Do they need my permission?”

The island belongs to you.”

I closed my eyes.

Of course they did.

“Send me whatever I need to sign.”

Jason looked at me.

“No hesitation?” 1

“People died there.”

I looked toward the television.

“Search every centimeter.”

Emory became quiet.

“That’s essentially what they intend to do.”

“Then they have permission.”

I hung up.

Jason slid a plate toward me.

“Eat.”

“I’m not hungry.”

“Amber.”

I looked at him.

He pointed at my stomach.

“You’re feeding three people.”

I reluctantly picked up a piece of toast.

“Not even one day.”

He smiled sympathetically.

“You almost got twelve hours.”

“Luxury.”

Then my phone rang again.

I stared at it.

Jason stared at it.

Neither of us moved.

“Maybe if we ignore it, they’ll assume we’re dead,” he suggested.

Considering the last week, that’s entirely believable.”

The phone continued ringitig.

I checked the number.

Encrypted.

My expression changed.

Jason noticed.

“Who?”

“The Ember Association.”

I answered.

“Amber Asher.”

A woman’s voice came through.

“Mrs. Asher, we finished tracing the families from the island.”

I immediately put the call on speaker.

Jason sat straighter.

“What did you find?”

There was a pause.

Then Alison Sparks spoke.

“All of them.”

I frowned.

“All of what?”

“Every family publicly identified as having participated in the hunts.”

I stopped chewing.

“What about them?”

“They’re connected.”

Jason and I looked at each other. 1

“Connected how?”

“Different companies. Different countries. Different surnames.

I could hear papers moving on her side.

“But when we followed the ownership structures, marriages, inheritance records, trusts and old family lines...”

She stopped.

already knew what she was going to say.

“Say it.”

“They’re branches of the Vincent family.”

Silence.

I slowly put the toast back onto my plate.

Jason took the phone.

“You’re certain?”

“We checked twice.”

“Check again.”

“We’re already doing it.”

Alison continued.

“Some connections go back more than a century. Others were created through marriages. Several families changed their surnames generations ago.”

I thought about the Vinnys.

The Beckers.

Families we had already discovered were Vincents under different names.

This was bigger.

Much bigger.

“So the Vincents weren’t on the island owner’s list,” I whispered.

“No,” Alison answered.

“Because they didn’t need to be.”

Jason understood immediately.

“The families hunting people were Vincents.”

“Branches,” Alison corrected. “But yes.”

I stood and walked toward the window.

The castle grounds were peaceful.

Children were somewhere upstairs.

Guards walked along the perimeter.

Everything looked normal.

It wasn’t.

“Send everything to me.”

Uready encrypted. ”

ready

“Send copies to Mr. Stait and Emory.”

There was a short pause.

“Amber, there’s something you need to understand.”

“What?”

“The Vincent family isn’t a family in the traditional sense anymore.”

I waited.

“It’s a network.”

My stomach tightened.

“We’ve been treating Alexander Vincent as the head of one family.”

“Yes.”

“But that’s not what he controls.”

“No.”

I closed my eyes.

Companies depended on companies.

Families depended on families.

Marriages connected bloodlines.

Children became collateral.

Businesses became leverage.

Governments became protection.

The ecosystem.

We had already seen it.

We simply hadn’t understood how far it reached.

Jason came to stand beside me.

I looked at him.

“So the families weren’t working with the Vincents.”

He nodded slowly.

“They were Vincents.”

My phone vibrated again.

Another message.

Another crisis.

Another secret.

I looked at the clock.

It wasn’t even nine in the morning.

Not even one day to rest.

Apparently, surviving the island had been the easy part.

Now we had to dismantle the family that had helped turn it into a hunting ground.

P

She smiled.

of them.”

Jason and I went upstairs quietly.

Iris’s door was partially open.

We didn’t enter.

We simply stood there.

Alice was sprawled sideways across the bed, one leg hanging over the edge.

Alex was sleeping beside her.

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He didn’t answer.

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“We’ve already had this conversation.”

“I know.”

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“The children could have lost both of us.”

That one hurt.

Because he was right.

For a moment, I didn’t answer.

Then I moved closer and rested my forehead against his.

“We came home.”

“Barely.”

“But we did.”

Jason closed his eyes.

I touched his cheek.

“We can’t change what happened. We can only learn from it.”

His hand remained protectively over my stomach.

“No more volunteering you for military missions.”

I smiled.

That’s probably a reasonable marriage rule.”

“I’m serious.”

“So am I.”

He opened his eyes.

“And no more islands.”

“That one might be difficult.”

He stared at me.

I couldn’t help it.

I laughed.

Jason groaned and pulled me against him.

Somewhere down the hall, our children were sleeping together because apparently none of them wanted to be alone.

Tomorrow, we would deal with the Vincents.

Oliver.

The second trafficking network.

The accusations.

And the island I couldn’t get rid of.

But tonight, I was home.

Jason was home.

Our children were safe.

One day

Amber POV

+15 8enus

I didn’t even get one full day.

That was all I wanted.

One day.

Twenty-four uninterrupted hours in which nobody was kidnapped, nobody tried to kill us, nobody demanded custody of one of our children, and nobody uncovered another international criminal organization.

Apparently, that was too much to ask.

I woke up to my phone vibrating against the nightstand.

Jason groaned beside me.

“Ignore it.”

“I can’t.”

“You absolutely can.”

I reached for it.

He grabbed my wrist without opening his eyes.

“Amber.”

“What?”

“We survived an island, a massacre, and a category-five hurricane. We deserve one morning.”

The phone stopped.

I smiled.

“See? Problem solved.”

It immediately started ringing again.

Jason opened his eyes.

“I hate our lives.”

I checked the screen.

Pamela.

That meant I couldn’t ignore it.

“Hello?”

“Turn on the news.”

Of course.

Ten minutes later, Jason and I were downstairs with coffee, watching Alexander Vincent give a press conference.

“My son is currently being held by the River City military.’

Jason nearly choked.

“His son?”

I stared at the screen. J

Alexander stood surrounded by reporters and lawyers.

“For three weeks, I believed my child was being held somewhere on that island. I went there because I was being blackmailed with his life.”

He paused.

“I found him alive.”

Cameras flashed.

“And now River City’s military refuses to release him to me.”

I put down my coffee.

“Technically, they aren’t refusing to release him. They’re refusing to hand an traumatized eleven-year-old to a stranger.”

Jason nodded.

“Important distinction.”

Alexander continued.

“They will not even allow me to meet him privately.”

A reporter shouted, “Has the child been confirmed as your biological son?”

Alexander’s expression hardened.

“We are working on confirmation.”

“So you don’t know?”

“I know.”

Jason rolled his eyes.

“Apparently DNA is optional when you’re a Vincent.”

Before Alexander could continue, the broadcast changed.

Mr. Stait appeared.

And unlike Alexander, he didn’t bring lawyers.

He brought evidence.

“Oliver Vincent is not a prisoner.”

Behind him appeared photographs from the island.

The tunnels.

he underground rooms.

The hatch.

The women.

Then Oliver’s rescue record appeared with identifying information censored.

“This eleven-year-old child was discovered alongside six women who had escaped an area of the island used as á human hunting ground.”

The reporters became silent.

Mr. Stait continued.

“He had been kidnapped.”

Another photograph appeared.

“He was terrified, dehydrated, and unaware that Alexander Vincent claimed to be his father.”

Alexander's narrative collapsed almost instantly.

"The child does not know Mr. Vincent," Mr. Stait said. "Whatever biological relationship may exist between them does not change that."

I nodded slowly.

"Good."

Jason smiled.

"He isn't giving Alexander an inch."

"He shouldn't."

Mr. Stait looked directly into the cameras.

"Our responsibility is to protect the child, establish his identity, investigate his kidnapping, and help him process what happened."

Another reporter shouted, "Will Alexander Vincent eventually be allowed access?"

"That decision will be made according to the child's welfare and the investigation."

Simple.

Clean.

And considerably more reasonable than Alexander's accusation that the military had stolen his son.

Unfortunately, Alexander wasn't our biggest problem that morning.

Because the accused families had started talking.

And this time, they weren't only defending themselves.

They were pointing fingers.

One family released a statement claiming that while the Vincents had never personally participated in a hunt, they had helped organize access to the island.

Another claimed introductions had been arranged through intermediaries connected to the Vincent network.

A third went further.

They accused the Vincents of helping identify wealthy clients interested in the hunts.

I stared at the television.

“There it is.”

Jason’s expression hardened.

“The connection.”

“Maybe.”

I wasn’t accepting anything without evidence anymore.

Not after everything we had gotten wrong.

The families accusing the Vincents were desperate.

Desperate people lied.

But desperate people also exposed each other.

Emory called less than an hour later.

“The island has officially been declared a crime scene.”

I sighed.

“My island.”

“Unfortunately.”

“I hate saying that.”

“You’ll get used to it.”

“I absolutely will not.”

He laughed.

“River City and Sum are submitting formal requests for access.”

“For what?”

“Full forensic investigation.”

I immediately became serious.

“Together?”

“Joint operation. River City wants to investigate the hunting grounds. Sum wants access because of the possible Vincent connection and the trafficking investigation.”

“Do they need my permission?”

The island belongs to you.”

I closed my eyes.

Of course they did.

“Send me whatever I need to sign.”

Jason looked at me.

“No hesitation?” 1

“People died there.”

I looked toward the television.

“Search every centimeter.”

Emory became quiet.

“That’s essentially what they intend to do.”

“Then they have permission.”

I hung up.

Jason slid a plate toward me.

“Eat.”

“I’m not hungry.”

“Amber.”

I looked at him.

He pointed at my stomach.

“You’re feeding three people.”

I reluctantly picked up a piece of toast.

“Not even one day.”

He smiled sympathetically.

“You almost got twelve hours.”

“Luxury.”

Then my phone rang again.

I stared at it.

Jason stared at it.

Neither of us moved.

“Maybe if we ignore it, they’ll assume we’re dead,” he suggested.

Considering the last week, that’s entirely believable.”

The phone continued ringitig.

I checked the number.

Encrypted.

My expression changed.

Jason noticed.

“Who?”

“The Ember Association.”

I answered.

“Amber Asher.”

A woman’s voice came through.

“Mrs. Asher, we finished tracing the families from the island.”

I immediately put the call on speaker.

Jason sat straighter.

“What did you find?”

There was a pause.

Then Alison Sparks spoke.

“All of them.”

I frowned.

“All of what?”

“Every family publicly identified as having participated in the hunts.”

I stopped chewing.

“What about them?”

“They’re connected.”

Jason and I looked at each other. 1

“Connected how?”

“Different companies. Different countries. Different surnames.

I could hear papers moving on her side.

“But when we followed the ownership structures, marriages, inheritance records, trusts and old family lines...”

She stopped.

already knew what she was going to say.

“Say it.”

“They’re branches of the Vincent family.”

Silence.

I slowly put the toast back onto my plate.

Jason took the phone.

“You’re certain?”

“We checked twice.”

“Check again.”

“We’re already doing it.”

Alison continued.

“Some connections go back more than a century. Others were created through marriages. Several families changed their surnames generations ago.”

I thought about the Vinnys.

The Beckers.

Families we had already discovered were Vincents under different names.

This was bigger.

Much bigger.

“So the Vincents weren’t on the island owner’s list,” I whispered.

“No,” Alison answered.

“Because they didn’t need to be.”

Jason understood immediately.

“The families hunting people were Vincents.”

“Branches,” Alison corrected. “But yes.”

I stood and walked toward the window.

The castle grounds were peaceful.

Children were somewhere upstairs.

Guards walked along the perimeter.

Everything looked normal.

It wasn’t.

“Send everything to me.”

Uready encrypted. ”

ready

“Send copies to Mr. Stait and Emory.”

There was a short pause.

“Amber, there’s something you need to understand.”

“What?”

“The Vincent family isn’t a family in the traditional sense anymore.”

I waited.

“It’s a network.”

My stomach tightened.

“We’ve been treating Alexander Vincent as the head of one family.”

“Yes.”

“But that’s not what he controls.”

“No.”

I closed my eyes.

Companies depended on companies.

Families depended on families.

Marriages connected bloodlines.

Children became collateral.

Businesses became leverage.

Governments became protection.

The ecosystem.

We had already seen it.

We simply hadn’t understood how far it reached.

Jason came to stand beside me.

I looked at him.

“So the families weren’t working with the Vincents.”

He nodded slowly.

“They were Vincents.”

My phone vibrated again.

Another message.

Another crisis.

Another secret.

I looked at the clock.

It wasn’t even nine in the morning.

Not even one day to rest.

Apparently, surviving the island had been the easy part.

Now we had to dismantle the family that had helped turn it into a hunting ground.

P

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 361

Amber POV

The children found us before we could find them.

Jason and I were still sitting at the breakfast table, surrounded by coffee, half-eaten toast, and enough international criminal evidence to ruin several governments, when I heard running footsteps upstairs.

Then more footsteps.

Then-

“Mom!”

I barely had time to turn.

Alice slammed into me.

I caught her instinctively, laughing as she wrapped both arms around my neck.

“Careful, sweetheart.”

She immediately loosened her grip.

“The babies!”

“They’re fine.”

Alex arrived seconds later.

Unlike Alice, he didn’t throw himself at me.

He stopped.

Just stood there staring at us.

Jason immediately pushed his chair back.

“Hey, buddy.”

Alex’s lower lip trembled.

“You came back.”

That destroyed me.

I opened one arm.

“Of course we came back.”

He crossed the room so quickly that I barely saw him move.

One second he was standing there.

The next, his arms were around me too.

Jason joined us, wrapping himself around all three of us.

“We’re here,” he whispered.

Iris and Rose appeared next.

Rose ran straight toward Jason.

Iris didn’t.

She stood in the doorway.

Trying very hard to look composed.

Then she walked over and hugged both of us.

Hard.

Nobody said anything for several minutes.

Nobody needed to.

Eventually Alice pulled away.

“You’re not going anywhere today.”

I smiled.

“Good morning to you too.”

“I’m serious.”

“So am I,” Alex added.

Jason raised an eyebrow.

“Don’t you two have school?”

Four horrified faces stared at him.

“No,” Alice said.

Jason looked at me.

I looked at him.

“Technically,” he began-

“Don’t,” Iris warned.

I covered my mouth to hide my laugh.

Rose crossed her arms.

“We thought you were going to die.”

That ended the humor immediately.

Jason crouched in front of her.

“We’re okay.”

“But you almost weren’t.”

“No,” he admitted. “We almost weren’t.”

Alice tightened her grip around my hand.

“So we’re not going to school.”

I should have argued.

Education was important.

Routine was important.

Normalcy was important.

But after everything that had happened, I couldn’t bring myself to force them away from us.

I looked at Jason.

“Family day?”

His answer was immediate.

“Family day.”

Alice screamed.

Alex smiled. 1

Rose cheered.

Even Iris looked relieved.

I pointed at all of them.

“One day.”

“Two,” Alice negotiated.

“One.”

“One and a half.”

“How exactly do you attend half a school day tomorrow?”

“I’ll figure it out.”

Jason laughed.

“She’s definitely your daughter.”

we did absolutely nothing important.

No investigations.

No Vincents.

No island.

No governments.

At least, that was the rule.

phone went into a drawer.

Jason turned his off completely.

Mrs. Sun nearly applauded when she saw us do it.

We ate breakfast together.

Alice insisted on making pancakes and produced something that looked like fried cement.

Alex beat Jason at chess.

Twice.

Jason demanded a rematch.

Alex beat him again.

Rose dragged us into the gardens.

Iris pretended she was too old to participate in whatever ridiculous game the younger children invented, then became the most competitive person there.

For several hours, the world became small again.

Just us.

The castle.

Our children.

No explosions.

No helicopters.

No murder islands.

It was wonderful.

That afternoon, I found Jason staring at me.

“What?”

He continued staring.

“Jason.”

“Doctor.”

I frowned.

“What about one?”

“I want you to see one.”

“I’m fine.”

“You were trapped on an island.”

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“So were you.”

ouring a category-five hurricane.”

“Underground.”

“After hiking through a jungle.”

“I took breaks.”

“Amber.”

I sighed.

“I’m fine.”

His eyes dropped toward my stomach.

I was almost five months pregnant now.

There was no hiding it anymore.

The twins had apparently decided subtlety wasn’t a family characteristic.

Jason placed his hand against my stomach.

“I know you feel fine.”

“Then-”

“But I want to know that you’re fine.”

His voice softened.

“And that they’re fine.”

I stopped arguing.

The island had been stressful.

Physically and emotionally.

I’d climbed a mountain.

Spent days underground.

Barely slept.

Survived explosions.

And somehow, in the middle of all of it, I’d almost forgotten that my body was already doing something incredibly demanding.

I covered his hand with mine.

“Okay.”

Jason looked suspicious.

“Okay?”

“I’ll make an appointment.”

Today.”

“Jason.”

“Tomorrow.”

I laughed.

“Tomorrow.”

He kissed my forehead.

“Thank you.”

“You realize you’re also getting checked.”

His smile disappeared.

“What?” 1

“You spent twelve hours driving without stopping before this whole disaster, then ran around an island while people shot at you, survived a hurricane, and barely slept.”

“I’m fine.”

I smiled sweetly.

“Interesting.”

He narrowed his eyes.

“Don’t.”

“That’s exactly what I said.”

“Amber.”

“Doctor.”

He sighed.

“Fine.”

Marriage was beautiful.

Our peaceful family day lasted until approximately four in the afternoon.

A guard contacted us from the castle entrance.

“Mrs. Sun?”

“Yes?”

“There’s a young man here asking for Iris.”

I looked toward Iris.

She froze.

“Who?”

The guard checked.

“Franklin Owen.”

I slowly smiled.

Iris immediately pointed at me.

“No.”

“I haven’t said anything.”

“Your face said it.”

Jason looked between us.

“What am I missing?”

“Nothing,” Iris said quickly.

The guard continued.

“He says she didn’t arrive at school today and he was worried.”

My smile widened.

Iris groaned.

“He’s not my boyfriend.”

“I still haven’t said anything.”

“You were going to.”

“Absolutely.”

Jason looked delighted now.

“Franklin?”

Iris covered her face.

“Can everyone stop?”

Alice appeared from nowhere.

“Is Iris’s boyfriend here?”

“HE’S NOT MY BOYFRIEND!”

Rose shouted from the hallway.

“Franklin’s here?”

Iris looked toward the ceiling.

“I hate this family.”

“No, you don’t,” I said.

She glared at me.

Then immediately started fixing her hair.

I raised an eyebrow.

She stopped.

“Don’t.”

I smiled innocently.

“Didn’t say anything.”

A few minutes later, Franklin walked into the sitting room.

He looked genuinely worried.

Until he saw Iris.

Then his entire body relaxed.

“You’re okay.”

Iris blinked.

“Of course I’m okay.”

“You weren’t at school.”

“My parents just came back from an island where people tried to kill them.”

Franklin paused.

“Fair.”

He looked toward Jason and me.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“You didn’t,” Jason said.

I smiled.

“We’re having a family day.”

Franklin nodded.

“I’ll leave.”

Iris spoke immediately.

“You can stay.”

Silence.

Absolute silence.

+15 Borus

I turned toward Jason.

Jason turned toward me.

Alice’s mouth fell open.

Rose started smiling.

Alex wisely looked away.

Franklin stared at Iris.

“Really?”

Iris’s face turned red.

“I mean… you’re already here.”

“Right.”

“And it would be stupid to drive all the way back.”

“Obviously.”

“Exactly.”

Franklin smiled.

“Then I’ll stay.”

I leaned toward Jason.

“Not her boyfriend.”

He whispered back.

“Clearly.”

Iris threw a pillow at us.

And somehow, surrounded by laughter, children, terrible pancakes, an embarrassed teenager and her absolutely- not-boyfriend, I realized something.

This was what we had almost lost.

Not companies.

Not islands.

Not fortunes.

This.

A ridiculous afternoon with the people we loved.

Tomorrow, I would go to the doctor.

Tomorrow, the investigation would continue.

Tomorrow, the Vincents would still exist.

+15 Bcnus

school

Amber POV

Franklin had barely been inside the castle for twenty minutes when Jason finally asked the question that had

apparently been bothering him.

“Why were you at school?”

Franklin stopped with a cookie halfway to his mouth.

“What?”

Jason stared at him.

“You were on an island three days ago.”

“So were you.”

“I wasn’t at school this morning.”

“You’re also not eighteen.”

I covered my mouth.

Jason narrowed his eyes.

“That’s not the point.”

Franklin ate the cookie.

“What is the point?”

“You participated in an international military exercise that turned into an actual massacre, survived a category- five hurricane, spent three days trapped on an island, and then went back to school?”

When he put it that way...

Yes.

It sounded ridiculous.

Iris looked at Franklin.

“Actually, why did you go?”

Franklin shrugged.

“My mom made me.”

I blinked.

“Excuse me?”

“My mother woke me up this morning and told me I had already missed enough classes.”

Alice frowned.

“Doesn’t she know you were on the island?”

Franklin suddenly became very interested in the plate in front of him.

Jason noticed immediately.

“Franklin.”

“What?”

“Does your mother know you were on the island?”

Silence.

I sat straighter.

“Franklin Owen.”

He sighed.

“No.”

Iris’s mouth fell open.

“What?!”

“I didn’t tell her.”

“You participated in a military operation without telling your mother?”

“It was supposed to be a competition!”

“That isn’t better!”

Franklin held up both hands.

“She wouldn’t have let me go!”

I stared at him.

Something wasn’t adding up.

“Wait.”

Everyone looked at me.

“You turned eighteen the day the competition started.”

Franklin nodded.

“Yes.”

I slowly narrowed my eyes.

“Did you…”

Jason understood at exactly the same moment.

“You ran away.”

Franklin grimaced.

A

“I wouldn’t call it running away.”

What would you call it?” Iris demanded.

“Leaving without obtaining parental authorization after becoming legally old enough to make my own decisions.”

Jason stared at him.

“That’s running away with extra words.”

I burst out laughing.

Franklin pointed at him.

“I was eighteen.”

“For approximately five minutes!” Iris exclaimed.

“Still counts.”

Apparently, the moment Franklin officially turned eighteen, he had left home, met his military contact, and disappeared to participate in the competition without bothering to inform Mrs. Owen.

Then he’d returned after surviving a massacre and a hurricane.

And because he hadn’t told his mother where he’d gone in the first place, she hadn’t believed his explanation.

“She thought I was lying,” Franklin explained.

I stared at him.

“You came home after disappearing for days and told your mother that you had secretly joined an international military competition, got trapped on an island where people were being hunted, survived a category-five hurricane, and were evacuated by the military.”

“Yes.”

“And she didn’t believe you.”

“No.”

I considered it.

“Honestly, I understand her.”

“Thank you!”

Iris threw a cushion at me.

Franklin caught it.

“She said if I was going to invent excuses for disappearing, I should at least make them believable.”

Jason laughed.

“What did she think you were doing?”

Franklin looked uncomfortable.

Iris narrowed her eyes.

“What?”

Nothing.”

“Franklin.”

He sighed.

“She thought I disappeared with a girl.”

Silence.

Then everyone looked at Iris.

Her eyes widened.

“WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME?”

I laughed so hard my stomach hurt.

Franklin’s face turned bright red.

“I didn’t say it was Iris!”

“You didn’t have to,” Rose said.

