A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 381

Target

+15 Bo

My heart started pounding.

“Would he take Jason to one of them?”

Oscar looked at me.

“I don’t know.”

“Oscar.”

“I don’t!”

He pulled against the restraints.

“But if he took Jason, he wouldn’t use anything connected to White. He knows you’re going to search everything. He knows Jason has Chronos. He’d use something old. Something that existed before anyone knew what to look for.”

Jacob Sin.

I looked at Pamela.

She was already moving.

“Search everything.”

“Already doing it.”

“Property records. Utilities. Shell companies. Tax records.”

“Amber.”

“Everything.”

“I know.”

Marcus stepped outside to make calls.

Grandpa pulled out his own phone.

Mr. Sun stood beside the window, his face frighteningly calm.

Mrs. Sun sat beside me and took my hand.

I looked at Oscar through the screen.

“One more question.”

He raised his eyes.

“Did your father take Jason when he was a child?”

Oscar froze.

That was answer enough.

“Oscar.”

“I don’t know everything that happened.”

Did he take him?”

baby”

Torget

“That’s not what I asked.”

Oscar’s breathing changed.

“He talked about it.”

Mrs. Sun’s grip tightened painfully around my fingers.

“What did he say?” she whispered.

Oscar looked toward her.

For the first time, shame appeared on his face.

“He said Jason had already escaped him once.”

Mrs. Sun made a broken sound.

Mr. Sun turned away.

I felt something