Iris looked personally betrayed.

“Rose!”

Jason leaned toward me.

“I like him.”

“Of course you do.”

Franklin wisely decided to stop talking.

The next morning, Jason and I went to the doctor.

Technically, we had both been examined immediately after returning from the island.

But there was a considerable difference between a military doctor confirming that we weren’t actively dying and an actual medical appointment.

Jason insisted on the second.

And because I had agreed to go only if he was checked too, he was sitting beside me looking deeply offended while a doctor reviewed his results.

“Everything looks normal, Mr. Sun.”

I smiled.

Jason looked smug.

“See?”

“Don’t celebrate yet. You’re still sleeping eight hours tonight.

“Amber-”

Doctor’s orders.”

“The doctor didn’t say that.”

“I interpreted.”

The doctor laughed.

Then she opened my file.

Her expression changed.

It wasn’t dramatic. 1

Just a slight narrowing of her eyes.

Unfortunately, I noticed.

Jason noticed too.

“What?”

The doctor looked at me.

“Your blood pressure is elevated.”

I frowned.

“How elevated?”

She gave me the numbers.

Jason immediately stopped smiling.

“Is that dangerous?”

“It can be concerning during pregnancy, particularly with twins.”

My hand instinctively moved toward my stomach.

“The babies?”

“The babies look fine.”

I released the breath I’d been holding.

The ultrasound had been normal. 1

Both heartbeats were strong.

Growth looked appropriate.

And, apparently, our children remained determined not to cooperate with anything because they’d once again made positioning unnecessarily difficult.

“But,” the doctor continued, “your body has been under considerable stress.”

Jason gave me a look.

That sounded suspiciously indefinite.

Nooked at Jason.

He looked delighted.

“This isn’t funny.”

“I’m not laughing.”

“You want to.”

“Very much.”

The doctor handed him the instructions.

That was a mistake.

Jason accepted them like he’d just been handed a presidential decree.

“We’ll follow everything.”

“We?”

“Yes.”

“Jason.”

He folded the paper carefully.

“You made me come to the doctor.”

“And?”

“Now I’m making you follow the doctor’s instructions.”

I narrowed my eyes.

“This marriage is becoming increasingly inconvenient.”

He kissed my forehead.

“You’re stuck with me.”

On the drive back to the castle, I stared out the window.

Bed rest.

I had an island under criminal investigation. I

The Ember Association had just connected dozens of families to the Vincents.

Oliver was under military protection.

Alexander was making public accusations.

And somewhere out there was still an international trafficking network we hadn’t dismantled.

I looked down at my stomach.

Then sighed.

Jason glanced at me.

“Fine what?”

“I’ll stay in bed.”

His eyebrows rose.

“Really?”

“I didn’t say I’d stop working.”

His expression fell.

I smiled.

Bed rest was one thing.

Nobody had said anything about

D

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 362

get it

Questionable

Amber POV

By the time we arrived at the castle, I had already decided that bed rest was a ridiculous concept.

I wasn’t even sick.

My blood pressure was high.

The babies were fine.

I was fine.

I just needed to-

“Don’t.”

I turned toward Jason.

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You were thinking about work.”

“You don’t know that.”

“I’ve been married to you long enough.”

He parked and came around to my side before I could open the door myself.

I stared at the hand he offered me.

“I can walk.”

“The doctor said bed rest.”

“She didn’t say you had to carry me from the car.”

“I can.”

“Try it and you’ll need another medical examination.”

Jason grinned.

At least he let me walk.

We had barely made it through the castle doors when I realized we had a problem.

A woman was sitting in the main sitting room with Mrs. Sun.

She looked elegant.

Composed.

Absolutely furious.

Franklin was sitting across from her.

He looked like he wanted the floor to swallow him.

Questiongb

I stopped.

Jason followed my gaze.

“Oh.”

Franklin saw us.

The relief on his face was immediate.

“Mr. Sun! Mrs. Sun!”

His mother slowly turned toward us.

“Perfect.”

Franklin’s relief vanished.

I almost felt sorry for him.

Almost.

Mrs. Sun calmly poured more tea.

“Amber, Jason, this is Mrs. Owen.”

“We’ve met,” Jason said.

Mrs. Owen stood. 1

“Then perhaps you can tell me whether my son has completely lost his mind.”

Franklin groaned.

“Mom.”

“Quiet.”

He became quiet.

Immediately.

I was impressed.

Mrs. Owen looked at us.

“My son disappeared for days.”

Jason glanced at Franklin.

Franklin looked away.

“He returned home telling me that he’d participated in an international military competition on a private island, that people started killing each other, that there was a hurricane, and that he was evacuated by helicopter.”

She paused.

“I thought he was lying.”

“Understandable,” I admitted.

Pranklin looked betrayed.

“Amber!”

“What? It sounds insane.”

“It happened!”

“I know. I was there.”

Mrs. Owen closed her eyes.

“That’s the problem.”

Apparently, one of her friends had called that morning after recognizing Franklin in footage from the evacuation

She had shown Mrs. Owen the news.

Then photographs.

Then an interview where one of Sum’s officials confirmed that an eighteen-year-old Owen heir had participated.

And suddenly Franklin’s completely unbelievable excuse had become horrifyingly real.

Mrs. Owen pointed at her son.

“He waited until the exact day he turned eighteen.”

Mrs. Sun calmly sipped her tea.

“So I’ve heard.”

“He left without telling me.”

Another sip.

“Also heard that.”

“He joined a military competition!”

“Technically, he represented Sum.”

Mrs. Owen stared at her. 1

Mrs. Sun lowered her cup.

“Sorry. Not helping.” 1

“No.”

Franklin tried again.

“Mom, I knew what I was doing.”

“You turned eighteen that morning!”

“I was legally an adult.”

“Do not use legal technicalities with me.”

Noyered my mouth.

Jason suddenly found the ceiling fascinating.

Mrs. Owen turned toward us.

“Was he really there?”

There was no point softening it.

“Yes.”

Her face fell.

“And everything he said happened?”

Jason nodded.

“Unfortunately.”

“The shootings?”

“Yes.”

“The explosions?”

“Yes.”

“The hurricane?”

I sighed.

“Category five.”

She looked at Franklin.

For a moment, her anger disappeared.

She crossed the room and hugged him.

Franklin froze.

Then slowly hugged her back.

“You stupid child.”

“I’m okay.”

“You could have died.”

“I know.”

She pulled away and slapped his shoulder.

“Ow!”

“That was for leaving without telling me.”

!

Sunstorua

Mrs. Sun immediately intervened.

ea.”

Mrs. Owen stared at her. `

Mrs. Sun pushed a cup toward her.

“Drink before you kill the boy. At least he wasn’t alone. Jason and Amber were there.”

I stared at her.

“Considering what happened, I’m not sure we’re the comforting part of that sentence.”

Jason nodded.

“Statistically, being near us has become questionable.”

Mrs. Sun ignored us.

M Your Daily Bonus... Open the chest and win coins

Bed rest

Amber POV

Unfortunately, Franklin’s problems couldn’t distract Jason from mine.

The moment Mrs. Owen left with her very alive-and probably very grounded-eighteen-year-old son, Jason pointed upstairs.

“Bed.”

I glared at him.

Mrs. Sun looked at me.

“Bed.”

Traitor.

So that was how I officially went on bed rest.

I hated it.

Within an hour, I had transformed our bedroom into an office.

Laptop.

Tablet.

Two phones.

Documents.

Water.

Snacks.

And enough pillows surrounding me that Jason couldn't claim I wasn't following the doctor's orders.

Then I contacted my team.

"I'm officially on bed rest."

There was a suspiciously long silence.

Pamela finally spoke.

"Actual bed rest?"

"Doctor ordered."

Someone laughed.

I narrowed my eyes.

"Who was that?"

Nobody answered.

"I heard you."

M Your Daily Bonus... Open the chest and win coins

Pamela cleared her throat.

We'll take care of everything."

"I can still work."

"Of course."

Her tone was far too agreeable.

“Pamela.”

“We’ll send updates.”

I ended the call and immediately opened the reports from Asher Corporation.

Jason walked into the bedroom carrying a tray.

“You are supposed to be resting.”

“I am.”

“You’re working.”

“While lying down.”

“That isn’t how bed rest works.”

I ignored him.

For months, something inside Asher Corporation’s River City operations had bothered me.

Marketing expenses had increased.

Supplier invoices were higher.

Yet the quality of materials used in several campaigns had actually decreased.

Nothing was large enough to trigger an obvious alarm.

Individually, the discrepancies looked insignificant. 1

Together, they formed a pattern.

That was why I had assigned Emilia Goodrich to the marketing department.

Officially, Emilia was an intern.

Young.

Inexperienced.

Harmless.1

Exactly the type of person executives ignored.

Unofficially, she was there because I suspected someone was stealing from my company.

And Jason knew perfectly well about it.

He had been sitting beside me when I'd asked Jasper Wilson, one of my aides, to keep an eye on Emilia.

Jasper had two jobs.

Make absolutely certain nobody discovered what Emilia was really doing.

And keep her safe.

I wasn't sending a young woman into the middle of a potentially organized theft operation without someone watching her back.

My secure phone vibrated.

I immediately recognized Emilia's identification code.

Three words appeared.

You were right.

I sat straighter.

Jason placed the tray down.

"Emilia?"

"Yes."

He came to sit beside me.

"What did she find?"

L'opened the encrypted files.

Photographs.

Invoices.

Purchase orders.

Delivery receipts.

Internal messages.

Then a spreadsheet Emilia had apparently been building for weeks.

Jason leaned closer.

“Oh.”

“Exactly.”

One of our marketing leads had created an entire internal operation.

Asher Corporation was paying premium prices for premium materials.

High-quality promotional displays.

Luxury packaging.

Corporate merchandise.

Event equipment.

Printed advertising materials.

But those weren’t the products actually arriving.

Emilia had photographed the deliveries herself.

Cheap replacements.

Low-quality materials.

Some weren’t worth even a third of what the company had supposedly paid.

But the invoices still showed the premium products.

Jason scrolled through the documents.

“They’re pocketing the difference.”

“Looks like it.”

“And they’ve been doing it for a while.”

“At least eighteen months from what Emilia found.”

Jason frowned.

“Jasper?”

“Already checking.”

Almost on cue, another message arrived.

This one was from Jasper. 1

Emilia remains uncompromised. No indication anyone suspects why she was assigned there. I’m continuing surveillance.

I relaxed slightly.

Jason noticed.

“Good.”

“Very.”

Finding the theft mattered.

Keeping Emilia safe mattered more.

I had asked her to investigate because I suspected something was happening.

That made her my responsibility.

I typed back.

Do not let her confront anyone. Continue documenting. If you think she’s been discovered, pull her immediately.

Jasper responded within seconds.

Understood.

Jason continued looking through Emilia’s files.

“This isn’t just the marketing lead.”

“I know.” 1

Someone had approved the suppliers.

Someone had processed the invoices.

Someone had accepted the deliveries.

Someone had falsified the quality-control records.

And somehow, all that money had moved without our normal controls stopping it.

The marketing lead was simply the first person Emilia had managed to identify.

I picked up my phone and called Pamela.

She answered immediately.

“Shouldn’t you be resting?”

“I am resting.”

“Amber-”

“Emilia found it.”

Silence.

Then Pamela’s voice became serious.

“How bad?”

“Worse than I thought.”

I forwarded the files.

She spent several moments reading.

“That’s organized.”

“Exactly.”

“Do you want me to remove the marketing lead?”

“No.”

Jason nodded beside me.

Pamela paused.

“You’re leaving him in place?”

“For now.”

If I fired him, everyone involved would know.

Documents would disappear.

Accounts would close.

People would suddenly develop urgent reasons to leave the country.

Instead, I wanted them comfortable.

“I want him to believe Emilia found absolutely nothing.”

“Jasper can manage that.”

“Good.”

I looked at the spreadsheet again.

“And I want a complete internal audit.”

“Of marketing?”

“Everything.” 1

Pamela groaned.

“Of course you do.”

“Procurement. Accounting. Inventory. Suppliers. Contracts. Expense accounts. Quality control. Every department that could have touched one of these transactions.”

“How far back?”

“Three years.”

Jason whistled. 1

Pamela went silent.

Then she asked, “Where do you want us to start?”

“Not marketing.”

She immediately understood.

“Because they’ll realize we’re investigating.”

“Exactly. Make it look like a routine company-wide review.”

“What about Emilia?”

“She stays where she is as long as Jasper believes she’s safe.”

Jason interrupted.

“And Jasper stays close.”

I looked at him.

He shrugged.

“I’m allowed to be protective too.”

Pamela laughed.

“Understood.”

I ended the call.

Jason took my laptop.

“Hey.”

“No.”

“I wasn’t finished.”

“You’ve just ordered a three-year covert audit while on bed rest.”

“So?”

“So now you eat.”

I reached for the computer.

He moved it farther away.

“Jason.” 1

“Babies first. Corporate corruption second.”

I glared at him.

He handed me the plate.

Eventually, I accepted it.

Fine.

I could rest.

I could eat.

I could follow the doctor’s instructions.

But I had specifically placed Emilia Goodrich inside that department because I knew something was wrong.

Now she’d proven it.

And because Jasper Wilson had kept her invisible, the people responsible still believed they were safe.

That was exactly how I wanted them.

I wasn’t going to fire one corrupt marketing lead.

I was going to follow him.

His suppliers.

His approvals.

His money.

d every person stupid enough to participate.

Then, when I knew exactly how deep the operation went, I would clean house properly.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 363

Keep her safe

Amber POV

Bed rest was torture.

Not because I was uticomfortable.

The bed was enormous, the pillows were perfect, the room had been adjusted to exactly the temperature I liked, and Mrs. Sun had apparently decided that being placed on bed rest meant I needed to be fed every forty-five minutes.

The problem was that everyone had suddenly decided I wasn't allowed to experience stress.

Especially Jason.

"You're frowning."

I didn't look away from my laptop.

"I'm thinking."

"You frown when you're stressed."

"I also frown when numbers don't make sense."

"Which stresses you."

I finally looked at him.

"Are you going to do this all day?"

"Probably."

He was sitting beside me with his own laptop, supposedly helping with the investigation.

In reality, he had appointed himself my personal stress monitor.

Unfortunately, he was useful, so I couldn't kick him out.

Emilia's information had given us somewhere to start.

Now Jason and I were following the merchandise.

The scheme itself was simple enough.

Asher Corporation purchased expensive, high-quality materials.

The correct products arrived.

Then, somewhere between delivery and actual use, some of those products disappeared and were replaced with cheaper alternatives.

The company records still showed the originals.

Which meant someone was taking the real merchandise.

But there was a problem.

We couldn’t find where it went.

Jason leaned closer to his screen.

Nothing.”

“Again?”

“Nothing.”

I’d already searched the obvious places.

Online stores.

Resale platforms.

Distributors.

Auction sites.

Bulk liquidators.

Even smaller companies that had suddenly started advertising products suspiciously similar to ours.

Nothing.

There were no significant purchases matching the stolen merchandise.

No obvious resale operation.

No unusual market influx.

It was as though the products simply disappeared.

I leaned against my pillows.

“That leaves two possibilities.”

Jason looked at me.

“Someone already has a buyer.”

“Exactly. An acquaintance. Someone purchasing everything directly and probably paying off the books.”

“No public listings.”

“No digital trail.”

Jason nodded.

“Or?”

“They’re storing it.”

“For what?”

“Inventory.”

He immediately understood.

“A new company.”

W

“Or a store.”

at made considerably more sense than selling everything individually.

If someone had been taking merchandise for eighteen months, they could have accumulated enough inventory to launch an entire business without paying for most of the initial stock.

Jason’s expression hardened.

“Using Asher Corporation to finance their startup.”

“Possibly.” 1

“And replacing everything they steal with garbage.”

“Lower-quality products,” I corrected.

“Garbage.”

I smiled.

“Fine. Garbage.”

My phone vibrated.

Pamela.

I answered.

“Tell me you found something.”

“I found something better.”

I sat straighter.

Jason immediately put his hand on my shoulder.

“Blood pressure.”

I pushed his hand away.

“What?”

Pamela sounded amused.

“I have our excuse for the audit.”

I frowned.

“We already decided we’d make it look routine.”

“This is better.”

She explained what had happened.

Two investors had been riding one of the elevators that morning.

They weren’t discussing anything secret.

Quite the opposite.

One had apparently mentioned that, considering everything that had happened around me lately, it was probably

me for the investors to see the books properly.

The other agreed.

According to Pamela, his exact concert had been simple: Amber had spent months dealing with outside problems, so she needed to see the real current state of the company.

I smiled.

Jason noticed.

“What?”

I put the call on speaker.

Pamela continued.

“They didn’t know employees were riding behind them.”

“How many?” I asked.

“Four.”

I laughed.

“Perfect.”

Jason understood immediately.

“Employees gossip.”

“Employees breathe gossip,” Pamela corrected.

Apparently, by the time the elevator reached the ground floor, four employees knew investors wanted an audit.

Ten minutes later, at least twenty people knew.

Half an hour later, managers were quietly asking whether anyone had heard something about the investors demanding a review of the company's finances.

The story was spreading beautifully.

I looked at Jason.

"We don't even have to manufacture a reason anymore."

"No."

The audit wasn't my idea.

At least, that wasn't what anyone inside Asher Corporation would believe.

Concerned investors wanted to see the books.

Perfectly reasonable.

Especially considering how much time I'd spent away from the company's daily operations.

"Do it," I told Pamela.

"Already did."

linked.

"What?"

–

"I formally requested the audit twenty minutes ago."

Jason laughed.

I smiled.

"I like you."

"I know."

"How broad?"

"Financials, procurement, inventory, contracts, suppliers, departmental expenses and quality control."

Exactly what we needed.

“And how much warning did they get?”

Pamela laughed.

“Almost none.”

That was the best part.

The elevator gossip had spread quickly.

But not quickly enough.

People knew an audit was coming.

They simply didn’t know it was coming now.

By the time the first managers started calling one another, the audit teams were already receiving access authorization.

Records were being locked.

Digital backups were being secured.

Financial databases were being copied.

Inventory checks were being scheduled.

Nobody had enough time to rewrite eighteen months of history.

“Emilia?” I asked.

“Still invisible.”

“Jasper?”

“Watching her.”

Good.

That mattered,

on’t change anything around her,” I ordered. “She remains an intern. Nobody suddenly gives her special treatment.”

“Understood.”

I ended the call.

Jason looked thoughtful.

“What?”

“The timing.”

“What about it?”

“If someone is storing those products, an audit could scare them.”

I stared at him.

Then smiled.

Jason immediately pointed at me.

“No.”

“What?”

“That’s your dangerous smile.”

“I don’t have a dangerous smile.”

“You absolutely do.”

I ignored him and opened the inventory records again.

“If they have a warehouse somewhere, what happens when they hear auditors are checking inventory?”

Jason slowly smiled too.

“They move the merchandise.”

“Exactly.”

And moving eighteen months’ worth of stolen products was considerably harder than hiding numbers inside a spreadsheet.

Trucks moved.

Warehouses opened.

People made calls.

Security cameras recorded things.

Drivers needed instructions.

Money changed hands.

I picked up my phone.

Jason took it away.

“Hey!”

“You are on bed rest.”

“I need Jasper.”

“I’ll call Jasper.”

I stared at him.

He stared back.

Apparently, this was the compromise.

“Fine.”

Jason called him.

“Jasper, the audit is starting.”

A pause.

“We think whoever is stealing the merchandise may have been storing it. If they panic and start moving anything, we need to know.”

Another pause.

“No. Emilia doesn’t follow anyone. She stays exactly where she is.”

I smiled.

Jason glanced at me.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

He continued.

“You handle it. Keep her safe and watch the people around that marketing lead.”

He ended the call.

“There.” 1

“You’re surprisingly good at this.”

“At protecting your blood pressure?”

“At corporate espionage.”

“I’m married to you. I’ve adapted and improved my ways.”

I laughed and settled farther into the pillows.

Somewhere inside Asher Corporation, word was spreading that concerned investors had demanded to see the

company’s real financial condition.

Nobody knew I had been investigating before that elevator conversation ever happened.

Nobody knew Emilia Goodrich had been placed there specifically because I already suspected something.

And nobody knew Jasper Wilson was watching quietly from the shadows.

The people stealing from my company had received a warning.

Unfortunately for them, it wasn’t enough time to hide.

Only enough time to panic.

And panicked people made mistakes.

Convenient

Jason POV

Apparently, surviving our own version of The Hunger Games wasn't enough.

Apparently, my pregnant wife being placed on bed rest wasn't enough either.

Now the Ember Association wanted me in River City,

I stared at the message on my phone.

"No."

Amber looked up from her laptop.

She was surrounded by pillows, reports, tablets, and enough technology to make the doctor's definition of bed rest questionable.

"What now?"

"The Ember Association wants me in River City."

Her expression immediately became serious.

"About your childhood?"

"Apparently."

This wasn't the first time we'd investigated what happened to me.

We had already confronted my father.

We'd already demanded the truth.

Or what we'd thought was the truth.

My mother had been Mr. and Mrs. Sun's daughter.

After she died, my father remarried.

Then Oscar was born.

I was supposedly becoming unruly, and my father claimed he feared I would hurt the newborn.

So he sent me away.

Except we'd eventually discovered that wasn't what had happened.

The Vincents had wanted me.

They had offered my father money in exchange for me.

When we'd confronted him, Mr. White insisted it hadn't truly been an offer.

According to him, the Vincents had been forcing him.

Threatening him.

Making it clear that refusing wasn't really an option.

Con

And then we'd learned something even worse.

stepmother hadn't been the monster everyone thought she was.

She had tried to save me.

For years, I'd believed she was dead.

She wasn't.

The Vincents had forced her into becoming the wife of an heir from one of the families under their control.

Somehow, despite everything happening to her, she'd managed to make a call.

A call that helped save me.

And she had ultimately lost her life because of it.

That revelation had changed everything I'd believed about her.

It had also made my father's story seem plausible.

He'd been pressured.

She'd tried to help.

The Vincents had been responsible.

End of story.

Except apparently it wasn't.

My phone rang.

Alison Sparks.

I answered and put her on speaker.

“What did you find?”

“Enough to know Mr. White didn’t tell you everything.”

My jaw tightened.

Amber closed her laptop.

“What does that mean?”

Alison hesitated.

“We’ve reconstructed more of Jason’s timeline.”

I hated that sentence already.

Amber reached for my hand.

Alison continued.

“We know Jason was taken after his mother died. We know the Vincents were involved. We know his stepmother eventually tried to help him.”

“Yes.”

But there’s a gap.”

I already knew which one.

The castle.

The photograph.

Amber and me sitting beneath a tree together, eating fruit.

Someone had rescued both of us.

Someone had brought us there.

And then I disappeared again.

Two years after my father originally sent me away, my grandparents found me in a house in the mountains.

By then, I'd lost even the most basic thing a child should have.

My name.

I'd been there long enough, or traumatized badly enough, that Jason had disappeared somewhere inside me.

My grandparents had taken me home.

But we'd never understood how I'd gotten from the castle to that mountain house.

Until now.

"We think Mr. White knew you'd been rescued," Alison said.

My hand tightened around Amber's.

"What?"

"We found indications that someone informed him."

Amber frowned.

"Someone from the Vincent network?"

"Possibly."

I stood.

Amber immediately tugged me back down.

"You're supposed to be keeping me calm."

Right.

I sat.

"What exactly are you saying?"

Alison's answer came carefully.

"We think your father may have taken you from the castle himself."

Silence.

I stared at the phone.

“No.”

“We don’t have proof yet.”

“My father claimed he didn’t know where I was.”

“We know.”

“He said the Vincents took me.”

“We know.”

“He said they were forcing him.”

“I know what he told you, Jason.”

I laughed without humor.

Amber squeezed my hand.

Alison continued.

“The first part may still be true. The Vincents may have forced him to surrender you initially. Your stepmother’s attempt to rescue you was real.”

“But after I was rescued…”

“Something changed.”

I felt sick.

Amber spoke quietly.

“You think somebody told Mr. White Jason had escaped.

“Yes.”

“And then?”

“We believe it’s possible Mr. White collected Jason himself.”

I stared at nothing.

The mountain house.

The place where I'd lost my name.

My father might not simply have failed to rescue me.

He might have personally taken me there.

"Why?"

"We don't know."

Conveniant

"Money?"

Rossibly."

"The Vincents?"

"Possibly."

"Then find him and ask him!"

Silence.

That was when I knew there was another problem.

"Alison?"

"We can't."

"Why?"

"Mr. White is gone."

Amber sat straighter.

"Gone?"

"He abandoned his properties."

I immediately reached for my laptop.

"What about Oscar?"

Another pause.

“Also gone.”

Of course.

I started searching.

White Corporation records.

Private properties.

Vehicles.

Aircraft.

Hotels.

Credit cards.

Nothing.

My father and Oscar hadn’t simply stopped answering calls.

They had vanished.

But people didn’t vanish.

“We think your father may have taken you from the castle himself.”

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They had vanished.

But people didn’t vanish.

They left traces.

tarted with White Manor.

Security records.

The main gates showed nothing unusual.

Garage logs showed nothing.

No registered vehicle had left at a suspicious time.

Then I remembered something.

“Emergency exits.”

Amber looked at me.

“What?”

“The manor has emergency exits.”

I pulled up the archived security feeds.

Most were useless.

Some cameras had conveniently gone offline.

But one exterior camera remained active.

It covered a narrow service path behind the western wing.

I accelerated the footage.

Hours passed in seconds.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Then-

“Stop,” Amber said.

I froze the image.

Two people.

Leaving through an emergency exit.

Covered from head to toe.

Long coats.

Hats.

Masks.

Gloves.

Almost nothing visible.

Bach carried luggage.

Amber leaned toward the screen.

“Can you identify them?”

“Give me a second.”

I enlarged the footage.

Facial recognition was useless.

So I looked at everything else.

Height.

Build.

Movement.

Oscar had an old injury that made his right foot turn slightly when he walked quickly.

There.

The younger man did it.

My pulse accelerated.

“Oscar.”

Amber pointed toward the older figure.

“And him?”

I already knew.

The posture.

The way he favored one shoulder.

I’d seen it my entire life.

“My father.”

I sent the footage to Alison.

“They weren’t taken.”

A pause.

“What?”

“They ran.”

I watched the footage again.

Two men leaving White Manor through an emergency exit with suitcases.

ι

Prepared.

Covered deliberately so cameras couldn’t identify them.

No panic.

No struggle.

No kidnappers.

They had planned it.

Alison received the video.

“Jason…”

“They knew.”

Amber looked at me.

“Knew what?”

I stared at the screen.

“That we were getting close.”

There was no other explanation that made sense.

My father had already been questioned once.

He’d given us enough truth to satisfy us.

The Vincents had offered money.

He’d claimed they forced him.

My stepmother had tried to save me.

She’d paid for that attempt with her life.

All true.

And that was what made the lie so effective.

He hadn’t needed to invent everything.

He’d only needed to stop talking before reaching the worst part,

Amber whispered, “There was more.”

“Much more.”

I thought about that photograph again.

Two children beneath a tree.

Amber and me.

Safe.

Someone had rescued us.

Men someone had taken me away again.

Maybe my father.

Maybe he’d been told I’d escaped and had come personally to retrieve me.

Maybe he’d taken me to that house in the mountains.

The place where two years later my grandparents found a child who no longer even knew he was Jason Sun.

And now, just when the Ember Association had started reconstructing that missing part of my childhood, Mr. White had packed a suitcase and run.

Oscar had gone with him.

I stared at the frozen security footage.

“Find them.”

Alison was quiet.

“We will.”

“No.”

My voice hardened.

“I’ll find them.”

Amber squeezed my arm.

I looked at her.

She didn’t tell me to calm down.

She didn’t tell me the past didn’t matter.

She understood.

My father had already confessed to selling me once.

Now I was beginning to suspect that after someone risked everything to save me, he had taken me back.

And this time, he wasn’t going to get to tell me only the convenient parts.

When I found him, I wanted the entire story.

U

(get it

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 364

Should have done worse

Amber POV

Jason was worried.

I was furious.

There was a difference.

Jason sat beside me on the bed, staring at the frozen security footage for what had to be the twentieth time.

Mr. White.

Oscar.

Both covered from head to toe.

Both carrying suitcases.

Both slipping through an emergency exit at White Manor like criminals who knew exactly how to disappear without being noticed.

They hadn't been kidnapped.

They hadn't vanished mysteriously.

They had run.

And I was furious because I had made a mistake.

I thought I had already destroyed them.

Not literally.

Financially.

Socially.

Professionally.

I'd watched the White family's reputation collapse.

I'd taken back what belonged to me.

I'd watched Oscar lose the company we'd created together.

I'd exposed lies.

I'd stripped away enough of their influence that I genuinely believed they couldn't hurt us anymore. Apparently, I'd underestimated them.

Again.

"I should have gone further."

Jason finally looked away from the screen.

"What?"

n

"I should have destroyed everything they had."

Amber.”

“I thought it was enough.”

I shifted against the pillows, immediately irritated by the fact that I couldn’t even pace.

Bed rest was particularly inconvenient when I wanted to break something.

“I thought the worst thing your father had done was give you to the Vincents.”

Jason’s jaw tightened.

Even saying it aloud sounded horrifying.

The Vincents had wanted Jason.

They had offered money.

Mr. White had accepted.

Yes, he’d later claimed it hadn’t really been a choice.

That they’d pressured him.

Threatened him.

Forced his hand.

I’d wanted to believe at least part of that.

Not because Mr. White deserved sympathy.

Because Jason deserved to believe that his father hadn’t willingly sold him.

But now?

I wasn’t so sure.

“We know you were rescued,” I continued. “We know someone got you out.”

The photograph proved it.

Jason and me beneath that tree at the castle.

Children.

Eating fruit.

Safe, at least for that moment.

Someone had brought us there.

Someone had saved us.

And then Jason disappeared.

Again.

Two years after he'd originally been sent away, Mr. and Mrs. Sun found him in that house in the mountains.

Achild who had been mistreated so badly that he'd lost his identity.

His name.

His connection to his family.

Everything.

And his grandparents hadn't known where he was.

That was the part I couldn't get past.

Mr. White had hidden Jason's location from his own mother's parents.

From the people who would have taken him home immediately.

"He knew your grandparents were looking for you."

Jason said nothing.

"He knew."

"We don't have proof."

"Then why run?"

His eyes met mine.

I hated the pain I saw there.

I softened my voice.

“Jason, if your father discovered you’d been rescued and took you back…”

“I know.”

“No.”

I reached for his hand.

“Think about what that means.”

His fingers closed around mine.

“It means he had another chance.”

Exactly.

Maybe the first time, the Vincents had forced him.

Maybe they’d threatened him.

Maybe he’d been afraid.

Maybe every excuse he’d given us was true.

But then someone rescued Jason.

His father had been given another opportunity.

He could have called the Suns.

He could have taken his son home.

He could have told Jason’s grandparents everything.

Instead, if the Ember Association’s theory was right, Mr. White had taken his own child back to the place he’d escaped from.

A place where Jason was mistreated.

A place where he eventually stopped knowing who he was.

My anger returned instantly.

“I thought I punished him enough.”

Jason gave me a tired look.

“This isn’t your responsibility.”

“It became my responsibility when I married you.”

“That’s not how marriage works.”

“That’s exactly how our marriage works.”

That almost made him smile.

Almost.

Then my eyes returned to the second figure on the screen.

Oscar.

And somehow, my anger became even colder.

I’d known Oscar for years.

Loved him for years.

Built a company with him.

Planned to marry him.

For a long time, I thought his greatest betrayal was what he’d done to me.

Amelie.

The lies.

Taking credit for my work.

Allowing me to become useful rather than loved.

Standing by while I was publicly humiliated.

Trying to hold onto what I’d built after throwing me away.

I’d thought that was the worst of Oscar White

“What does Oscar know?”

Jason followed my gaze.

“I don’t know.”

“He left with him.”

“That doesn’t mean he knows everything,”

“No. But it means he knows enough to run.”

Oscar wasn’t a frightened child being dragged through an emergency exit

He’d packed luggage.

Covered himself deliberately.

Left with his father.

That required preparation.

“What if they’re working with the Vincents?” I asked.

Jason’s expression hardened.

“I’ve considered it.”

“Or someone else.”

That possibility bothered me even more.

We had already learned our lesson on the island.

Not every monster belonged to the same organization.

We’d spent too long, assuming every trafficking operation, every kidnapping, every corrupt family and every hidden crime eventually led back to one source.

Then we’d discovered networks within networks.

Branches of families.

Alliances.

Rivals.

People who cooperated when it benefited them and destroyed one another when it didn’t.

Mr. White and Oscar could be working for the Vincents.

Or they could be running from them.

Or working for another family entirely.

Or perhaps the White family had always been something more than we'd understood.

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I picked up my tablet.

son immediately took it away.

"Excuse me?"

"Your blood pressure."

"My blood pressure would improve significantly if people stopped committing crimes."

"Until then, you're resting."

"I can investigate while resting."

"You become terrifying while investigating."

"Thank you."

"That wasn't a compliment."

I held out my hand.

He didn't return the tablet.

"Jason."

"No."

I narrowed my eyes.

"Fine. You investigate."

That caught him off guard.

"What?"

"You're apparently my stress manager now. Congratulations. Find them."

He stared at me.

I pointed toward the footage.

“Start with what they’re carrying.”

Jason looked back at the image.

“The suitcases?”

“Yes. If they planned to disappear permanently, they needed money, documents, clothing, medication, identities. Something.”

His expression slowly changed.

Good.

Now he was thinking instead of hurting.

“They couldn’t use normal passports,” he said.

“Not if they expected us to search for them.”

“Private transportation.”

Rossibly.”

“Or false identities.”

“Find out whether any White family employees disappeared around the same time.”

Jason finally gave me my tablet back.

“Why?”

“Because wealthy men don’t usually disappear alone. Someone arranges transportation. Someone provides documents. Someone moves money.” 1

I opened another screen.

“And if Oscar and Mr. White are working for somebody…”

Jason understood. 1

“…someone helped them escape.”

Exactly.

I looked at the photograph from the castle again.

Little Jason.

Little me.

Sitting beneath a tree without any idea what was happening around us.

I couldn’t change what happened to those children.

I couldn’t go back and stop Mr. White from selling his son.

I couldn’t prevent Jason from being taken again after someone rescued him.

But I could find out who had done it.

And this time, destroying their companies wasn’t enough.

I wanted the truth.

All of it.

Because Oscar White had once convinced me that his worst crime was betraying the woman who loved him.

Mr. White had convinced Jason that his worst crime was surrendering his son under pressure.

Now both men had run.

Which meant there was something they feared us discovering more than everything we already knew.

I looked at Jason.

“We find them.”

He nodded.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 365

Why

Amber POV

The problem with discovering that my former fiancé and his father might be involved in something much darker than we'd imagined was that the rest of tny problems didn't magically disappear.

Asher Corporation was still being rubbed.

Emilia was still undercover.

Jasper was still watching her.

The audit had started.

And somewhere, potentially eighteen months' worth of premium materials had disappeared without appearing on any legitimate resale market.

I stared at the warehouse list on my tablet.

Jason glanced at me.

"What are you doing?"

"Resting."

"You're making that face."

"What face?"

"The one that usually costs someone their job."

I ignored him.

The audit had created exactly the reaction we'd wanted.

People were nervous. 1

Departments were checking records.

Managers were suddenly very interested in inventories they'd ignored for months.

If the people stealing from Asher Corporation had been storing the original materials, this was when they'd move them.

The problem was that I couldn't exactly stake out a warehouse from bed.

Then I remembered three people who might actually consider that entertaining.

I opened our group chat.

Amber: Are you three busy?

Jasmine answered almost immediately.

Jasmine: Define busy.

Daniel followed.

Daniel: Don't answer that. What do you need?

Then Noah.

Nah: Is it legal?

I stared at his message.

Amber: Yes.

Three dots appeared.

Noah: Less interesting, but continue.

I laughed.

Jason looked over.

"Who are you corrupting now?" 1

"Nobody."

I started a video call.

All three answered.

Jasmine appeared first, dressed entirely in black as usual.

Daniel was eating something.

Noah looked suspiciously comfortable for a man I'd watched hunt people through a jungle not long ago.

"I need help," I said.

Jasmine smiled.

"Finally."

"Why does everyone enjoy when I say that?"

"Because your problems are interesting."

"My last interesting problem nearly got us killed."

"And yet we're friends now."

I blinked.

"Are we?"

Daniel looked offended.

"We survived an island together."

Noah nodded solemnly.

"That's at least friendship level three."

I laughed.

Apparently, the four of us had clicked better than I'd realized.

EXI

Then Jasmine dropped another surprise.

We actually decided to keep the team together."

I stared at them.

"What?"

"Us three," Daniel explained. "And you whenever you're available."

"You created a permanent team?"

Noah shrugged.

“We work well together.”

Jasmine grinned.

“And apparently trouble likes you.”

“That is not a qualification.”

“It should be.”

I couldn’t argue with that.

“Fine. Team reunion. I need surveillance.”

All three became serious.

I explained the Asher Corporation investigation.

The inflated invoices.

The premium merchandise disappearing.

The cheap replacements.

Emilia confirming the operation.

The audit beginning before anyone had enough warning to completely cover their tracks.

“We haven’t found the original merchandise,” I finished. “Which means either it’s being sold privately or stored.”

“Warehouses,” Noah said.

“Exactly.”

I sent them the list.

Asher Corporation had several warehouses throughout River City and surrounding areas.

Some held promotional materials.

Others stored equipment, packaging or inventory before distribution.

“I want to know if anything leaves without authorization.”

Daniel nodded.

“Security records?”

Ramela has access.”

Jasmine was already scrolling through the list.

“Employees know us.”

That was true.

Their faces had been everywhere after the island.

Which brought me to Noah.

I smiled.

He immediately frowned.

“No.”

“I haven’t said anything.”

“I know that smile.”

Jason laughed beside me.

“See? I’m not the only one.”

I ignored him.

I

“Noah, I need you disguised.”

“How disguised?”

“Enough that nobody recognizes you.”

Jasmine looked delighted.

“Can I choose?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because I need him to look boring.”

Daniel laughed.

Noah looked personally offended.

“I can look boring.”

Jasmine stared at him.

“No, you can’t.”

“Yes, I can.”

“You look like you could break someone’s spine while waiting for coffee.”

I covered my mouth.

son wasn’t even pretending not to listen anymore.

“Hat,” I suggested. “Glasses. Different clothes. Change the way you walk if necessary.”

Noah sighed.

“Fine.”

“Nobody confronts anyone,” I warned. “You’re watching. That’s it.”

Jasmine looked disappointed.

“Even if they run?”

“Especially if they run. Follow them.”

Daniel nodded.

“Understood.”

“And if anything feels wrong, leave.”

Jasmine rolled her eyes. 1

“I’m serious.”

“We survived the island.”

“Exactly. I’d like to keep that record intact.”

My next call was Pamela.

“I have people for the warehouses.”

“You have people?”

“I borrowed some.”

“Amber.”

I sent her their contact information.

She went silent.

Then-

“Are these your island teammates?”

“Three of them.”

“You’re sending military operatives to watch corporate warehouses?”

“When you say it like that, it sounds excessive.”

“It is excessive.”

“Good. Coordinate with them.”

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Pamela sighed.

send them warehouse schedules, authorized shipments, vehicle registrations and security access.”

“Don’t tell warehouse management.”

“Obviously.”

“And keep Emilia completely separated from this.”.

“Jasper already has her covered.”

Perfect.

Now we waited.

Z

If somebody panicked because of the audit and tried to move stolen inventory, Jasmine, Noah and Daniel would see it.

Jason spent most of the afternoon working quietly beside me.

Unlike me, he was actually capable of sitting still while investigating.

I found it irritating.

Then his phone vibrated.

He looked at it.

Stopped.

And sat straighter.

I immediately noticed.

“What?”

He didn’t answer.

“Jason.”

“I might have something.”

That got my full attention.

He turned his laptop toward me.

A photograph appeared.

Oscar.

Not the security footage from White Manor.

A much clearer image.

He was walking through an airport.

His face was partially obscured, but there was no mistaking him.

“Where?”

“Nevermore.”

tared at the screen.

“You’re sure?”

“One of my contacts is.”

Jason still maintained connections under his Cronos identity….

People who didn’t necessarily know Jason Sun.

People who knew Cronos.

He’d circulated one of Oscar’s photographs through that network.

And someone had found him.

“When?”

“Recently.”

I looked closer at the image.

Oscar had changed his appearance slightly.

Different hair.

Casual clothing.

Nothing dramatic enough to attract attention.

He looked like a man trying not to be remembered.

“Was your father with him?”

“No.”

“Did they track where Oscar went?”

Jason typed quickly.

“They’re checking.”

I looked at the airport photograph again.

Nevermore.

Oscar hadn’t simply run.

He had gone somewhere.

That distinction mattered.

“Find his arrival flight.”

“Already requested.”

“Departure too.”

“Amber.”

What?”

“I know.”

Right.

Of course he did.

I leaned back.

The doctor would probably have been proud.

Technically, I was still resting.

My company was being investigated by other people.

My surveillance team was being coordinated by Pamela.

Jasper was protecting Emilia.

Jason was tracking Oscar.

I wasn’t doing anything.

Except coordinating everyone.

Which absolutely counted as rest.

Probably.

Jason's phone vibrated again.

He read the message.

His expression changed.

"What now?"

"My contact confirmed it."

"Confirmed what?"

He looked at me.

"Oscar wasn't passing through Nevermore."

My stomach tightened.

"He entered the country."

I stared at Oscar's photograph.

"So that's where we start."

Jason nodded.

For the first time since seeing the footage of Oscar and Mr. White escaping White Manor, we had a real trail.

Oscar White was in Nevermore.

Now we just had to find out why.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 366

Discrepancies

Amber POV

Three days into the warehouse surveillance, Jasmine called me.

I answered immediately.

“Please tell me you found something.”

“No.”

I stared at the ceiling.

“I don’t like you anymore.”

“You never officially admitted you liked us.”

Daniel’s voice came through somewhere in the background.

“She called us for help. That means she likes us.”

Noah added, “Or we’re cheap labor.”

“You’re free labor,” I corrected.

Jasmine laughed.

They had spent the last three days rotating between the warehouses Pamela had identified.

They’d watched employees.

Photographed vehicles.

Tracked authorized shipments.

Followed two trucks that had left at unusual hours.

One turned out to be carrying damaged promotional displays for disposal.

The other had been making a perfectly legitimate emergency delivery,

Nothing.

Not one trace of the premium materials that had disappeared from Asher Corporation.

“No suspicious movement?” I asked.

“Some,” Jasmine answered. “Nothing connected to your missing inventory.”

Daniel came closer to the phone.

“We’ve documented everything anyway.”

“Send it to Pamela.”

“Already did.”

I smiled.

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They really had made a good team.

Unfortunately, that meant my theory that the stolen materials were being stored inside one of our own warehouses was becoming less likely.

Either the merchandise had already been moved somewhere else...

Or someone outside Asher Corporation had been receiving it all along.

“Keep watching another two days,” I decided. “After that, pull back.”

“You sure?”

“Yes. I don’t want anyone noticing you.”

Noah spoke next.

“They won’t.”

I remembered what he’d looked like in his disguise and nearly laughed.

Jasmine had eventually helped despite my objections.

Somehow, she’d transformed a dangerous-looking martial artist into a tired delivery driver with glasses, badly

fitted clothing and enough facial hair to add ten years to his appearance.

I had almost failed to recognize him myself.

“Good. Be careful.”

“We will.”

I ended the call.

The warehouse surveillance hadn’t given us the breakthrough I’d hoped for.

The audit, however, was another story.

Pamela sent me the preliminary report that afternoon.

I opened it.

Then stopped.

“Oh.”

Jason looked up from across the bedroom.

That was basically where we lived now.

Me in bed.

Jason somewhere within ten feet of me, making sure I didn’t do anything the doctor had forbidden.

“What?”

“The audit.”

He came over.

“Marketing?”

Not just marketing.”

That wiped the amusement from his face.

Three departments had serious discrepancies.

Marketing.

Accounting.

Logistics.

Exactly the departments necessary to make something disappear.

Marketing ordered the materials.

Accounting processed the money.

Logistics controlled where the products went.

Jason sat beside me.

“That’s not coincidence.”

“No.”

The auditors hadn’t concluded that the three departments were working together.

Not yet.

But there were enough irregularities to justify expanding the investigation.

Invoices that didn’t properly correspond with inventory.

Shipment records with incomplete destinations.

Internal transfers without matching receipt confirmations.

Payments approved unusually quickly.

Supplier numbers that didn’t always match older contracts.

Nothing alone proved organized theft.

Together?

It looked terrible.

I called Pamela.

“How many people know?”

“About the discrepancies? Auditors, me, Jasper, and the department heads know questions are being asked.”

“Keep it that way.”

“Already done.”

“What about Emilia?”

That was always my first concern now.

“Does anyone suspect her?”

“Jasper says no.”

“Good.”

Pamela hesitated.

“Amber, this might be bigger than the marketing lead.”

“I know.”

“If accounting and logistics are involved-”

“They could have been moving merchandise anywhere.”

Including outside our warehouses.

Which explained why Jasmine’s team had found nothing.

The stolen products might never have stayed on Asher property long enough to be discovered.

“Follow the shipment discrepancies,” I said.

“We are.”

“Especially anything where logistics shows merchandise leaving but there’s no confirmed destination.”

“Understood.”

I ended the call.

Jason took the tablet from me.

“Enough.”

“I’ve been working for fifteen minutes.”

“Thirty-eight.”

I stared at him.

“Are you timing me?”

“Yes.”

“That’s disturbing.’

“Your blood pressure was high again this morning.”

I immediately became quiet.

That was the one argument I couldn’t dismiss.

I was five months pregnant now.

Pive months.

Halfway there.

And still on bed rest.

The babies were doing well.

I was the problem.

Apparently, my body had decided that running corporations, surviving assassination attempts, being trapped on an island during a category-five hurricane, and investigating international criminal networks while carrying twins was unreasonable.

I disagreed.

My doctor disagreed with my disagreement.

And my family had become unbearable.

Brain rest

Amber POV

My grandfather arrived that evening.

I should have known something was wrong when Mrs. Sun entered the bedroom with him.

Together.

They had been disagreeing about practically everything since I'd married Jason.

Seeing them united was terrifying.

"No."

Neither had spoken yet.

Grandpa frowned.

"What do you mean, no?"

"Whatever you're about to suggest."

Mrs. Sun crossed her arms.

"You haven't heard it."

"I don't need to. You're cooperating."

Jason coughed suspiciously.

I looked at him.

"Whose side are you on?"

"The babies'."

Traitor number three. 1

Grandpa sat down.

"I want you admitted to the hospital."

"No."

"Amber."

"No."

"Your blood pressure remains unstable."

"And I'm being monitored."

Mrs. Sun spoke next.

“Then we’ve reached a compromise.”

I looked between them.

“I don’t like that word anymore.”

you refuse hospitalization, we’ll hire a doctor to remain here.”

I stared at her.

“A doctor.”

“Yes.”

“Living here.”

“Or staying on the property.”

“No.”

Grandpa’s patience visibly disappeared.

“Amber, this isn’t about convenience.”

“I know.”

“Then stop being stubborn.”

“I’m not being stubborn.”

Three people looked at me.

Fine.

Maybe slightly.

But I had reasons.

“I am not staying in a hospital unless it’s medically necessary.”

“It may become medically necessary,” Grandpa argued.

“Then I’ll go.”

“And until then?”

“I’m staying here.”

Mrs. Sun sighed.

“Then the doctor.”

“No.”

“Why?”

That question I could answer.

“Because I would feel more vulnerable in a hospital.”

They went quiet.

“Think about everything that’s happened.”

I started counting.

People have gotten into private properties. Nicole had access to the Sun estate. Oscar walked into our wing. Someone replaced the entire crew of our plane and planted a bomb in less than half an hour.”

Jason’s expression hardened at the reninder.

“And you want me to advertise which hospital room contains Amber Asher, pregnant with Jason Sun’s twins?

“We wouldn’t advertise anything,” Grandpa said.

“It would leak.”

Nobody contradicted me.

Because we all knew it could.

Hospitals had employees.

Visitors.

Delivery personnel.

Records.

Schedules.

Too many access points.

“I feel safer here.”

Mrs. Sun gestured around us.

“Which is why we’re suggesting bringing the doctor here.”

“That’s not necessarily safer.”

“Amber-”

“If we hire someone whose entire purpose is to remain beside me because something might happen, we create another vulnerability.”

Grandpa frowned.

“We’d investigate them.”

“Like everyone investigated Nicole?”

Silence.

I immediately regretted the cruelty of that comparison.

Mrs. Sun’s expression changed.

“I’m sorry.”

She nodded once.

But the point remained.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 367

“We’ve learned repeatedly that people can be bought, threatened or manipulated. I’m not bringing a stranger into the castle and giving them unlimited access to me, my medical information and my babies.”

“A qualified physician isn’t some random stranger,” Grandpa argued.

“Neither was the pilot who was supposed to fly our plane.”

Jason finally intervened.

“She’s right about that.”

Grandpa looked at him.

“Don’t encourage her.”

“I’m not. I want medical support nearby too.”

I stared at my husband.

He held up a hand.

“But bringing someone into the house full-time creates a security issue we would need to solve first.”

Exactly.

Mrs. Sun sat beside me.

“So what do you propose?”

That was better.

A discussion instead of everyone deciding what happened to me.

“Regular appointments. Monitoring equipment here. Emergency transportation ready if we need it. My doctor can check my results remotely, and I follow the bed-rest instructions.”

Jason raised an eyebrow.

“All of them?”

“Most.”

“Amber.”

“Fine. All.”

Grandpa still didn’t look satisfied.

“What happens if your condition changes suddenly?”

“We go to the hospital.”

“What if there isn’t time?”

That frightened me.

I hated that it did.

My hand moved instinctively over my stomach.

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I could feel one of the twins moving.

Asmall flutter beneath my palm.

Five months.

They were depending entirely on me.

I looked at Jason.

He had noticed the movement too.

His hand covered mine.

“We increase security around her appointments,” he said. “And we identify several doctors who can be called if necessary. Nobody gets permanent access to the castle unless we personally approve them.”

Grandpa considered it.

Mrs. Sun wasn’t happy.

Neither was I.

But at least it didn’t make me feel like we’d painted a target on my back.

“Temporary compromise,” Grandpa finally said.

“Temporary,” I agreed.

Mrs. Sun pointed at my laptop.

“And less work.”

I frowned.

“That wasn’t part of the compromise.”

“It is now.”

“No.”

“Amber.”

“Mrs. Sun.”

Jason laughed.

I glared at him.

He immediately pretended to be interested in his phone.

Then the phone actually vibrated.

His expression changed as he read the message.

“What?” I asked.

“Nothing about Oscar yet.”

I relaxed slightly.

“But?”

ne of my Cronos contacts is still tracing the Nevermore airport footage.”

Another investigation.

Another problem waiting for us.

I looked at the audit report beside me.

Marketing.

Accounting.

Logistics.

Somewhere between those three departments was the answer to what was happening inside Asher Corporation.

Somewhere in Nevermore was Oscar.

Somewhere else was Mr. White.

And somewhere inside my body, two babies apparently expected me to stop stressing about all of it.

I leaned back against the pillows.

Fine.

I could stay in bed.

I could follow the doctor's orders.

I could even let other people do the dangerous parts.

But I wasn't going to stop looking for answers.

Bed rest was not brain rest.

Slowly

Amber POV

By the time I reached six months pregnant, I had discovered something important.

Bed rest did not make time move faster.

If anything, it made every day approximately seventy hours long.

The twins were getting bigger.

So was I.

My blood pressure had improved enough that the doctor was no longer threatening me with hospitalization every time she saw me, but I was still under strict orders to rest.

And after a month of investigating Asher Corporation, we finally knew how bad the problem had been.

Very bad.

The good news?

Not a single one of the low-quality products had reached another customer after we'd discovered the scheme.

The moment Emilia confirmed my suspicions, Pamela and her team had quietly started separating questionable inventory.

By the time the full audit exposed the scale of the operation, everything was already contained.

Low-quality materials were removed.

Finished products made with questionable materials were isolated.

Warehouses were checked.

Distribution was stopped wherever necessary.

Nothing moved without verification.

And then Grandpa returned to Asher Corporation.

Personally.

I'd called him the moment we realized the discrepancies extended beyond marketing.

His answer had been simple.

"I'm going back."!

He'd walked into headquarters the next morning.

Apparently, retirement became optional when someone stole from his company.

Between Grandpa and Pamela, they cleaned house.

Aggressively.

Most of marketing?

Gone.

Most of logistics?

Gone.

Half the employees in the affected storage areas?

Gone.

The main storage manager?

Gone.

Some were fired for participating directly.

Others had falsified reports, ignored discrepancies or approved things they had absolutely no business approving.

A few resigned the moment the audit reached their departments.

Which was practically a confession by itself.

The damage, unfortunately, couldn’t be fixed overnight.

Our luxury bag line had to be paused.

That hurt.

Orders had already been placed.

Customers were waiting.

But I refused to knowingly sell something beneath the standard carrying the Asher name.

So we stopped everything.

New materials were ordered.

Suppliers were verified again.

Production restarted under direct supervision.

Every finished product was inspected.

It took almost an entire month to replace the materials, manufacture the new bags, perform quality checks and begin shipping orders to buyers.

Expensive?

Absolutely.

Annoying?

Extremely.

Necessary?

Without question.

Then Malcolm Sito gave us an idea that I immediately loved.

Malcolm was one of our production managers.

called during one of the quality-control meetings.

“We need a way to identify every bag that passes the new inspection.”

“We already have serial numbers,” Pamela said.

“Serial numbers can be copied.”

I looked at him through the screen.

“What are you suggesting?”

“An invisible quality mark.”

I sat straighter.

Jason, sitting beside me, immediately pushed another pillow behind my back.

I ignored him.

Malcolm continued.

“Something added only after final inspection. Invisible under normal conditions. Each mark connected to the individual bag identification in our internal system.”

I smiled.

“Do it.”

Pamela nodded.

“I like it.”

“So do I.”

Every newly approved bag received the invisible quality – passed mark.

Not advertised.

Not publicly explained.

Only a small number of people knew exactly what it was or how to verify it.

That decision saved us less than two weeks later.

The headline appeared before breakfast.

ASHER LUXURY SCANDAL: CUSTOMER CLAIMS NEW BAG IS CHEAPLY MADE

I stared at my phone.

Jason looked over my shoulder.

“That didn’t take long.”

The woman had posted photographs and videos.

She claimed she’d recently purchased one of the newly released Asher bags after production resumed.

According to her, the stitching was poor.

The material felt cheap.

The hardware was already discoloring.

And the interior lining had started separating.

The media loved it.

Of course they did.

Within hours, the story had spread.

People were asking whether Asher Corporation had secretly reduced quality while continuing to charge luxury prices.

Others connected it to the month-long production pause.

Then someone leaked that we’d recently fired employees from marketing, logistics and storage.

Suddenly, every business reporter in River City wanted answers.

I called Grandpa.

He answered with-

“No.”

I blinked.

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You’re not coming here.”

“I wasn’t-”

“Amber.”

Fine.

I had considered it.

“I can make a statement remotely.”

“No.”

“Grandpa.”

“I’ll handle it.”

I frowned.

“You’re enjoying being back at the company.”

Silence.

“Grandpa?”

“I have a press conference.”

He hung up.

tared at niy phone.

Jason laughed.

“He’s definitely enjoying it.”

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 368

Gave him up

Amber POV

Grandpa walked into the press conference looking like he had been waiting years for someone to annoy him publicly.

The woman with the supposedly defective bag was there.

So was her lawyer.

So was the bag.

Reporters filled the room.

I watched everything from bed.

Because apparently this was my life now.

The accusations came quickly.

Poor materials.

False advertising.

Luxury pricing for inferior merchandise.

One reporter asked whether Asher Corporation had knowingly sold defective products.

Grandpa didn’t argue.

He didn’t threaten anyone.

He simply looked at the woman.

“May I see the bag?”

She handed it over.

Grandpa examined it briefly.

Then looked toward her.

“Could you provide the bag identification number given to you by the salesperson?”

The woman hesitated.

“What?”

“The identification number.”

She looked at her lawyer.

Grandpa waited.

“I don’t have it with me.”

“That’s unfortunate.”

Then he asked, “Your receipt?”

Another hesitation.

Nost

Nost it.”

The room changed.

Reporters started murmuring.

Grandpa remained completely calm.

“Digital receipt?”

“I paid cash.”

“Which store?”

She named one.

Grandpa looked toward Pamela.

Pamela checked something on her tablet.

Then shook her head.

“No transaction matching her name or the bag occurred at that location.”

The woman’s lawyer intervened.

“Perhaps the sale was registered incorrectly.”

Grandpa nodded.

“Certainly possible.”

Then he held up the bag.

“Which is why we have another method.”

I smiled.

Here we go.

The bag was taken to the quality-control specialist.

They checked the hidden mark.

Nothing.

Grandpa looked directly at the cameras.

“This bag did not pass through our current production system.’

The room erupted.

The woman immediately started arguing.

She insisted she’d purchased it recently.

Grandpa asked again for the identification number.

Nothing.

Receipt.

Nothing.

Salesperson’s name.

She suddenly couldn’t remember.

Then Pamela brought up the current inventory database.

Every bag produced after the manufacturing pause had been individually recorded.

Every bag carried the new internal verification.

The one in front of them didn’t.

It wasn’t one of the new bags.

It was one of the inferior ones we’d removed from circulation.

Which meant someone had deliberately obtained it.

The media turned on the woman almost instantly.

Questions came from everywhere.

Where did she actually get it?

Who gave it to her?

Why did she claim she’d purchased it recently?

Was someone paying her?

Her lawyer tried to end the press conference.

Too late.

Because while Grandpa had been speaking, Pamela had been investigating her.

And then my phone rang.

“Amber.”

“Tell me.”

Pamela sounded delighted.

“She’s related to one of the fired logistics managers.”

I sat straighter.

“How?”

“Niece.”

Of course.

By that evening, the story had completely reversed.

Instead of-

Asher Corporation Selling Defective Luxury Products

-the headlines became-

FAILED SMEAR ATTEMPT AGAINST ASHER CORPORATION EXPOSED

The woman lasted less than a day under the pressure.

Once our legal team informed her that Asher Corporation was considering action over the false claims and reputational damage, she panicked.

Then she offered a deal.

Information in exchange for us not pursuing her for slander.

Her uncle had given her the bag.

He had told her exactly what to say.

He wanted Asher Corporation publicly embarrassed after being fired.

But once she started talking, she gave us considerably more than that.

Her uncle hadn’t simply known about the low-quality substitutions.

He had participated.

He knew who coordinated shipments.

He knew which employees were involved.

He knew how products disappeared from storage.

And most importantly-

He knew where some of the missing premium merchandise had gone.

I stared at Pamela through the screen.

“She gave him up completely?”

“Names, dates, messages. Everything she still has.”

“Over one threatened lawsuit?”

Pamela shrugged.

“Apparently family loyalty has limits.”

Jason laughed beside me.

I looked down at my stomach.

One of the twins kicked.

“Did you feel that?”

Gave him up.

Jason immediately put his hand there.

Another kick.

His entire expression softened.

For several seconds, Asher Corporation disappeared.

Oscar disappeared.

The Vincents disappeared.

Everything disappeared.

Then my tablet chimed.

Pamela had sent the woman’s statement.

Jason immediately reached for it.

“No.”

I stared at him.

“Excuse me?”

“Blood pressure.”

“I’m fine.”

“You’re six months pregnant.”

“I’m aware.”

“You investigate tomorrow.”

I looked at the file.

Then at him.

Then down at my stomach.

Another tiny movement.

Fine.

Tomorrow.

For tonight, Grandpa and Pamela had Asher Corporation under control.

Malcolm Sito’s invisible quality mark had protected the new production line exactly as intended.

The attempted scam had failed spectacularly.

And the woman who’d tried to publicly humiliate us had accidentally handed us our first real trail to the missing merchandise.

Her uncle wanted revenge.

Instead, he’d given us a witness.

chup

Sometimes people destroyed themselves far more efficiently than I ever could.

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 369

Not brothers

Amber POV

The problem with secrets was that once one cracked open, ten more seemed to crawl out behind it. I had spent most of the morning reviewing everything we had collected on the White family, and this time I wasn't looking at White Corporation. I was looking at the family itself: birth records, marriage certificates, old trusts, property transfers, corporate partnerships, photographs, archived legal documents, and everything the Ember Association and Jason's contacts had managed to uncover.

Eventually, I found something that made me stop scrolling.

"Jason, come here."

He was sitting across the room with his own laptop, supposedly working, although I knew perfectly well that half his attention was on me. Ever since the doctor put me on bed rest, Jason had developed an irritating sixth sense for whenever I was about to discover something stressful.

"What did you find?"

"The Whites and the Vincents are connected."

That got him moving. He crossed the room and sat beside me, taking the laptop when I turned it toward him. I showed him the records I'd been following. The connection wasn't through his stepmother like we'd originally assumed. It went back much further than that. There were old investments, trusts connected through intermediaries, property transactions, and companies that had changed names or ownership but repeatedly circled back to the same families.

None of those records alone would have convinced me of anything. Together, they formed a pattern that was impossible to ignore.

"The White family knew the Vincents long before your stepmother was involved with them," I explained.

Jason's expression hardened. "So my father lied."

“At the very least, he didn’t tell us everything.”

That was becoming Mr. White’s specialty.

The last time we’d confronted him, he’d admitted that the Vincents had offered him money for Jason. He’d claimed it wasn’t truly an offer, that he’d been pressured and threatened until surrendering Jason seemed like his only choice. We’d later discovered that Jason’s stepmother, whom everyone believed had died, had actually been forced to become another family’s heir’s wife. She had managed to make the call that eventually helped save Jason, and she’d lost her life because of it.

We’d believed we’d finally understood what had happened.

Now I wasn’t sure we’d understood anything.

Mr. White had disappeared with Oscar the moment we started looking deeper into the past. They hadn’t been abducted. Jason had found the footage himself: both men covered from head to toe, suitcases in hand, slipping through an emergency exit at White Manor. Oscar had since been caught on camera entering Nevermore.

They were running from something.

Or toward someone.

Not brothers

I stared at the records again, but something else was bothering me. Oscar had gone with Mr. White willingly If

his was only about what happened to Jason as a child, why would Oscar need to disappear too?

Then the answer-or at least another question-occurred to me.

“Jason, there’s something we’ve never checked.”

He looked at me. “What?”

“Blood.”

His expression changed.

Getting Jason’s DNA was obviously simple. Getting Oscar’s should have been much more difficult, considering he was currently hiding somewhere in Nevermore. Fortunately, Oscar had been involved in enough legal trouble over the last several months that a DNA

profile existed in the police database. Through the proper investigation, there was already a preserved profile that could be compared.

Jason provided his sample.

Then we waited.

I hated waiting under normal circumstances. Waiting while trapped in bed was worse. Jason refused to let me constantly check for updates because, according to him, refreshing a screen every thirty seconds counted as unnecessary stress. 1

When the results finally arrived, Jason opened them before I could.

He went completely still.

That scared me more than any visible reaction would have.

“What?”

He didn’t answer immediately.

“Jason?”

He turned the screen toward me.

I read the report once.

Then again.

Then a third time, because my brain refused to accept something written so clearly.

Jason and Oscar shared no biological relationship.

None.

Not half-brothers. Not some unexpected distant relationship that could explain away the discrepancy. The genetic comparison didn’t support them sharing blood at all.

“That’s impossible,” I whispered.

“Apparently not.”

I looked at Jason, then back at the results. For practically their entire lives, Jason and Oscar had been considered half-brothers. Jason was the son of Mr. White and the Sun family’s daughter. Oscar was supposedly the son of Mr.

White and Jason’s second wife. Same father, different mothers.

Except that couldn’t be true.

“Either you’re not Mr. White’s biological son,” I said slowly, “or Oscar isn’t.”

Jason’s jaw tightened. “And White conveniently disappeared before we could test him.”

That was the problem. Without Mr. White’s DNA, we couldn’t immediately determine which son wasn’t his.

Or whether there was something even stranger happening.

Who is

Amber POV

We waited until evening to tell Mr. and Mrs. Sun.

We simply asked them to meet us in the living room.

Jason was firmly enforcing my bed-rest restrictions, so walking downstairs apparently required the level of supervision normally reserved for transporting a head of state.

“I can walk.”

“I know.”

“Then stop holding my arm.”

“No.”

“I’m pregnant, not ninety.”

“Your blood pressure was high.”

“You’re raising it.”

That made Mrs. Sun look up from the sofa as we entered.

“He’s right.”

I stared at her.

“You don’t even know what we’re arguing about.”

“I heard enough.”

Mr. Sun laughed from his chair.

Traitors.

All of them.

Jason helped me settle onto the sofa, arranged a cushion behind me, and only then sat beside me.

Mrs. Sun looked between us.

“What happened?”

“The babies are fine,” I said immediately.

Her shoulders visibly relaxed.

“Then what is it?”

Jason handed her the DNA report.

Mrs. Sun read it.

Her expression slowly changed.

Mr. Sun noticed and leaned closer.

“What?” 1

handed him the report without saying anything.

He read it.

Then read it again.

Mrs. Sun looked at Jason.

“This can’t be right.”

“We repeated the comparison.”

“But Oscar is your brother.”

“No,” Jason said quietly. “Apparently he isn’t.”

“Half-brother.”

“Not biologically.”

Mrs. Sun shook her head.

“You have the same father.”

Jason’s expression remained remarkably calm.

“Then one of us isn’t White’s son.”

Silence settled over the living room.

Mr. Sun stared at the report.

“Which one?”

“We don’t know,” I answered.

Mrs. Sun sat back against the sofa.

“Your mother told us White was your father.”

Jason looked at her.

“Did she ever mention anyone else?”

“No.”

“Grandma, think.”

“I don’t need to think. Your mother told us White was your father.”

Jason’s expression softened immediately.

“I’m not accusing Mom of lying.”

“Then what are you saying?”

“I’m saying someone lied.”

Nobody spoke.

Because there was no arguing with that.

Jason's mother might genuinely have believed Mr. White was his biological father.

Oscar might be the one who wasn't Mr. White's son.

Or Mr. White might have known all along that Jason wasn't biologically his.

Without Mr. White's DNA, we couldn't determine which possibility was true.

Conveniently, he had run away before we could ask.

"Before your daughter married Mr. White," I asked carefully, "was there anyone else? Someone she dated?"

Mrs. Sun shook her head.

"Not that we knew." 1

"Someone she was particularly close to?"

"I don't know, Amber. She was an adult. We were close, but we didn't know every person she spoke to."

Mr. Sun looked thoughtful.

"She never gave us any reason to believe White wasn't Jason's father."

Jason stared at the report.

Then I remembered the other part.

"There's more."

Mrs. Sun closed her eyes.

"Of course there is."

Under different circumstances, I might have laughed.

"The White family's connection to the Vincents predates Jason's stepmother."

That immediately changed the atmosphere.

Mr. Sun sat straighter.

"How far back?"

“We’re still tracing it, but enough that I don’t believe Mr. White gave us the complete story. He made it sound as though the Vincents approached him for Jason, offered money, then pressured him when he resisted. But the Whites already had connections to them.”

Jason’s jaw tightened.

His childhood was suddenly back at the center of everything.

Someone had taken him after Mr. White gave him up.

Someone else had eventually rescued him.

We had photographic proof that Jason and I had both been brought to the castle as children. There was a picture of

s sitting beneath a tree, eating fruit together.

Then Jason disappeared again.

Two years after he’d originally been sent away, Mr. and Mrs. Sun found him in a house in the mountains.

By then, he’d been mistreated so badly that he’d lost his identity.

Even his name.

And now the Ember Association believed Mr. White might have known Jason had been rescued.

Worse, it was possible he’d been the person who took Jason away from safety and returned him to that house.

Mrs. Sun suddenly stood.

“I want the archives opened.”

Mr. Sun looked at her.

“All of them?”

“Everything.”

She began pacing.

“Everything we still have from our daughter’s life. School records, university records, photographs, letters, travel documents, old security records. Everything.”

Jason frowned. 1

“Grandma-”

“No.”

She turned toward him.

“If there was someone in my daughter’s life we didn’t know about, I want to know who he was. And if White knew you weren’t his biological son...”

Her voice faltered.

Mr. Sun stood and took her hand.

She continued more quietly.

“Then I want to know why he took you.”

That question hit differently.

Because if Jason wasn’t Mr. White’s biological child, then the entire story changed.

Why had the Vincents wanted him?

Why had Mr. White accepted money for him?

Why had he hidden Jason’s location from the Suns?

And if he really had taken Jason back after someone rescued him, why?

ww

I reached for Jason’s hand.

intertwined his fingers with mine.

He looked calm.

Anyone else might have believed he was.

I knew better.

Another piece of his childhood had just collapsed.

But it didn’t change who he was.

He was still Jason Sun.

Still Alice and Alex's father.

Still the father of the twins growing inside me.

Still my husband.

Jason looked down at the DNA report one final time.

"If White isn't my father..."

His voice faded.

Mrs. Sun looked at him.

Nobody moved. 1

Finally, he finished the question.

"Then who is?"

No one in that living room had an answer.

But somewhere inside the Sun family's past, the White family's connection to the Vincents, and those missing years of Jason's childhood, someone did.

And we were going to find them.

(get it

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 370

St. Johns

Amber POV

Jason was stressed, but beneath all the confusion, anger, and questions, I could see something else in him that I hadn't expected.

Relief.

It felt strange to call it that when we'd just discovered that the man Jason had believed was his biological father might not actually be his father, but I understood where the feeling came from. For years, Jason had tried to understand how Mr. White could have given him away so easily. Even after we'd learned that the Vincents had pressured him, even after Mr. White claimed he'd been threatened and hadn't truly been given a thoice, one fac remained impossible to excuse.

He had accepted money for Jason.

There were softer ways to describe it, but I wasn't interested in using them. If someone gave you money in exchange for taking away your child and you accepted it, you sold your child. Whatever threats had accompanied the transaction didn't erase that fact.

"I hope he's not my father," Jason admitted quietly.

We were in our bedroom, where I was still trapped on bed rest at six months pregnant. Jason had positioned himself beside me with his laptop, although I suspected his decision to work from the bedroom had more to do with supervising me than anything else.

I reached for his hand. "I understand."

He looked at me for a moment before glancing back at the DNA results on his screen. "For years, I kept trying to understand how he could do it. I kept thinking there had to be something wrong with me for my own father to accept money and let someone take me."

"There was something wrong with him, not you." 1

Jason gave me a tired smile, but his attention quickly returned to the report.

"If White knew I wasn't his biological son, it would explain some things."

"Explain, yes. Excuse, no."

"Definitely not excuse."

Biological child or not, Mr. White had raised Jason as his son. He had been responsible for protecting him. If he'd known Jason wasn't biologically his, that didn't make handing a child over to the Vincents any less monstrous.

Still, I could understand why Jason wanted the answer to be that simple. 1

Perhaps Mr. White had never looked at Jason and seen his son.

Perhaps he'd looked at him and seen someone else's child. :

It might explain why he'd been able to give him away.

It might even explain why, if our suspicions were correct, he'd later returned Jason to the house in the mountains after someone had already rescued him.

But first, we needed to know who Jason's biological father actually was.

And when Jason wanted information, Chronos went to work.

activated contacts in every location he controlled and sent the same request through multiple networks. This time, he wasn't looking for Mr. White or Oscar. He wanted his mother's history reconstructed as completely as possible, particularly the years before she married Mr. White.

University records, travel history, old photographs, social circles, friends, classmates, employees, security personnel-anything that might tell us who had been close to her.

The first information that came back wasn't particularly interesting. Jason's mother had attended university events, participated in charities, traveled with friends, and maintained a relatively normal social life for the daughter of the Sun family.

Then Mr. Sun found something.

He and Mrs. Sun had spent the day going through boxes containing their daughter's belongings. Since they lived here at the castle with us, Mr. Sun simply came upstairs that evening carrying an old box, with Mrs. Sun following behind him.

"I think we found someone you should look into," Mr. Sun said.

Jason immediately put his laptop aside. "Who?"

Mr. Sun placed the box on the bed between us and began removing old photographs, notebooks, invitations, and university documents. Finally, he pulled out several pictures and handed one to Jason.

The photograph showed Jason's mother when she was young, probably in her first years of university. She was smiling at the camera, standing beside a man who appeared a few years older than her.

I leaned closer.

"Who is he?"

"Connor St. Johns," Mr. Sun answered. "He was a senior at the university when your mother met him."

Jason looked at his grandfather. “Were they dating?”

“We didn’t think they were,” Mrs. Sun said, although there was enough hesitation in her voice to make me look at her.

“You didn’t think they were?” I repeated.

Mrs. Sun sighed. “Your mother called him her friend. That’s how she always introduced him. But they were extremely close.”

Mr. Sun nodded. “Connor helped her when she first arrived at the university. He showed her around, introduced her to people, helped her with classes. For a while, whenever your mother spoke about university, his name came up.”

That was interesting.

Jason turned the photograph over. A date and location were written on the back, along with their names.

“How much older was he?”

“A few years. He was already a senior,” Mr. Sun said. “Your mother was younger.”

“What happened to him?”

Mr. and Mrs. Sun exchanged a look.

at immediately caught my attention.

“What?” I asked.

Mr. Sun took the photograph back and studied it as if seeing Connor for the first time in decades. “He disappeared.

Jason frowned. “Disappeared from Mom’s life?”

“Not only from her life,” Mrs. Sun answered. “His entire family disappeared.”

That made Jason sit straighter.

“The entire family?”

“The St. Johns family was very powerful at the time,” Mr. Sun explained. “Old money, old connections, extremely private. Then they simply vanished from society.”

“Families don’t just vanish,” I said.

“That’s what everyone said at the time,” Mrs. Sun replied. “There were rumors that they had lost everything financially. Others said they had left the country. Some believed they’d been killed. There were even rumors that they had changed their identities.”

“But nobody knew?”

Mr. Sun shook his head. “Not that we ever heard.”

Jason immediately turned back to his laptop and searched the name through his Chronos network.

Connor St. Johns.

Then the family.

St. Johns.

There were records, but almost everything was old. References to businesses, social events, properties, investments, and charitable donations appeared for years, and then the information seemed to stop abruptly.

Jason frowned.

“That’s strange.”

“What?” I asked.

“They don’t decline.”

I understood what he meant once he showed me. There wasn’t the gradual collapse you’d expect from a wealthy family that had gone bankrupt. No years of property sales, lawsuits, liquidations, or companies slowly shutting down.

The records simply stopped.

Mr. Sun nodded slowly. “That’s why people talked about them for years. One day, the St. Johns family was part of society. Then they weren’t.”

Mrs. Sun picked up another photograph of Connor and her daughter. “She was very upset when he disappeared.”

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 371

Jason looked at her sharply. “You remember that?”

“Was she already with White?”

“No,” Mrs. Sun answered. “She became involved with him later.”

That made the room go quiet.

I looked at Jason.

He was already thinking the same thing I was.

“Check the dates,” I said.

Jason didn’t ask what I meant. He immediately began comparing everything we knew: his mother’s university years, the period when she was close to Connor, the approximate date the St. Johns family disappeared, when she became involved with Mr. White, and eventually Jason’s birth.

It took him several minutes.

Nobody interrupted.

Finally, he leaned back and stared at the screen.

“The timeline works.”

Mrs. Sun looked uncomfortable. “That doesn’t mean Connor was your father,”

“I know.”

And it didn’t. A close male friend and a compatible timeline weren’t proof of anything. We didn’t even know whether Jason’s mother and Connor had ever been romantically involved.

But we’d started the day with no alternative candidate for Jason’s biological father.

Now we had one.

Connor St. Johns had been extremely close to Jason’s mother. He had disappeared before Mr. White became a significant part of her life, and the entire St. Johns family had apparently vanished with him.

Then another thought occurred to me.

“What if Connor isn’t the mystery we should be investigating?”

Jason looked at me. “What do you mean?”

“We’re trying to figure out where Connor went because he might be your father, but an entire powerful family doesn’t simply disappear without leaving something behind. Maybe we need to find out why the St. Johns family vanished in the first place.”

Mr. Sun’s expression changed.

Mrs. Sun looked down at the photographs.

Jason slowly closed the file containing his mother’s timeline and opened a new investigation.

ested a hand over my stomach as one of the twins shifted. Somehow, what had begun as a simple DNA comparison between Jason and Oscar had turned into another mystery involving a family that had supposedly disappeared decades ago.

Maybe Connor St. Johns had only been Jason’s mother’s friend.

Maybe his disappearance had absolutely nothing to do with Jasun.

Maybe the fact that the timeline worked was nothing more than coincidence.

But coincidence had stopped being convincing a very long time ago.

And if Connor St. Johns really was Jason’s biological father, then we weren’t simply looking for one missing man

anymore.

We were looking for an entire vanished family. 1

Ember

Amber POV

There was no useful information about the disappearance of the St. Johns family.

That alone bothered me...

Jason had activated every Chronos contact he trusted and searched through private databases, government archives, old university records, corporate registries, property transactions, newspapers, and decades-old society pages. We could reconstruct the St. Johns family’s history almost perfectly until one particular point.

Then they simply disappeared.

There was no public collapse, no bankruptcy, no mass funeral, no announcement that the family had left, the country. Their companies didn't gradually fail, and their properties weren't publicly liquidated. A family wealthy and influential enough to leave footprints everywhere suddenly stopped leaving them at all.

The one thing Jason managed to establish with certainty was where the St. Johns family had originated.

Sum.

"The St. Johns were from Sum," Jason said one afternoon.

I looked away from the reports I'd been reading. At six months pregnant and still on bed rest, I'd become accustomed to conducting practically my entire life from the sofa or our bedroom.

"Originally?"

"Very originally."

Mr. and Mrs. Sun, who were both in the living room with us, immediately became interested. Mr. Sun had spent the last several days going through old records belonging to his daughter, while Mrs. Sun had been sorting photographs and correspondence.

Jason turned his laptop so we could see the screen. "Their oldest businesses, properties, and family records are here. They left Sum eventually, but they maintained assets here."

Then he found something much more interesting.

A will.

More specifically, an enormous family trust.

The St. Johns family had consolidated a significant portion of their wealth before disappearing. Money, investments, properties, and other assets had been placed into a trust with very unusual instructions.

It was supposed to remain active for fifty years.

Waiting.

"For what?" I asked.

"A relative."

I frowned.

Jason showed me the conditions. Any legitimate blood relative of the St. Johns family could submit themselves for

verification. If their relationship was established according to the trust's requirements, they could potentially inherit.

"How much money?"

Jason told me.

I stared at him.

"That's obscene."

"That's the original amount."

I stared harder.

"The original amount?"

"It's been invested."

Wonderful.

Apparently, if Connor St. Johns turned out to be Jason's biological father, my husband might accidentally inherit another fortune.

Mrs. Sun immediately looked at Jason. "Take the test."

"No."

"Jason."

"I'm not taking a DNA test because Mom had a close male friend in college and there happens to be money involved."

Mr. Sun shook his head. "Forget the money."

"There's an impressive amount of it to forget."

Despite everything, I laughed.

Mrs. Sun pointed at Jason. "You wanted to know whether White is your biological father. We can't test White because he's hiding. This could give you another answer."

Jason became quiet.

That was the real reason to do it.

Not the inheritance.

Connor. 1

Jason's mother had been extremely close to Connor St. Johns during university. The timeline allowed for the possibility that Connor could be Jason's biological father, and now we'd discovered that the St. Johns had deliberately created a trust designed to wait decades for surviving relatives.

Eventually, Jason nodded.

"I'll do it."

The St. Johns trust had its own legal verification process, which wasn't surprising considering the fortune

Bonus

involved. Jason contacted the trustees, explained why he had reason to suspect a possible biological connection, and began the process.

Then, because neither Jason nor I had ever learned how to leave one mystery alone while waiting for another, he continued digging into the St. Johns history.

That was when he found my family.

"Amber."

I looked over.

His expression made me immediately suspicious.

"What?"

"Your family is from Sum."

I blinked.

"No, we're not."

"Apparently, you are."

I sat straighter.

Jason immediately reached toward me.

“Careful.”

“I’m pregnant, Jason, not made of glass. What do you mean my family is from Sum?”

He turned the laptop toward me.

The Asher family history went back generations in River City, but apparently it went back even further somewhere else.

Here.

In Sum.

And Asher hadn’t even been our original family name.

I stared at the record.

Ember.

“The Ember family?” I asked.

Jason nodded.

Something about that name immediately made Mr. Sun react.

He came closer.

“Go back.”

Jason did.

Mr. Sun read the record and went completely still.

“You know the name,” I said.

Everyone who knows the old history of Sum knows that name.”

I looked between him and the screen.

“Apparently I don’t.”

Mr. Sun sat down across from us.

“The Ember family wasn’t simply another old family from Sum, Amber. At one point, they were the largest and most powerful family in the country.” 1

That got my attention.

“How powerful?”

“More powerful than the Suns. More powerful than most families that exist here today.”

I stared at him.

Apparently, my family history had decided to become ridiculous too.

Mrs. Sun looked at the records over Jason’s shoulder. “The Embers controlled enormous amounts of land and industry. But that wasn’t what they were remembered for.”

“What were they remembered for?”

Mr. Sun answered.

“The Vincents.”

The room became silent.

Of course.

Because apparently every road in our lives eventually found its way back to that family.

“What about them?”

“The Ember family defeated them.”

I stared at him.

Jason stopped scrolling.

Mr. Sun continued. “The Vincents were once established in Sum. Powerful, wealthy, and increasingly dangerous. Eventually, what they were doing became impossible to tolerate.”

We already knew pieces of that history from Oleta Vincent.

The Vincents had once lived in Sum.

They’d been exiled.

Their old motto had been reborn to improve, supposedly reflecting the idea that after their exile they would rebuild their power honestly.

Except they hadn't.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 372

Their descendants had turned the family into something far worse.

Mad always known the Asher family was responsible for the Vincent family's fall.

I simply hadn't understood that the Ashers hadn't been called Ashers yet.

"The Ember family was the one that drove them out," I whispered.

Mr. Sun nodded. "They led the families that stripped the Vincents of their power in Sum and ultimately forced them into exile."

I looked at Jason.

"That explains why the Vincents hate my family."

"More than we realized," he said.

Suddenly, several things felt different.

The long-standing hostility.

The obsession with Sum.

The Vincent family's determination to regain access to the country that had thrown them out.

The mines.

The alexandrite.

Their fixation on old bloodlines.

This wasn't simply about wealth or territory.

There was history behind it.

Deep history.

“What happened to the Embers?” I asked.

Mr. Sun looked back at the records.

“They disappeared too.”

I frowned.

“Like the St. Johns?”

“Not exactly.”

Jason had already found the next part.

“They hid.”

I looked at him.

“What?”

“The Ember family deliberately dismantled its public identity.”

He showed me the records he’d pieced together. After defeating the Vincents and forcing them out of Sum, the

Ember family had made powerful enemies. Not merely the surviving Vincents, but families and organizations that had benefited from them.

The Embers had won.

Then they’d realized winning didn’t necessarily make them safe.

So they disappeared before someone could retaliate.

Properties changed hands.

Businesses were transferred.

Branches of the family relocated.

Names changed.

Records became harder to follow.

The largest family in Sum had intentionally broken itself apart to protect its descendants.

One branch eventually became the Ashers.

My branch.

“They didn’t fall,” I murmured.

“No,” Jason said. “They hid.”

That distinction mattered.

My ancestors hadn’t lost their power because someone defeated them. 1

They’d chosen survival.

They’d abandoned the Ember name, left Sum, and eventually established themselves in River City under another identity.

Asher.

I stared at the records.

Then another connection appeared.

St. Johns.

Again and again, whenever the Ember family appeared in the oldest documents, the St. Johns family wasn’t far

away.

Shared businesses.

Political alliances.

Mutual defense agreements.

Joint properties.

The deeper Jason searched, the clearer the relationship became.

“The St. Johns were their closest allies,” Jason said.

Not simply business partners.

Allies.

When the Ember family fought the Vincents, the St. Johns had stood with them.

When the Vincents were exiled, both families had been involved.

And eventually, both families disappeared from public life.

+15 8çnus

The Embers deliberately hid and became other families.

The St. Johns simply vanished.

I stared at Connor's old photograph lying beside Jason's laptop.

"This can't be coincidence."

Jason didn't disagree.

Mr. Sun was still reading.

"If Connor was your father..."

Mrs. Sun looked at Jason.

"Then an Ember descendant and a St. Johns descendant somehow ended up together again."

I looked down at my stomach.

Our twins moved beneath my hand.

Jason noticed and placed his hand over mine.

For a moment, neither of us spoke.

My family hadn't always been the Ashers.

We had once been the Ember family-the largest family in Sum, powerful enough to defeat the Vincents and drive them into exile. Then we'd hidden our identity to protect the generations that followed.

The St. Johns had been our closest allies.

And now Connor St. Johns might be Jason's biological father.

There was still no proof.

The DNA test could come back negative and destroy the entire theory.

But if it came back positive, then the past hadn't simply resurfaced.

The descendants of two families that had once stood together against the Vincents had somehow found each other generations later.

And considering that the Vincents were once again trying to force their way back into Sum, I couldn't help wondering whether history was preparing to repeat itself.

Not be due of the fortune

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Not because of the fortune

Amber POV

For once, my phone ringing brought good news.

I was in the living room, comfortably trapped beneath a blanket with my feet elevated, when Pamela's name appeared on the screen. Jasmine was already connected when I answered, and the expression on both their faces immediately told me they'd found something.

"Please tell me one of you is calling because you've finally found my merchandise."

Jasmine grinned. "We found your merchandise."

I sat up so quickly that Jason, who was working a few feet away, immediately looked over.

"Where?"

Pamela actually laughed. "You're going to hate this."

That wasn't encouraging.

"Where, Pamela?"

"Inside one of your own warehouses."

I frowned. "You already checked the Asher Corporation warehouses."

“Not Asher Corporation.”

I stared at her.

Then it clicked.

“No.”

Jasmine’s smile widened. “Yes.”

“Asher-Phoenix?”

“They’ve been storing everything inside the Asher-Phoenix building.”

For several seconds, I couldn’t say anything.

Then I started laughing.

Not because it was particularly funny, but because the sheer audacity was almost impressive.

The Asher-Phoenix building was one of my properties, separate enough from Asher Corporation’s primary storage facilities that it hadn’t appeared on the original list Pamela gave Jasmine, Noah, and Daniel. There were commercial storage areas inside the building that could be rented independently.

And apparently, someone had decided the safest place to hide stolen Asher merchandise was inside a building that also belonged to me.

“They hid my property inside my property?”

“Basically,” Pamela said.

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“That’s either brilliant or incredibly stupid.”

little of both.”

Jasmine sent me the information they’d uncovered. One of the warehouse spaces inside Asher-Phoenix had been rented months earlier. On paper, there was nothing connecting the rental to Asher Corporation.

That was intentional.

The lease was under the name of the wife of one of the marketing employees involved in the scheme.

There it was.

The missing connection.

Marketing had arranged the substitutions. Logistics helped move the original merchandise. Storage employees manipulated inventory records. The premium products and materials were quietly transported to Asher-Phoenix, where they disappeared into a privately rented warehouse under a name that wouldn't immediately attract attention.

They hadn't needed to find an outside buyer immediately.

They'd simply been accumulating everything.

"How much is there?" I asked.

Pamela's expression became serious. "A lot."

"Define a lot."

"Enough that we're still counting."

That wiped away my amusement.

The warehouse contained finished luxury bags, premium leather, specialized hardware, fabrics, packaging materials, and other inventory that had disappeared over time. Some of it had already been boxed and organized in quantities that suggested whoever was behind the operation eventually intended to move it somewhere else.

Fortunately, the audit had frightened them before they could.

"Has anyone touched anything?" I asked.

"Only to secure the site," Pamela answered. "Everything is being documented before it's moved. Legal is involved, security is there, and we've preserved the rental records."

"Good."

"And before you ask, no, you're not coming."

I frowned.

"I wasn't going to."

Jason laughed from across the room.

I glared at him.

Jasmine noticed.

“You were absolutely going to.”

am perfectly capable of following medical instructions.”

Three people laughed.

I hung up on them.

The recovery took most of the day.

By evening, Pamela sent me the preliminary inventory.

Most of what we’d been looking for was there.

Not everything, unfortunately. Some merchandise had almost certainly been moved or sold before we’d uncovered the operation, and the investigation into that portion would continue. But we’d recovered enough premium, materials and finished products to dramatically reduce the financial loss.

More importantly, we finally understood the scheme.

After months of suspicions, Emilia working undercover, Jasper quietly protecting her, the audit, the firings, the warehouse surveillance, and an attempted public scam involving one of the defective bags, we finally had the physical evidence.

I leaned back against the sofa and closed my eyes.

“Done.”

Jason looked over.

“Done?”

“Mostly.”

“That’s not the same thing.”

“It’s close enough for today.”

And for once, I meant it.

There would still be prosecutions. Lawsuits. Internal restructuring. More audits. We'd have to trace whatever merchandise had already left the warehouse and determine exactly how much money had been stolen.

But the immediate threat to Asher Corporation was contained.

The low-quality bags had never reached legitimate customers after we discovered the problem. Production had restarted with proper materials. Malcolm Sito's invisible quality verification system was working. The stolen merchandise had been recovered.

One disaster could finally be closed.

Which meant Grandpa could retire again.

"I am not retiring."

Those were the first words out of his mouth when I called him.

I smiled. "Yes, you are."

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 373

Not becom of the fort

"Amber-"

ou came back because I needed you."

"And apparently you still do."

"I always need you. That's completely different from needing you to work."

He went silent.

I knew I'd won.

Adrian had proven himself throughout the entire crisis. He understood the corporation, people respected him, and unlike several of the managers we'd just fired, he'd shown that his loyalty wasn't dependent on whether I was physically present to supervise him.

“I want Adrian to stay as vice president,” I said.

Grandpa considered it.

“Permanent?”

“Yes.”

“He’ll need more authority.”

“I know.”

“And he’ll need direct access to the executive audit reports.

“I’ll authorize it.”

“What about Pamela?”

“Pamela keeps her current authority.”

That mattered to me. I wasn’t replacing Pamela or undermining what she’d done. Adrian’s role would strengthen the executive structure, especially when I couldn’t be physically present.

Grandpa remained silent for another moment.

Then he sighed.

“Fine.”

I smiled.

“Congratulations on your second retirement.”

“I didn’t agree to retirement.”

“You just agreed Adrian could take over your current responsibilities.”

“That isn’t the same thing.”

“Enjoy your retirement, Grandpa.”

I hung up before he could argue.

Jason stared at me.

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“You’re brave.”

He loves me.’

“That’s the only reason you’re alive.”

“Probably.”

That evening, Jason became unusually quiet.

I noticed while we were getting ready for bed.

He stood by the window for a while before finally turning toward me.

“I’ve decided to do it.”

I knew immediately what he meant.

“The St. Johns test?”

He nodded.

I studied his expression.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

He sat beside me.

“But I want something understood.”

“What?”

“I’m not doing it for the inheritance.”

“I know.”

“No, Amber. I really don’t care about the money.”

I smiled slightly. “You already have enough.”

“So do you.”

“Apparently my ancestors were the biggest family in Sum. Maybe greed is hereditary.”

That got a small laugh from him.

Then his expression became serious again.

“If the St. Johns trust disappeared tomorrow, I’d still take the test.”

I reached for his hand.

That was what I wanted to hear.

Because this wasn’t about a fifty-year trust or the massive fortune sitting inside it waiting for a surviving relative.

It was about Connor St. Johns.

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It was about Jason’s mother.

was about Mr. White.

And it was about a little boy who had spent years believing his own father had accepted money to give him away.

“I need to know,” Jason said quietly. “That’s all.”

I intertwined my fingers with his.

“Then find out.”

He looked down at our hands.

“If Connor isn’t my father, at least we eliminate one possibility.”

“And if he is?”

Jason was quiet for a moment.

“Then maybe some things finally make sense.”

I understood.

Perhaps Mr. White had known from the beginning that Jason wasn't biologically his. Perhaps that was why he'd been able to surrender him so easily when the Vincents came asking.

It wouldn't excuse him.

Nothing could.

But answers didn't always exist to forgive people.

Sometimes they simply existed to let you understand what happened.

Jason placed his hand over my stomach when one of the twins moved beneath my shirt.

"I don't need another family," he said.

I looked at him.

"I have one."

His thumb moved gently over my stomach.

"You. The children. My grandparents. That's enough."

"But you still deserve to know where you came from."

He nodded.

"Exactly."

And just like that, Jason made the decision.

He would submit his DNA to the St. Johns trust.

Not because of the fortune.

Not because of the properties.

Not

Qum of the future

Not because discovering he was a St. Johns could give him another powerful name.

was doing it for the simplest reason possible.

He wanted the truth.

For once, I hoped that was exactly what we were going to get.

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it’s not only the Beckers

Amber POV

Jason contacted the trustees of the St. Johns family the following morning.

I expected the process to be complicated considering the amount of money involved in the trust, but complicated. turned out to be an understatement. The trustees had apparently spent decades preparing for people to appear claiming some distant relationship to the vanished family. There were protocols for everything, including exactly how a potential heir’s DNA could be collected.

The test couldn’t be done privately.

There would be witnesses present during the collection, representatives from the trust, an independent laboratory, legal observers, and enough documentation to establish an unquestionable chain of custody from the moment Jason’s sample was taken until the results were certified.

Jason listened to the explanation without complaining.

“When?”

“We can arrange the collection in three days,” the trustee told him through the video call. “However, Mr. Sun, you should understand that the results will not be immediate. Given the age of the reference samples and the verification required under the St. Johns trust, final confirmation could take up to two weeks.”

“That’s fine.”

I looked at him.

It absolutely wasn’t fine.

Jason wanted the answer yesterday.

But he simply nodded and scheduled the appointment.

When the call ended, I smiled.

“Two weeks.”

“Don’t.”

“You’re going to lose your mind.”

“I can wait.”

I laughed.

Jason narrowed his eyes. “You refresh investigation reports every thirty seconds.”

“That’s completely different.”

“How?”

“Because I’m charming when I’m impatient.”

He stared at me.

I smiled.

“Don’t answer that.”

once, we had something almost normal to wait for.

Then my phone started vibrating.

And didn’t stop.

Jason’s followed seconds later.

I looked at the screen.

“What happened now?”

That question had become far too common in our lives.

The first headline answered it.

BECKER MATRIARCH DEMANDS RETURN OF DAUGHTER

My smile disappeared.

“Rose.”

Jason was already opening the article.

Rose’s biological mother had resurfaced.

Not physically, of course.

That would have required her to reveal where she was, and the Becker matriarch was still a wanted criminal. Instead, she’d released a statement through intermediaries and attorneys, claiming that her daughter had been illegally taken from her.

Worse, she was claiming she’d been coerced into signing the adoption documents.

According to her statement, she’d been threatened, manipulated, and forced to surrender Rose while under extreme pressure. She claimed the adoption should never have been considered valid and demanded that her daughter be returned to her immediately.

The media exploded.

Within an hour, the story was everywhere.

Some outlets treated it like a custody battle.

Others framed it as another conflict between powerful families.

A few questioned whether a wanted criminal could even demand custody without appearing before the authorities.

But what made me furious was the way some of them talked about Rose.

As though she were property.

Something transferred from one family to another.

Something that could simply be returned.

Rose was a child.

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Emory spoke next.

he Becker statement gives them a narrative they can control. If we stay silent, they’ll turn this into a story about powerful people stealing children from their biological families.”

“Instead of what actually happened.”

“Exactly.”

I understood.

The Becker matriarch wanted the world debating whether she’d been coerced into signing adoption papers.

She didn’t want anyone asking why Rose needed to be protected from her in the first place.

“How much are you going to expose?” Jason asked.

“As much as we safely can,” Mr. Stait answered. “Enough to establish that this isn’t an isolated custody dispute. There is a network. The Vincents have been using it, and several families have participated.”

I looked toward the living room doorway.

Rose wasn’t there.

Neither was Iris.

Good.

“Have you spoken to Rose?”

“Not yet.”

“Then don’t announce anything involving her until you do.”

“We won’t.”

“She decides.”

There was no hesitation.

“Agreed.”

Rose and Iris surprised all of us.

We gathered in the living room that afternoon. Mr. and Mrs. Sun were there, along with Jason, Mr. Stait, and Emory through a secure video connection.

I had expected Rose to be frightened.

She was angry.

“That woman is lying.”

I watched her carefully. “You don’t have to respond publicly.”

“I want to.”

“Rose-”

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 374

Her voice trembled, but she didn’t stop.

She always does this. She does bad things, and then she says someone made her do them, she claims to be my mother, but i did not even know who she was when I was with them, i was a slave, a nameless girl treated like a dog, they don’t get to claim me now.”

Iris sat beside her.

Neither girl looked like the frightened children we’d first met.

They’d changed.

Not because what happened to them had stopped hurting.

Because they’d learned that being afraid didn’t mean they had to remain silent.

Rose looked at me.

“People are going to believe her if I don’t say anything.”

“Some people might.”

“Then I want to tell them.”

I hesitated.

“You don’t owe the public your story.”

“I know.”

That answer mattered.

She wasn’t doing this because she believed she had to defend us.

She wanted to.

Iris reached for Rose’s hand.

“I’m doing it too.”

I looked at her.

“Iris.”

“If Rose talks alone, they’ll make it about the Beckers.”

She glanced toward Mr. Stait on the screen.

“But it’s not only the Beckers.”

No.

It wasn’t.

Iris looked at Rose and then back at me.

“It’s happening to other kids.”

Her voice was quieter now.

Anot only the Hockers

“Kids from families with money. Heirs. Children they think they can use to control companies or families. They

ove them around and make agreements about who they’re supposed to belong to.”

Rose nodded.

“They treat us like we’re things.”

Nobody interrupted.

“They decide who you’re supposed to marry,” Iris continued. “Where you’re supposed to live. What family gets you. And if somebody doesn’t cooperate, they threaten them.”

My stomach twisted.

We already knew this.

Hearing the girls describe it themselves was different.

Rose looked toward the screen.

“If Mr. Stait is going to expose them, then I want people to know what they actually do.”

Emory leaned closer to his camera.

“You understand that once you speak publicly, people will talk about you. Some will support you. Others may question you.”

“I know.”

“They may investigate your past.”

“I know.”

“They may say terrible things.”

Rose’s chin lifted.

“They already are.”

That silenced everyone.

I looked at Jason.

His jaw was tight.

I knew exactly what he was thinking.

He’d been one of those children too.

Different circumstances.

Same principle.

Adults deciding a child could be transferred, hidden, sold, or used because powerful families believed bloodlines mattered more than the person carrying them.

Mr. Stait finally nodded.

“Then we do it correctly.”

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Not a gossip interview.

Not a rushed response outside a courthouse.

The girls would give formal statements. Their identities and experiences would be handled carefully, and investigators would release corroborating evidence wherever doing so wouldn’t endanger victims or active rescue operations.

The story wouldn’t be about Rose’s mother demanding her daughter back.

It would be about the system that had made children like Rose and Iris valuable targets in the first place.

Jason’s hand found mine.

“This is going to explode,” he murmured.

“I know.”

The Becker matriarch had wanted public attention.

She was about to get considerably more of it than she’d expected.

Because Mr. Stait and Emory were ready to expose the trafficking network the Vincents and their allied families had been using.

And Rose and Iris were ready to speak.

Not as property being fought over.

Not as heirs.

Not as bargaining chips between powerful families.

As themselves.

For the first time, the people who had spent years controlling children through fear, bloodlines, marriages, and money weren’t going to be the ones telling the story.

The children they'd tried to control were.

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A baby

Amber POV

The doctors were not happy about me flying to River City.

Jason was even less happy about it, which was impressive considering he was the one who ultimately arranged the flight, the medical clearance, the additional security, and enough monitoring equipment to make me feel as though we were transporting a critically endangered species instead of a six-months-pregnant woman.

But there was no possibility of me staying behind.

Rose and Iris had decided to speak publicly, and if they wanted me there, I would be there.

All of us flew to River City together. Mr. and Mrs. Sun came with us, and Grandpa was already there. Mr. Stait and Emory had traveled ahead to coordinate with military and police officials because this wasn't going to be / presented as a family dispute or another scandal between wealthy families.

This was a criminal investigation.

The statement would be given from a government facility, with representatives from the military, police, and investigators standing together. Evidence had been reviewed carefully beforehand. Anything that could compromise active rescue operations was removed, and the identities of victims who hadn't agreed to be named would remain protected.

Rose and Iris had both been given the option to change their minds until the last possible second.

Neither did.

Iris had spoken publicly before, at least partially. When the truth about her being an heir had emerged, pieces of what happened to her had become public knowledge.

But only pieces.

The world knew she'd been mistreated.

They didn't know the darkest parts.

They were about to.

The press room was completely full.

Jason and I stayed offstage with Rose while Iris waited nearby. I was sitting because Jason had apparently informed everyone within a ten-mile radius that allowing me to stand unnecessarily was a criminal offense.

Mr. Stait walked onto the stage first.

The room immediately went quiet.

“This investigation did not begin yesterday,” he said. “Nor did it begin with the recent statement made by the Becker family.”

Behind him, the large screen changed.

Numbers appeared.

Rescue operations.

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Recovered victims.

Countries.

Ages.

Ongoing investigations.

I watched the reporters react.

The numbers were difficult to look at even when you already knew them.

Mr. Stait explained that military and law-enforcement operations had uncovered a network used to move human beings between households and territories. Some victims had been sold. Others exchanged. Some were children whose identities or inheritance rights made them valuable to powerful families.

He discussed the women we’d found.

The rescues.

The testimonies.

The people recovered from properties connected through intermediaries.

He didn’t disclose everything.

He didn’t need to.

The numbers were enough.

The room had become completely silent by the time he finished the initial statement.

Then Mr. Stait looked toward the side of the stage.

“Numbers, however, have a problem.”

He paused.

“They make it very easy to forget that every number represents a person.”

He stepped away from the microphone.

“I’d like you to hear from one.”

Iris walked onto the stage.

My throat tightened.

Jason reached for my hand.

Iris looked small behind the podium.

Not weak.

Just young.

Far too young to have a story that required a military press conference.

She adjusted the microphone.

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“My name is Iris.”

Cameras flashed.

She waited.

“I’ve already talked publicly about some of what happened to me. People know I lived with the Becker family. People know now that I was an heir.”

She swallowed. 1

“What people don’t know is what I was before anyone discovered that.”

The room became still.

“Nothing.”

My fingers tightened around Jason’s.

“At least, that’s what I was told.”

Iris looked directly toward the cameras.

“I lived with the Beckers, but I wasn’t treated like family. I wasn’t even treated like someone who worked for

them.”

Her voice remained steady.

“I was a maid. A servant. I cleaned. I carried things. I followed instructions. I did what I was told because I knew what happened when I didn’t.”

One reporter lowered his camera.

“I didn’t have a name that mattered. I didn’t have status. I didn’t have family coming to find me. I didn’t have anyone I thought I could call.”

She paused.

“And then they told me what was going to happen to me.”

I already knew.

Hearing her say it still made me furious.

“They told me I was going to become a bride for the Vincent family.”

The room erupted.

Questions immediately came from several directions.

Mr. Stait raised his hand.

“Let her finish.”

Silence returned.

Iris continued.

“Nobody asked me if I wanted to marry anyone. Nobody cared. It wasn’t presented as a choice. I was told what my

A baby

future would be, and I understood that there was nothing I could do about it.”

Her hands tightened around the podium.

“I had no money. No family that I knew about. No status. No protection. No way out.”

Her voice cracked slightly.

“But I had it better than some.”

That sentence hurt more than everything before it.

Iris looked down for a moment before continuing.

“There was a baby.”

Behind me, I heard Rose inhale.

I turned.

She was staring at Iris.

“I took care of her,” Iris said. “As much as they let me.”

Her voice had softened.

“I was still a child myself, so I didn’t always know what I was doing. But I fed her when I could. I held her when she cried. I stayed with her when she was scared.”

Rose’s eyes filled with tears.

I reached for her hand.

She took mine.

“I watched that baby grow,” Iris continued. “And while she got older, I realized she was trapped in the same nightmare I was.”

The press room was so quiet that I could hear the cameras clicking.

“She had a family name. She had blood that people considered important. But that didn’t protect her.”

Iris looked toward the reporters.

“It made her valuable.”

That distinction landed exactly as it should.

“She was another thing they could use. Another child whose future could be decided by adults because of the family she was born into.”

Iris took a breath.

“I tried to protect her. I don’t know if I did a good job.”

Beside me, Rose whispered, “You did.”

I looked at her.

Tears were sliding down her cheeks.

Iris continued.

couldn’t get us out. I couldn’t fight them. I couldn’t call the police because I didn’t believe anyone would listen

to someone like me.”

Her eyes lifted.

“But eventually, we were rescued.”..

A reporter near the front slowly raised her hand.

Mr. Stait acknowledged her.

“You said you cared for a baby while living with the Becker family. Who was that child?”

Iris didn’t answer immediately.

Instead, she looked toward the side of the stage.

Toward us.

Rose released my hand.

Jason stood.

So did I.

His hand immediately went to my arm.

“I’m walking ten feet.”

“I’m aware.”

Rose looked at me.

“Are you sure?” I whispered.

She nodded.

Then she walked.

Alone.

The moment she stepped onto the stage, the room changed.

At first, there was confusion.

Then recognition.

Reporters started whispering.

Cameras turned.

Someone gasped.

Iris moved away from the podium.

Rose walked straight toward her.

For a moment, neither girl said anything.

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Then Iris reached out.

Rose took her hand.

The flashes became almost blinding.

Iris looked toward the reporters.

“This was the baby.”

Silence.

Absolute silence.

Rose Becker-the child whose biological mother had just gone to the media claiming she’d been coerced into surrendering her-stood beside the girl who had cared for her when they were both trapped inside the Becker household.

Rose stepped toward the microphone.

Her hands were trembling.

Iris didn’t let go of one of them.

“My mother says she wants me back.”

The first few words were quiet.

Then Rose lifted her chin.

“But she never came to save me.”

Nobody moved.

“Iris did.”

I covered my mouth.

Jason’s arm wrapped around me.

Rose looked at Iris.

“She was a kid too, but she took care of me.”

Iris was crying now.

Rose turned back toward the cameras.

“So before anyone talks about whether my mother should get me back, I want them to know where I was.”

She paused.

“And I want them to know who was actually there.”

I looked around the press room.

No one was asking questions anymore.

They were listening.

The Becker matriarch had wanted the world to hear that her daughter had been taken from her.

Now the world was hearing from Rose herself.

And this was only the beginning.

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No claim

Amber POV

Rose stood behind the microphone with Iris’s hand still wrapped around hers.

The room remained completely silent. A few minutes earlier, reporters had been throwing questions at Mr. Stait. faster than he could acknowledge them. Now, no one seemed willing to interrupt the little girl standing before

them.

Rose looked toward me briefly.

I smiled at her.

She turned back to the cameras.

“I didn’t have a name either. Not a real one. Not one that belonged to me.”

A murmur moved through the room, but Rose continued.

“I know people call me Rose Becker now because Becker is the family I was born into, but when I lived there, nobody treated me like I was their daughter. I wasn’t given an education. I didn’t go to school. I didn’t have teachers or classes. Nobody cared if I learned to read properly or if I knew the things other children my age knew.”

Her voice was soft, but every microphone in front of her carried it across the room.

“I didn’t know that wasn’t normal because it was the only life I knew.”

My fingers tightened around Jason’s.

Rose took a small breath before continuing.

“I was hungry a lot. Sometimes Iris found food for me. Sometimes she gave me some of hers, even though she didn’t have enough either.”

Iris looked down.

“When Amber and Jason found me, I was severely malnourished.”

The room shifted.

This time, the whispers were louder.

Rose looked toward us again.

“I didn’t know what that word meant then. I just knew I was always tired. I was weak. I was hungry, and sometimes I thought I was going to fall asleep and…”

She hesitated.

“…not wake up.”

My eyes burned.

I remembered finding her.

How small she’d been.

How fragile.

How frighteningly easy it had been to see the evidence of neglect on her body.

wasn’t sure I was going to live,” Rose admitted.

Then she turned toward Iris.

@grus

“But I did because of her.”

Iris immediately shook her head.

Rose didn’t let her deny it.

“You kept me alive.”

Tears slipped down Iris’s cheeks.

“You fed me when you were hungry too. You stayed with me when I was scared. You took care of me when you were only a kid yourself.”

Rose’s voice broke.

“You didn’t have anything to give me, but you still thought about me.”

Iris covered her mouth.

“Thank you for keeping me alive all those years.”

That broke whatever composure Iris had left.

She pulled Rose into her arms.

For several seconds, the press conference stopped mattering. There were no powerful families, no criminal investigations, no Vincents or Beckers.

There were only two girls holding each other.

One had been a child trying to keep a baby alive when nobody had protected either of them.

The other had survived long enough to thank her.

When they separated, Rose wiped her face and returned to the microphone.

Her expression changed.

“And to the woman who says she’s my mother…”

The room became completely still.

“If you wanted to be my mother, you had the chance.”

I held my breath.

“You knew I was there. You lived in the same place I did. But you never claimed me as your daughter when I was living there.”

Rose’s voice trembled, but she didn’t stop.

“So you don’t get to claim me now because people are watching.”

There it was.

Not an argument between lawyers.

Not a custody statement prepared by adults.

A child drawing her own boundary.

“You might share my blood, but you didn’t share your love with me. You didn’t give me your attention. You didn’t. protect me. You never made me feel like your daughter.”

Rose lifted her chin.

“So I don’t accept you as my mother.”

No one interrupted.

“I already have a family.”

My heart clenched.

Rose looked toward us.

“Amber and Jason found me.”

Jason’s fingers tightened around mine.

“They didn’t know me. They didn’t owe me anything. But they didn’t leave me there.”

Tears escaped before I could stop them.

“They got me out.”

Rose smiled faintly.

“And then they gave me something I didn’t know I could have.”

She looked toward Mr. and Mrs. Sun.

“A family.”

Mrs. Sun immediately started crying.

Rose’s smile grew.

“Mr. and Mrs. Sun treated me like I belonged there from the beginning. They cared if I ate. They cared if I slept. They cared if I was scared.”

She glanced toward where the children were waiting away from the main press area.

“Alice and Alex treated me like I was already theirs.”

Then she looked at Iris.

“And Iris was my family before any of them even knew I existed.”

Iris started crying again.

Rose laughed softly through her own tears.

“She was the first person who loved me.”

That destroyed me.

eaned into Jason, and his arm immediately wrapped around me.

Rose turned back toward the cameras.

“Amber made sure I went to school. She told me I could learn anything I wanted, even if I had to start later than everyone else.”

I wiped my cheeks.

“Jason told me nobody was ever going to decide my entire life for me again.”

Jason looked down.

“And Mr. Sun tells very long stories.”

A ripple of laughter moved through the room.

Mr. Sun looked personally offended.

Mrs. Sun elbowed him.

Rose smiled.

“Mrs. Sun makes everyone eat whether they’re hungry or not.”

That earned another quiet laugh.

Then Rose’s expression softened.

“So thank you.”

She looked toward all of us.

“Amber. Jason. Mr. and Mrs. Sun. Alice. Alex. Iris.”

She paused.

“Thank you for loving me.”

My hand went over my mouth.

“I have a new life now. I have a home. I have school. I have people who want me there.”

Rose took a shaky breath.

“And I’m going to cherish it forever.”

Mr. Stait stepped forward, clearly preparing to conclude the girls’ portion of the press conference.

Rose and Iris turned to leave.

Then Jason released my hand.

I looked up.

“Jason?”

He stood.

There was something in his expression I recognized immediately.

He hadn’t planned this.

He kissed my forehead before walking toward the stage.

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 375

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War

Amber POV

Jason passed Rose and Iris on his way to the microphone.

He gently touched Rose’s shoulder, then Iris’s.

Both girls stopped.

Jason continued toward the podium.

The cameras immediately turned toward him.

He stood behind the microphone and looked across the room.

“You all know me.”

The room quieted.

“My name is Jason Sun.”

Everyone there knew that.

What they didn’t know was what came next.

“But what most of you don’t know is that I understand some of what these girls are describing.”

I stopped breathing for a second.

Mrs. Sun went completely still.

Jason looked directly toward the cameras.

“I lost my identity too.”

Whispers erupted.

“For two years of my childhood, I was kept away from my family. I was mistreated and isolated. I was made to forget who I was.”

The room exploded with questions.

“Mr. Sun, who took you?”

“Were the Vincents involved?”

“Did your grandparents know?”

“Are you saying you were trafficked?”

Jason waited.

Eventually, the room quieted again.

“When my grandparents found me, I didn’t know my own name.”

Mrs. Sun covered her mouth.

Mr. Sun took her hand.

“I didn’t know who I was or where I belonged. Other people had decided that for me for so long that the person I’d been before was almost gone.”

Jason looked toward Rose and Iris.

They were still standing at the side of the stage.

“So I’m not saying this for the people who did it.”

His eyes returned to the cameras.

“I’m saying it for everyone we’ve rescued and everyone who will still be rescued.”

The room became completely silent.

“If you’re safe now but you don’t know how to move forward, you don’t have to have the answer

His voice was calm.

“If you’ve forgotten who you were, you can discover who you want to become.”

I felt tears sliding down my face again.

immediately.”

“If someone took your name, your childhood, your family, your choices, or years of your life, they still don’t own what comes next.”

Rose reached for Iris’s hand.

Jason’s expression hardened.

“And to the people responsible for this network: we’re coming.”

Nobody moved.

“Not only for the people who physically held these victims. We’re coming for the people who paid for them, the people who transported them, the families who arranged these exchanges, the officials who looked away, and everyone who benefited from keeping children and adults trapped.”

Mr. Stait stood behind him without interfering.

Jason leaned slightly toward the microphone.

“Justice will be served.”

Then he stepped away.

For several seconds, the press room was silent.

Rose suddenly ran toward him.

Jason barely had enough time to turn before she threw her arms around his waist.

He immediately hugged her.

Iris joined them.

The cameras erupted in flashes.

And I didn’t care.

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Because the Becker matriarch had gone to the media expecting the world to debate whether her daughter should be returned to her.

Instead, Rose had told the world exactly who had saved her.

Iris had told them who had kept her alive.

And Jason had revealed that even he knew what it was like to have his identity taken from him.

The people behind this network had survived for generations because their victims had been isolated, frightened/

and silent.

That silence was over.

But as I watched Jason holding Rose and Iris, something inside me refused to let it end there.

Because there was another part of the story.

One that needed to be said.

I pushed myself to my feet.

Jason saw me immediately.

Of course he did.

His expression changed from emotional to alarmed in approximately half a second.

“Amber.”

“I’m walking.”

“You’re supposed to be sitting.”

“I’ve been sitting.”

“That isn’t how bed rest works.”

A few reporters close enough to hear us laughed.

I ignored him.

Mr. Stait looked at me as I approached the stage, probably trying to decide whether stopping a six-months- pregnant woman in front of several dozen cameras was worth the consequences.

Apparently, he decided it wasn’t.

He stepped aside.

Jason met me halfway and offered me his arm. I accepted it, mostly because I knew refusing would turn this into an argument neither of us needed broadcast live.

Rose and Iris moved toward Mr. and Mrs. Sun.

I walked to the podium.

The room quieted again.

I looked at the reporters.

Then at the cameras.

There were things I’d spent months refusing to say publicly because investigations were ongoing. Because we needed evidence. Because exposing too much could send people running.

But this wasn’t about exposing evidence.

It was about drawing a line.

“My name is Amber Asher.”

The flashes intensified.

“Many of you already know pieces of what happened to me when I was a child. You know pieces of what happened to Jason. You’ve heard Iris tonight. You’ve heard Rose.”

I rested one hand against the podium.

“But there’s something I want everyone to understand.”

I looked around the room.

“Some of us were lucky.”

That word felt strange considering everything we’d survived, but it was true.

“I was retrieved by my family before permanent damage could be done to me. Jason was eventually found by his grandparents. Others we’ve encountered were rescued before the people who took them could completely destroy their lives.”

I glanced toward Iris and Rose.

“But so many weren’t.”

The room was completely silent.

“Some children spent years without names. Some never received an education. Some were starved. Some were taught that they existed only to marry into another family. Some were moved between households as though they were property.”

My anger grew with every word.

“Some were taken because they were heirs. Some because of their bloodlines. Others because they were simply vulnerable enough that powerful people believed nobody would come looking.”

I paused.

“And some never came home.”

No one moved.

“This isn’t a family dispute. It isn’t wealthy people fighting over inheritance. It isn’t a custody battle, and it certainly isn’t gossip.”

My eyes moved toward the cameras.

“This is organized human trafficking.”

The words landed heavily.

“And I’m tired of pretending we don’t know the names surrounding it.”

eard movement behind me.

Jason had gone still.

Mr. Stait didn’t stop me..

So I continued.

“The Vinnys.”

Several reporters immediately started typing.

“The Beckers.”

More whispers. 1

Then I said the name that had followed us through almost every part of this nightmare.

“The Vincents.”

The room erupted.

Questions came from everywhere, but I raised my voice over them.

“No.”

They slowly quieted.

“You’ve had years to hide behind companies, intermediaries, marriages, money, political influence, and other families. You’ve had years to convince yourselves that having enough power meant nobody could touch you.”

I gripped the podium.

“You were wrong.”

Jason walked closer, stopping beside me.

I looked directly into the nearest camera.

I wasn’t speaking to the reporters anymore.

I was speaking to them.

“If you’re involved in taking these children, we’re coming for you. If you bought them, we’re coming for you. If you sold them, we’re coming for you. If you arranged marriages involving children who couldn’t consent, we’re coming for you. If you hid victims,

transported them, falsified their identities, or used your position to make investigations disappear, we're coming for you."

Jason placed a hand against my back.

I continued.

"If you helped and decide to come forward now, tell the authorities what you know. Help them find the people who are still missing. Give them names, locations, records, accounts-everything."

I paused.

"Because after today, silence is a choice."

Me room had gone completely still.

"The Vinnys, the Beckers, the Vincents, and every family working with them have spent generations believing their names protected them."

I shook my head.

"Not anymore."

I looked toward Mr. Stait.

Then Emory.

Then Iris and Rose.

Finally, Jason.

When I faced the cameras again, I knew exactly what I wanted to say.

"Consider this my public declaration of war."

The room exploded.

Jason closed his eyes beside me.

I could practically hear what he was thinking.

Of course my pregnant wife just declared war during a nationally televised press conference.

leaned toward the microphone one final time.

“Not against a country. Not against innocent members of any family.”

I paused.

“Against the network.”

That distinction mattered.

“Against every person who believes children can be bought, sold, traded, hidden, or used to preserve a bloodline.”

My hand instinctively moved to my stomach.

“Our children will not inherit this.”

I looked toward Rose and Iris.

“None of them will.”

Then I stepped away from the podium.

Jason immediately took my arm.

“Done?”

I glanced at him.

“For now.”

“Wonderful.”

emiled sweetly.

“You married me.”

“I know.”

“Contractually, at first.”

“Trust me, I’m painfully aware.”

Despite everything, I laughed.

Behind us, reporters were shouting questions. Phones were ringing. Statements were already being transmitted around the world, and I knew that within minutes my words would be everywhere.

Amber Asher declares war on trafficking network.

Fine.

Let that be the headline.

Because the people behind this had relied on one thing more than money, power, or fear.

They relied on everyone else staying quiet.

We weren't quiet anymore.

And this time, they knew exactly who was coming for them.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 376

Amber POV

After that, everything started to spiral.

Apparently, publicly declaring war against a human-trafficking network while six months pregnant had consequences.

Who knew?

My grandfather called before we'd even made it back to the castle. He didn't bother with a greeting.

"What the hell were you thinking?"

"I was thinking that someone needed to say it."

"Amber, you named three powerful families on live television."

"Yes. I remember. I was there."

"Do not get smart with me."

I pulled the phone slightly away from my ear and looked at Jason. He was sitting beside me in the car, pretending not to listen while very obviously listening.

“Grandpa, I’m fine.”

“You declared war.”

“Against human trafficking.”

“That clarification is not making me feel better.”

“It should.”

“It doesn’t.”

I sighed and rested my head against the seat.

“I wasn’t going to stay quiet after hearing Rose and Iris.”

His silence told me he understood that, even if he didn’t like it.

Finally, Grandpa sighed.

“Increase security.”

“Already done.”

“Don’t go anywhere alone.”

“Jason already threatened everyone within a ten-mile radius with death if they let me out of the castle.”

Jason looked at me.

“I didn’t say death.”

I covered the phone.

“It was heavily implied.”

was not.”

Grandpa heard him.

“Good. At least one of you has common sense.”

Traitor.

But my grandfather wasn’t the only one worried.

The Ember group began contacting me almost immediately.

Some of the women we'd helped reconnect with their real families were terrified that my public declaration would draw attention toward them. We'd spent months quietly helping people reclaim what their families had lost; land, companies, trusts, inheritances, identities. Many of them had children of their own now, and their greatest concern wasn't money.

It was whether the people who had stolen from their families would come after their children next.

I understood.

But the situation had changed.

"The spotlight is on me," I told them during a secure group call. "That's exactly why you shouldn't stop."

Several faces stared back at me.

One of the women shook her head. "Amber, this could expose us."

"Eventually, yes. But right now everyone is looking at me, Jason, the Vincents, the Beckers, and the Vinnys. Every reporter wants to know what I'm doing next."

I smiled.

"So while they're watching me, it's your time to shine."

That got their attention.

"Reclaim your land. File for your family assets. Challenge fraudulent ownership transfers. Recover your companies. Protect your children and document everything. Don't do anything illegally and don't give anyone an excuse to make you look like aggressors. But don't hide anymore."

For generations, these families had survived by convincing their victims that reclaiming what belonged to them would only bring more suffering.

That advantage was disappearing.

One by one, claims began to be filed.

Old land transfers were challenged.

Dormant trusts were reopened.

Companies that had supposedly belonged to certain families for generations suddenly faced documentation proving otherwise.

People began asking where those assets had actually come from.

And, more importantly, parents began safeguarding their children.

The Owen family would remain with us at the castle for the time being. Franklin's mother had initially resisted the idea of relocating, but after everything that happened on the island-and after discovering that her son had secretly joined a military competition on his eighteenth birthday-her tolerance for risk had understandably disappeared.

The castle was becoming less of a home and more of a heavily fortified family shelter.

Considering our lives, that was probably appropriate.

The backlash against the Vincents was worse than even I'd anticipated.

Their first response was predictable.

Denial.

They claimed the accusations were fabricated. They insisted Alexander Vincent's actions didn't represent the family. They accused governments, competing corporations, and even me of manipulating frightened victims to destroy their reputation.

That argument might have worked months earlier.

Not anymore.

There were too many victims.

Too many witnesses.

Too many records.

Too many countries investigating simultaneously.

International police agencies began coordinating arrests.

Secondary families connected to the network were hit first. Some had participated directly. Others had provided transportation, properties, forged documentation, or financial channels.

Executives resigned.

Board members disappeared.

Stock prices collapsed.

Several companies connected to Vincent-controlled interests lost so much value that bankruptcy proceedings began almost immediately.

And then came the rescues.

Women were found in private estates.

Others in compounds registered under shell companies.

Some had been moved repeatedly for years.

I made the mistake of looking at several photographs from the rescue operations.

I couldn’t finish.

Their condition was horrifying.

Some were painfully thin. Others had untreated injuries. A few looked directly at the cameras with expressions that somehow hurt worse than visible wounds.

Jason closed my tablet.

“Enough.”

I didn’t argue.

For once.

Because I could feel my blood pressure rising.

He crouched in front of me.

“This is why you’re staying here tomorrow.”

I knew exactly what he meant.

His DNA appointment.

?

The St. Johns trustees had arranged everything. The sample would be collected in front of independent witnesses, legal representatives, and laboratory personnel to ensure nobody could later claim the results had been manipulated.

“I could go.”

“No.”

“Jason.”

“No.”

“I’m your wife.”

“Exactly.”

I narrowed my eyes.

“Explain how that supports your argument.”

“The Vincents are collapsing, Amber. People are being arrested. Companies are failing. Families are losing assets they’ve controlled for decades, and you went on television and personally declared war against the entire network.

“Against the network, yes.”

“You named them.”

“They deserved it.”

“I agree.”

That stopped me.

Jason took my hands.

“But agreeing with you doesn’t mean I’m going to pretend you’re safe.”

s eyes dropped toward my stomach.

“You’re six months pregnant, you’re supposed to be on bed rest, and we’re dealing with people who have already tried to kill us.”

I couldn’t argue with that part.

Someone had replaced the crew of our private plane and planted a bomb beneath it.

Subtlety had left the conversation a long time ago.

Jason kissed my forehead.

“Stay at the castle. Let me do the test. I’ll come straight back.”

I sighed.

“Fine.”

His shoulders visibly relaxed.

“But call me immediately.”

“I will.”

“Before anyone tells you the result.”

“Amber, they said it could take two weeks.”

“I know. I’m establishing rules early.”

He laughed.

“Of course you are.”

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 377

Amber POV

The morning Jason left for the DNA appointment, another story broke.

This one changed everything again.

The missing Vincent women were speaking.

Not one.

Several.

Some were women Mr. Stait and Emory had rescued during previous operations. Others had been recovered after the international investigations expanded. Women the Vincent family had spent years describing as missing, unstable, estranged, dead, or simply irrelevant were suddenly appearing in front of investigators.

And their stories matched.

I watched one of the recorded statements from the living room.

The woman on the screen looked exhausted. There were shadows beneath her eyes, and she kept twisting her fingers together while an investigator sat beside her.

“My father didn’t lose me,” she said.

My stomach tightened.

“He sold me.”

I stopped breathing.

She swallowed.

“Alexander Vincent’s father sold us.”

The investigator asked her to explain.

Her eyes filled with tears.

“He decided where we went. Which families received us. Some were marriages. Some weren’t called marriages at all.”

I felt sick.

“He said daughters were resources.”

My hand instinctively covered my stomach.

“He told us that the Vincent family survived because everyone had a purpose. Sons inherited. Daughters created alliances.”

Another woman gave almost the same testimony.

Then another.

Alexander’s father had arranged the transfers.

Some women were sent to families because those families owed the Vincents money. 1

Others were exchanged for business interests, political support, land, protection, or access.

Some had children.

Some of those children had been taken from them.

And some women had simply disappeared.

One of the rescued Vincent women looked directly into the camera during her statement.

“People keep asking whether Alexander knew.”

The investigator didn’t interrupt her.

She wiped her face.

“He grew up in that house.”

A chill moved through me.

“He knew women disappeared.”

She paused. 1

“Maybe he didn’t know where every woman went. Maybe his father didn’t tell him every agreement. But don’t let him tell you he thought we were all happily living somewhere else.”

I leaned back against the sofa.

That was the problem with criminal families collapsing.

Eventually, everyone stopped protecting the family name.

The Vincents had spent generations building power through silence, fear, bloodlines, and control.

Now the women they’d discarded were alive.

And they were talking.

My phone vibrated beside me.

A message from Jason.

Sample collected. Everything went normally. Coming home.

I released a breath I hadn’t realized I was holding.

One mystery was now officially waiting on a laboratory.

But the Vincent investigation wasn’t waiting for anyone.

Arrests were accelerating.

Victims were being found.

Families were reclaiming what had been stolen from them.

And the women Alexander’s father had treated like commodities were finally telling the world exactly what the

Vincent name had cost them.

decades, powerful men had written their family’s history.

Now the women they had sold were rewriting it.

The call from Mr. Stait came while Jason was still on his way back from the DNA testing appointment,

I almost didn’t answer.

After everything that had happened over the last few days, I had finally convinced myself to follow the doctor’s instructions properly. I was in bed, my laptop closed, my phone beside me, and absolutely nothing work-related within reach.

Then Mr. Stait called.

So much for that.

When I answered, he wasn’t alone.

Emory was standing behind him, and they appeared to be inside one of the secure safehouses River City’s military had been using for rescued victims.

But neither of them was the reason for the call.

Oliver was sitting between them.

Alexander Vincent’s son.

The boy looked considerably better than he had when we’d found him on the island, but there was still something unsettling about how serious an eleven-year-old could look.

“Hello, Oliver.”

“Hi.”

Mr. Stait leaned closer to the camera. “He asked to speak with you.”

I frowned. “Is everything okay?”

Oliver nodded.

Then he placed something on the table.

A tiny storage chip.

“I gave them this.”

Mr. Stait picked it up carefully.

My attention sharpened.

“What is it?” 1

“The reason we’re calling,” Emory answered.

Oliver looked at me.

“It’s about my father.”

ONA

Something in the way he said father made my stomach tighten.

Alexander had spent weeks demanding access to Oliver, claiming River City was illegally keeping his son from him. He’d presented himself publicly as a father who’d only recently discovered he had a child and was being denied the opportunity to meet him.

Oliver apparently had a different story.

Mr. Stait inserted the chip into an isolated computer.

“We’ve already made copies and secured the original,” he explained. “What we’re about to show you is one of the copies.”

Files appeared across the screen.

A lot of files.

Corporate records.

Names.

Maps.

Photographs.

Financial documents.

Lists.

I leaned closer.

“What am I looking at?”

Emory’s expression hardened.

“Alexander Vincent’s operation.”

For a moment, I said nothing.

Then Mr. Stait opened the first folder.

Companies.

Dozens of them.

Some I recognized. Others I’d never heard of. On the surface, they had nothing in common. Transportation companies, private security firms, consulting agencies, charities, medical organizations, recruitment firms, real- estate companies.

Fronts.

The chip didn’t simply identify them.

It explained what they were used for.

Transportation.

Money laundering.

ONA

Identity changes.

Housing.

Surveillance.

Locating potential targets.

Moving victims across borders.

I felt my stomach turn.

“Alexander knew.”

Mr. Stait looked at me.

“More than knew.”

Emory opened another file.

“He improved it.”

That was worse.

Much worse.

The information showed modifications Alexander had introduced to the existing network: new corporate structures, safer financial routes, additional intermediaries, and ways to separate the Vincent name from the operations themselves.

Alexander hadn’t inherited a criminal system and reluctantly tolerated it.

He’d modernized it.

Then Emory opened a map.

Countries were marked across the continent.

Some had notes attached.

“What are those?” I asked.

“Places where the network currently has influence.”

Government contacts.

Businesses.

Families.

Properties.

Officials.

Then another map appeared.

Different markings.

Future targets.

04A

I stopped breathing for a moment.

There were name’s.

Families.

Women.

Children.

Heirs.

Some were frighteningly young.

“What is that list?”

Mr. Stait’s jaw tightened.

“People they intended to take.”

I stared at him.

“Take?”

“The plans suggest the network intended to expand into those regions once they established enough political or economic influence. These individuals were identified as potential leverage,”

Leverage.

That word made me furious.

Children weren’t leverage.

Women weren’t assets.

Human beings weren’t pieces on a corporate board.

Yet Alexander’s files treated them exactly that way.

Some targets had notes beside their names describing inheritance rights. Others had projected marriages. Some children were connected to companies they were expected to inherit decades from now.

This wasn’t opportunistic kidnapping.

It was succession planning.

Only with people.

I looked at Oliver.

“Where did you get this?”

He looked down at his hands.

“My mom gave it to me.”

The room became quiet.

“When?”

“Before they took us to the island.”

Stait didn’t interrupt.

Oliver continued.

“She told me to hide it somewhere nobody would look.”

“Did she tell you what was on it?”

“Some of it.”

His fingers tightened together.

“She said if I ever got away, I had to give it to someone who could protect me.”

My chest hurt.

“She told me it could save me.”

I swallowed.

“She was right.”

Oliver shook his head.

“But I was already rescued.”

That simple sentence nearly broke me.

Because his mother had given him the only weapon she had, believing her son might someday have to bargain for his own survival.

And instead, he’d been rescued before he needed to.

Oliver looked directly at me.

“So I don’t need it to save me anymore.”

His eyes moved toward the computer.

“Maybe it can save them.”

I couldn’t speak for a second.

“The people on the lists?”

He nodded.

Then he said something I hadn’t expected.

“And the people still on your island.”

I froze.

“What?”

Mr. Stait’s expression changed.

Apparently, this part was new to him too.

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Oliver leaned toward the screen.

here are more people there.”

My heart started pounding.

“On the island?”

He nodded.

“Where?”

“I don’t know exactly. Mom said there were places underground. Not the place where you found us. Other places.”

I immediately reached for my laptop.

Mr. Stait stopped me.

“Amber.”

“We need to search the island.”

“We will.”

“There could still be people there.”

“I heard him.”

“Then send someone.”

“We’re already contacting the investigation team.”

I forced myself to stop.

My blood pressure.

The babies.

Bed rest.

I hated every single one of those words.

Oliver watched me.

“Please save them.”

That took every ounce of anger out of me.

“We will.”

He searched my face.

“Promise?”

I hesitated only because I didn’t like making promises about things I couldn’t completely control.

But this one I made anyway.

“I promise we’ll look for everyone.”

Oliver nodded.

Men he stared at me for a few seconds.

“My mom knew you.”

I frowned.

“What?”

“She knew you.”

“Oliver, I don’t think I’ve ever met your mother.”

“You did.”

A strange sensation crawled over my skin.

“How?”

He looked toward Mr. Stait as though checking whether he was allowed to continue.

Mr. Stait nodded.

Oliver turned back to me.

“My mom used to tell me a story about a little girl.”

I stopped moving.

“She was eight when they took her.”

His mother.

“She said there was another girl where they kept her. A really little girl. Maybe four.”

My fingers slowly tightened around the blanket.

Oliver continued.

“Mom said the little girl kept saying she wanted to go home.”

Something inside me went cold.

“She wanted Mom to leave with her.”

I couldn’t breathe properly.

“But Mom was scared.”

Images tried to form in my head.

Nothing came.

Only emptiness.

“She said the little girl wasn’t scared like everybody else. She kept looking for ways out.”

Oliver smiled faintly. 1

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“Mom said she thought the girl was crazy.”

eyes burned.

“Then one day, the little girl escaped.”

Silence.

“Mom didn’t go with her.”

Oliver looked down.

“She always regretted it.”

I stared at him.

“Why do you think that was me?”

“Because she knew your name.”

My heart stopped.

“Amber.”

I closed my eyes.

Nothing.

I tried to remember being four.

A room.

A girl.

Running.

Anything.

There was nothing there.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered. “I don’t remember her.”

Oliver didn’t seem hurt.

“Mom said you were really little.”

Mr. Stait was watching me carefully.

I pressed a hand against my forehead.

I’d known there were gaps in my earliest memories. I’d known I’d been recovered before lasting damage could be done.

But knowing something intellectually was very different from hearing that another child had remembered me for

years.

“She said you changed her life.”

I opened my eyes.

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“How?”

Because after you escaped, she knew it was possible.”

My throat tightened.

“She didn’t escape then. She was still too scared. But she said she never forgot the girl who did.”

I couldn’t speak.

At four years old, I had apparently done something I couldn’t even remember.

I’d run.

And an eight-year-old girl who’d been too frightened to follow had remembered me.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 378

GODE

Amber POV

Jason didn’t answer his phone.

The first time I called, I wasn’t worried. Not really. Jason was supposed to be returning from the DNA testing appointment, and there were a dozen perfectly reasonable explanations for why he wouldn’t answer immediately. He could still be speaking with the trustees. He could be driving. He could have stopped to speak with security.

So I waited five minutes and called again.

It rang

And rang

And went unanswered.

I frowned at the screen.

Jason always answered me.

Maybe not on the first ring. Sometimes not even on the first call if he was in the middle of something important. But if I called twice, he answered. If he couldn't, someone from his security team did.

I called a third time.

Nothing.

"Okay."

I sat straighter on the bed.

There was still no reason to panic.

I called his driver.

No answer.

Then his security detail.

No answer.

That was when the first thread of fear worked its way into my chest.

I opened the security application on my phone and checked Jason's location.

Unavailable.

"No."

I refreshed it.

Still unavailable.

Chronos had trackers everywhere. Jason practically breathed technology His phone, watch, car, security team there were redundancies built into redundancies because both of us had been kidnapped enough times to develop what normal people would probably consider an unhealthy relationship with tracking devices

Jason didn't simply disappear

I called again

"Come on, Jason

The phone rang beside my cal

Nothing

I checked the time

He should have been home

By the time an hour passed, I had called everyone

Mr. Mait

Emory

Marcus.

Pamela

Jasper

Malcolm.

My grandfather.

Mr. and Mrs. Sun were already moving through the castle coordinating with security while I searched every system I could reach from my phone.

The testing site had cameras.

The streets around it had cameras.

Nearby businesses had cameras.

Traffic intersections had cameras.

I hacked every single one I could access.

Jason appeared entering the testing site.

He appeared leaving it.

He walked toward his car.

Then

Nothing

1 went backward.

Watched again.

Jason left the building.

He was alone for only a few seconds while his security shifted around the vehicle.

The camera angle changed.

A delivery truck passed.

Then the feed glitched.

That was di

Three seconds off comeget torby

When the image women, condemning qan

I searched the next one

Nothing

Another

Mathing

His car disappeared too.

It was as if Jason thus had walked out of braiding in the middle of River City and vetoshard from the phot

That was impo

Which meant someone had planned it

My phone rang

1 answered immediately

“Jason”

“Auber

Mrs. Sun

My heart dropped.

“What did you find?”

“We’re still looking,”

That’s not at atwwer.”

..

“We don’t kouw you”

My breathing, became shallow

NO

I wasn’t doing this

I wasn’t panicking

Venke didn’t help

Information helped

“His car.

Mrs. Sun hesitated.

“What about it?”

“Find the car.”

“We’re trying.”

“Chronos has trackers.”

“They’re offline.”

“All of them?”

Silence.

“Grandma.”

“Yes.”

I closed my eyes.

Someone had known exactly what they were doing

The Vincents?

Mr. White?

Oscar?

Someone connected to the St. Johns trust?

We had just exposed an international trafficking network. Arrests were happening across multiple countries. Companies were collapsing. Women were talking. Oliver had handed over evidence that could destroy Alexander and expose Mr. White as the man behind the entire operation.

And Jason had just publicly revealed that he’d been one of the children who lost his identity.

Then he’d gone to establish whether he was biologically connected to another vanished family.

Too many possibilities.

Too many enemies.

“His last confirmed location?” I asked.

“Outside the testing site.”

“And the car?”

“Gone.”

I stopped.

“What?”

“The car is gone too.”

I pushed the blanket away.

“I’m coming.”

“Na.

“I’m coming,”

“Amber, absolutely not.”

“Jason is missing”

“And you’re six months pregnant and on bed rest.”

“I don’t care!”

The room tilted.

I grabbed the edge of the mattress.

Mrs. Sun’s voice sharpened through the phone.

“Amber?”

“I’m fine.”

I wasn’t.

My heart was beating too quickly.

There was pressure in my head and a strange buzzing in my ears.

“Amber, lie down.”

“I’m fine.”

“Call the doctor.”

“I’m not calling the damn doctor. I’m finding Jason.”

I tried to stand.

My legs didn’t cooperate.

The door opened.

One of the castle staff members took one look at me and immediately ran toward the bed.

“Mrs. Sun?”

“Don’t-”

She took the phone from my hand.

I heard Mrs. Sun shouting through it.

Everything became noise after that.

People entered.

Someone checked my blood pressure.

Then checked it again.

Their expression told me enough.

“How high?”

No one answered

“Tell me ”

The number they gave me made my stomach drop.

My hand immediately went over my belly.

The twins.

Fear changed direction instantly.

Not Jason.

Not me.

Them.

“Are the babies okay?”

“We need to take you to the hospital.”

“Are they okay?”

“We need to monitor all three of you.”

I hated that answer,

I hated everything about it.

But for once, I didn’t fight.

Because Jason was missing.

And I couldn’t lose our babies while trying to find him.

I was admitted to the hospital less than an hour later.

The babies were monitored immediately.

Two heartbeats.

Strong

Steady.

I cried when I heard them.

Not dramatically.

I simply turned my face away and cried while a nurse adjusted the monitors around my stomach.

Jason should have been here.

He would have been hovering over everyone, asking the doctors questions they had already answered and probably demanding credentials from anyone who came within five feet of me.

Instead, the chair beside my bed was empty.

Mrs. Sun arrived shortly afterward.

I knew from her face that there was no good news.

She sat beside me.

“They found his last confirmed scation

cation-

“I know. Outside the testing site.”

She nodded.

“His vehicle was there when he left the building. We have footage confirming that.”

“But now it’s gone.”

“Yes.”

“Security?”

“We’re looking for them too.”

That was worse.

Much worse.

I stared at her.

“Someone took ai! of them.”

“We don’t know that.”

“Grandma.”

She closed her eyes.

“That’s what we’re assuming.”

I looked toward the monitors.

The babies’ heartbeats continued steadily.

I concentrated on the sound.

One.

Two.

One

Two.

Stay calm.

I needed to stay calm.

“Have they checked airports?”

“Yes.”

“Private airfields?”

“Yes.”

“Train stations?”

-15 Bonu

15 Bonus

“Road cameras?”

“Chronos is checking everything

“Ports?”

“Amber.”

“Ports?”

“Yes.”

I swallowed.

“What about Mr. White?”

“They’re looking ”

“Oscar?”

“Looking”

“Alexander?”

“Under surveillance.”

“Connor St. Johns?”

That made her pause.

“We don’t even know if Connor is alive.”

“Then find out.”

She nodded.

I knew how irrational that sounded.

I didn’t care.

Jason had disappeared immediately after giving DNA to a trust connected to a family that had vanished decades earlier.

Every possibility mattered.

Pamela arrived first.

She didn’t ask permission before entering my room. She walked straight in, put her bag down, looked at the monitors, looked at me, and apparently decided I wasn’t allowed to die.

“I’m staying.”

“Pamela-”

“No.”

I blinked.

“You’re getting very comfortable telling me no.”

“You’re hospitalized.”

“temporarily

Marcus arrived ten minutes later

He walked in holding two coffees, saw the look Pamela gave him, and quietly placed one outside the room.

“I didn’t know pregnant women weren’t supposed to

“Marcus”

“Right. Not important.”

He came closer.

“Any word?”

I shook my head.

His expression changed immediately

Marcus and Jason had been friends too long for him to hide what he was feeling

“We’ll find him.”

I wanted to believe that

So I nodded.

Then three more people appeared in the doorway.

Jasmine

Noah

Daniel.

I stared at them.

“What are you doing here?”

Jasmine walked inside.

“Protecting you.”

“I have security.”

“Congratulations.”

I frowned.

Noah closed the door behind them.

Daniel looked at my monitors.

“How’s your pressure?”

I stared at him

He stared back.

Right

Medic

Traitor

“Better.”

“How much better?”

“None of your business.”

He walked over and looked at the monitor himself.

I sighed.

Jasmine dropped into the chair near the door.

“We’ve decided we’re your protection detail.”

I blinked.

“You’ve decided?”

“Yes.”

“Nobody asked you.”

“No.”

I looked at Noah.

He shrugged.

“We voted.”

“Who voted?”

“The three of us.”

“That’s not how assigning protection works.”

“It worked on the island,” Jasmine said.

Daniel sighed.

“We’re not officially replacing her security.”

Jasmine looked disappointed.

“We’re supplementing it.”

“Thank you, Daniel.”

“You’re welcome.”

Noah moved toward the window and checked outside.

I watched him.

“You’re actually serious.”

All three looked at me.

Apparently, that was a stupid question.

15 Borus

Jastine leaned forward

“Someone made Jason Sun-disappear in broad daylight.”

The humor left her expression.

“You’re pregnant with his children, you just publicly declared war on the people we’re investigating, and Oliver handed over evidence connecting Mr. White to the trafficking hetwork.”

Noah finished for her.

“You’re a target.”

I didn’t like hearing it.

Mostly because they were right.

Daniel pulled another chair closer.

“So we’re staying.”

I looked around the room.

Pamela had claimed one side.

Marcus had taken the other.

Jasmine was guarding the door.

Noah had positioned himself near the window.

Daniel was apparently going to personally monitor my blood pressure until one of us died from irritation.

And Jason was still missing.

My phone lay on the table beside me.

I picked it up.

Called him again.

Everyone went quiet.

The phone rang.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

Four.

“Come on,” I whispered.

Voicemail.

I closed my eyes.

For one horrible second, I remembered being four years old.

Not the memory itself.

I still couldn't remember that place Oliver's mother had described.

But I remembered what other had said.

A little girl who wanted to escape

Apparently, I'd once been that girl.

Jason had been taken too.

He'd lost his identity for two years.

Someone had eventually rescued him.

And then, if our suspicions were correct, Mr. White had taken him back.

I opened my eyes.

Not again.

Whoever had Jason had made one enormous mistake

They thought making him disappear would frighten me into stopping

It did frighten me.

I was terrified.

But fear and surrender had never been the same thing

I looked at Pamela.

"Get me everything on the testing site."

Then Marcus.

"Contact every Chronos location Jason activated during the St. Johns investigation."

Noah straightened.

"Amber–"

"I'm not leaving this bed."

Daniel looked mildly surprised.

“I can work from here.”

That earned me a sigh.

Finally, I looked at Jasmine.

“Find that car.”

Her smile disappeared.

She stood.

“Now that I can do.”

My hand settled protectively over my stomach as the twins moved.

Jason had asked me to stay safe at the castle because he was afraid someone would attack me.

U

D

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 379

son

Amber POV

There was one thought I couldn get out of my head.

The timing.

Jason had disappeared immediately after the DNA testing was completed.

Not before the appointment.

Not an his way there.

After.

That was too much of a coincidence.

I lay in the hospital bed staring at the information Pamela had pulled onto my laptop while the monitors beside me continued their steady rhythm. My blood pressure had finally come down enough that the doctors had stopped threatening me every ten minutes, but nobody was discussing discharging me yet.

Daniel had appointed himself their unofficial enforcer.

Jasmine was somewhere coordinating with security teams searching for Jason's car. Noah had barely moved from his position near the door, and Marcus had been speaking with Chronos contacts for the better part of an hour.

Everyone was searching.

But they were searching too broadly.

"Mr. White."

Pamela looked up from her tablet. "What?"

"My first suspect isn't Alexander."

Marcus ended his call and turned toward me.

"It's Mr. White."

The room went quiet.

I shifted against the pillows and ignored Daniel's immediate glance toward the blood-pressure monitor.

"Think about it. We know where Oscar is- or at least where he was most recently. Nevermore. We have footage of him entering the country"

"But nothing on Mr. White," Pamela said.

"Exactly"

That had bothered me from the beginning.

Mr. White and Oscar had left White Manor together Both had been covered almost completely, both had carried luggage, and both had disappeared through an emergency exit

Then Oscar resurfaced

Mr. White didn't

Not at an airport

Not at a hotel

Not at a border crossing

Nothing

He had simply vanished.

Just like Jason.

"Pull up everything we know about Jason's mother," I said.

Marcus frowned. "Amber-"

"Please."

He hesitated before opening another file.

I stared at the screen.

Jason's mother.

The late daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sun.

A woman who had gone to college, had been extremely close to Connor St. Johns, and had eventually married the man we'd known for years as Mr. White.

She had Jason.

Then she died.

Mr. White remained.

And people connected to Sum tried to gain control of assets that should have belonged to Jason through his mother.

My stomach tightened.

"Do you see it?"

Parela stared at the screen.

1 continued before anyone could answer.

“Jason’s mother died, and afterward Mr. White and people connected to Sum tried to take control of what belonged to her.”

Marcus’s expression slowly changed.

“It sounds familiar.”

“It sounds exactly like what we’ve been uncovering.”

Women used to acquire assets.

Women used to create alliances.

Children used to control inheritance.

Heirs moved around like pieces on a board.

The Vincent system wasn’t simply about kidnapping people and hiding them in compounds. It was about ownership Bloodlines Marriages, Companies. Land Inheritance.

Control

And Mr. White had married a Sun heiress.

I stared at the photographen the screen.

“What if she didn’t marry him because she wanted to?”

Pamela went still.

Marcus looked at me sharply.

“We don’t know that.”

“No. We don’t.”

And I’wasn’t going to turn a theory into a fact simply because it fit.

But suddenly, there were too many similarities to ignore.

“What if Jason’s mother was forced to marry Mr. White?”

Daniel had been quiet until then.

“Forced how?”

“I don’t know. Threats. Family pressure. Blackmail. Maybe something involving Connor. We don’t know enough yet.”

I looked toward Marcus.

“But we do know what happened after she died.”

Jason’s inheritance had nearly disappeared into other hands.

Assets that should have belonged to him through his mother had been contested, manipulated, and controlled.

And Jason hadn’t simply received everything automatically when he became an adult.

Marcus had helped him recover it.

I looked directly at him.

“You helped Jason get his mother’s assets back.”

Marcus nodded slowly.

“Yes.”

“Because they weren’t simply waiting for him.”

“No.”

There it was.

I leaned back.

A dead woman.

A child separated from his maternal family.

A husband attempting to maintain control.

Assets diverted away from the rightful heir.

It was practically the Vincent blueprint.

My hand curled around the edge of the blanket.

“And now we know Mr. White was born a Vincent.”

Pamela’s eyes narrowed.

“Alexander’s uncle.”

“Exactly.”

The name White had hidden him.

River City had hidden him.

For years, everyone had looked at Mr. White as an entirely separate man who happened to have some connection to the Vincents

He wasn’t.

He was family.

And according to Oliver’s chip, Alexander hadn’t been the mastermind.

Mr. White had.

Suddenly, another thought hit me.

I went completely still.

“Amber?”

I barely heard Pamela.

Mr. White had taken Jason before.

We’d spent so much time examining the Vincents, Alexander, the trafficking operation and the St. Johns connection that I had almost missed the most obvious part.

Jason had been sent away as a child.

Mr. White had accepted money from the Vincents to let them take him.

He’d claimed he’d been pressured.

Threatened

Trapped.

But now we knew he'd been lying about his relationship with them.

And there was evidence suggesting that after Jason had once been rescued and brought to the castle, someone had managed to take him again.

We'd already suspected Mr. White.

I closed my eyes,

"He's done this before."

Marcus stepped closer.

"What?"

I looked at him.

"Mr. White has already made Jason disappear once."

Nobody spoke.

My pulse began climbing again.

Daniel noticed immediately.

"Amber."

"I'm fine."

"You're not."

I ignored him.

"Mr. White knew Jason's history. He knew how he was taken the first time because he participated in it. He knew how to separate him from security. He knew how to make him disappear."

Pamela stood.

"And if Jason's DNA test threatens something-"

"He takes him again."

My heart hammered.

What did that test threaten?

The St. Johns inheritance?

Mr. White's story?

Jason's identity?

Or something much larger?

I looked toward Marcus.

"Find Mr. White."

"We're already trying."

"Try differently."

Marcus didn't argue,

"Stop looking for a billionaire businessman running from an investigation."

I swallowed.

"Look for a Vincent."

That changed everything.

Marcus reached for his phone.

Pamela was already typing.

I looked at Jason's empty chair.

I couldn't prove it yet.

But I didn't need proof to know where I wanted our attention.

Alexander Vincent was dangerous

Oscar was involved in something

The Vincents had spent generations destroying lives.

But if I had to put everything I owned on one person responsible for Jason's disappearance

I’d put it on the man who had already taken him once.

Mr. White.

And I was almost certain he had my husband.

Jason POV

Pain was the first thing I understood.

Not where I was.

Not how long I’d been there.

Not even what had happened.

Pain.

It pulsed through the back of my skull, deep and relentless, every heartbeat sending another wave through my head.

I tried to open my eyes.

Couldn’t.

My body felt impossibly heavy.

Something was wrong with my hands.

I couldn’t tell whether they were restrained or whether I simply couldn’t move them.

Then I heard a voice.

And suddenly, none of the pain mattered.

I knew that voice.

I’d spent years wishing I didn’t.

Mr. White

The man I’d grown up believing was my father.

My false father.

He was somewhere nearby.

Talking on the phone.

I forced myself to stay still.

To listen

“It is done,” he said.

+15 Bon

Silence followed while whoever was on the other end answered.

Then Mr. White spoke ag

“I have him.”

My blood went cold.

He meant me.

Another pause.

Then his voice changed.

Harder.

“Have Amber retract the statements and get the chip from your boy.”

My mind struggled through the haze.

Your boy.

Oliver.

Alexander.

Mr. White was talking to Alexander.

“Do you understand me?” Mr. White continued. “You know what will happen to him if you don’t, son.”

Son.

The word barely registered before another wave of pain tore through my head.

But it had registered.

Mr. White had called Alexander son.

Not nephew.

Son

I tried to hold on to consciousness.

Amber

He wanted Amber to retract her statements.

He wanted Oliver’s chip.

And he had taken me to get both.

The bastard had done it again.

The thought should have made me afraid.

Instead, beneath the pain, something furious came alive.

Because I wasn’t a child anymore.

I knew my name.

I knew who I was.

+15 Bor

U

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 380

Nothing

+15 Bon

Nothing

Amber POV

We found Oscar.

Not another airport sighting. Not a grainy camera image showing someone who looked vaguely like him disappearing into a

crowd.

His exact location.

Nevermore.

A private apartment registered to a company that, on the surface, had absolutely nothing to do with the White family.

Marcus found the financial connection first. Pamela confirmed it through another channel, and Chronos gave us the final piece

Oscar had been using the apartment for several days.

The moment the confirmation appeared on my screen, I called Emory.

“Tell me you’re still in Nevermore.”

“I am.”

“I found Oscar.”

There was a pause.

“Send me the address.”

That was it

No questions.

No lecture.

No attempt to convince me that someone else should handle it.

I sent him everything.

Then I waited.

Which, I had discovered, was one of the most torturous activities known to humanity.

Especially when I was trapped in a hospital bed.

My blood pressure had improved, but the doctors weren't willing to release me yet. Apparently, having a missing husband did not qualify as a medically appropriate reason to ignore pregnancy complications.

Ridiculous.

Mr and Mrs. Sun stayed with sne. Grandpa arrived not long after and took one look at my face before deciding that whatever lecture he'd prepared could wait.

The children were here too.

Not inside my room every second, but close.

Alice had crawled onto the bed earlier and asked when Daddy was coming home.

I'd told her soun

Thad no idea if that was trimi

Nothing

+15 Boni

Alex hadn't asked.

That worried me more.

He understood enough to know something was wrong, and after everything he'd already lived through, I could see the fear he was trying to hide.

Iris knew.

Rose knew.

None of them needed another person they loved disappearing.

Neither did I.

Mr. Stait apparently agreed.

Military officers were stationed outside the hospital perimeter.

Not hospital security.

Military.

When I asked whether that was excessive, Mr. Stait told me that after I'd publicly declared war against an international trafficking network and my husband vanished in broad daylight, I'd lost the right to complain about excessive security.

I didn't have a particularly good response to that.

So I waited.

And called Jason again.

Still nothing.

Almost three hours after I gave Emory the address, my phone rang.

Video call.

Emory.

I answered so quickly I nearly dropped it.

His face appeared first.

"We have him."

Everyone in the room moved.

Mr. Sun came to my bedside.

Mrs. Sun grabbed Grandpa's arm.

"What does that mean?" I demanded. "Is he alive?"

"Oscar is alive."

Not Jason

Oscar

I closed my eyes tor a second.

"show the "

Nothing-

The camera turned.

Oscar White was sitting in a chair.

Restrained.

His hands were secured behind him, and one of Emory's people stood several feet away.

Oscar looked terrible.

His hair was longer than the last time I'd seen him. There were dark circles beneath his eyes, and whatever expensive clothi he'd once considered necessary to maintain the White family image had been replaced by a plain shirt and jeans.

He looked at the screen.

Then he saw me.

"Amber."

I felt nothing.

"Where is Jason?"

Oscar frowned.

"What?"

"Don't."

"I don't know where Jason is."

"Your father took him."

His face changed.

That was enough.

Emory noticed too.

He stepped closer.

"What do you know?"

Oscar looked away.

Emory grabbed the back of the chair and pulled it around until Oscar faced him.

“Your brother disappeared after leaving a DNA testing facility.”

“He’s not my brother.”

The words came automatically

Mr. Sun flinched beside me.

Emory didn’t

“Fine Jason Sim disappeared. Your father is our primary suspect. Start talking.”

Oscar looked toward the phone again

“Amber, I swear I don’t know where Jason is “*

Nothing

“Then tell me where your father is.”

“I don’t know.”

Emory’s expression hardened.

Oscar immediately continued.

“I really don’t.”

“Convenient.”

“I left him.”

That stopped me.

“What?”

Oscar swallowed.

“I left my father.”

I stared at him.

“We have footage of you leaving White Manor together.”

“I know.”

“You fled together.”

“At first.”

Oscar closed his eyes.

“Then I ran from him.”

The room went quiet.

I studied his face.

“Why?”

He laughed bitterly.

“Because I finally understood that there was no version of my life where he was going to let me walk away.”

Something about that sentence felt too familiar.

Emory leaned against the table.

“Start at the beginning.”

Oscar looked at me,

And then he said so.nething I wasn’t prepared to hear.

“It was never my plan.”

+15 Bol

Nothing

Oscar looked miserable.

“My father told me to get close to you.”

For a moment, I thought I’d misunderstood him.

“What?”

“When we were younger. He knew who you were.”

The room seemed to shrink.

“He knew you were an Asher.”

My grandfather went completely still.

Oscar saw him behind me.

His face became even paler.

“He knew who her family was?” Grandpa asked.

Oscar nodded.

“Yes.”

“When?”

“Before Amber and I started dating.”

My fingers went numb around the phone.

Seven years.

Every memory suddenly rearranged itself.

Meeting Oscar.

Becoming friends.

Falling in love,

Building a company together.

Believing we were two young people creating something from nothing.

“What exactly did your father tell you?”

Oscar looked down.

‘Get close to her.”

“Why?”

“Because of the Askers.”

I couldn’t breathe properly.

“He wanted access to your family. Your grandfather. Your money. Your properties. Your connections.”

Grandpa muttered something vicious under his breath.

Oscar continued

+15 Boni

Nothing

“River City was always difficult for him. He had money, but he didn’t have the kind of influence he wanted. The old families

didn’t trust him.”

“So he wanted the Asher name,” I said

Oscar nodded.

“He wanted me to marry you.”

There it was.

Something inside me cracked.

Not because I still loved Oscar.

I didn’t.

It hurt because another part of my past had just become contaminated by the same nightmare we were uncovering everywher

else.

Women.

Marriage.

Inheritance.

Power.

I had spent seven years believing I’d chosen Oscar.

Apparently, Oscar had been sent to choose me.

“Was any of it real?”

The question escaped before I could stop it.

Oscar looked at me.

“Amber-”

“Was any of it real?”

His face crumpled.

“Yes,”

I almost laughed.

What an ugly answer.

“I was ordered to approach you. I was ordered to keep you close. But I did love you.”

“Don’t.”

“I did.”

“You slept with my secretary,”

its mouth closed.

“You let me build a company while you benefited from my work. Then you stood there while that same company tried to paint

me as a thief”

Nothing

“I know.”

“And your father wasn’t angry?

Oscar laughed.

The sound was bitter.

“No.”

I stared at him.

“He wasn’t angry that you cheated?”

“No.”

“That you destroyed our relationship?”

“No.”

“That the company almost collapsed?”

“He didn’t care.”

My chest tightened.

“What did he care about?”

Oscar looked directly at me.

“That I failed.”

The room became completely silent.

“He told me I’d spent seven years with you and somehow ended up with nothing.”

I felt sick.

“No Asher shares. No control over your properties. No connection to your grandfather. No marriage.”

Oscar swallowed.

“He said I’d been given the easiest assignment of my life and ruined it.”

Assignment.

Seven years of my life had been an assignment.

My hand went instinctively to my stomach.

Jason’s children moved beneath my palm.

Mrs. Sun immediately noticed and came closer, but I shook my head.

I was fine.

Or I would be.

Eventually

“So when your father was furious after everything happened……..”

“I wasn’t because of what I did to you.”

Besthing

Oscar shook his head.

“He didn’t care about Amelie He didn’t care that I’d humiliated you. He didn’t even care that the company was falling apart

His eyes dropped.

“He cared because you married Jason.”

That made sense.

Too much sense.

Because by marrying Jason, I hadn’t simply escaped Oscar.

I’d joined the Sun family.

And then Grandpa publicly named me his heir.

Every path Mr. White had expected to use to reach the Asher fortune had closed.

I finally understood.

I hadn’t accidentally become involved in this.

I had always been a target.

Torget

+15 8c

Target

Amber POV

Emory kept questioning him.

Names.

Accounts.

Meetings.

Properties.

People Mr. White trusted.

Oscar knew less than I wanted him to.

But then Emory asked the right question.

“If your father needed somewhere in River City where nobody would connect him to the White family, where would he go?”

Oscar hesitated.

My pulse jumped.

“You know something.”

“I don’t know where he is.”

“That’s not what he asked.”

Oscar looked at me.

“My father owns properties under other names.”

Emory straightened.

“Give me the names.”

“There are several.”

“Start.”

Oscar listed two.

Then stopped.

“Jacob Sin.”

I frowned.

“What?”

“Jacob Sin. S-1-N,”

Emory was already writing it down.

“That’s one of the identities he used for properties in River City.”

“How many?”

“I don’t know. Houses. Warehouses. Maybe commercial buildings ”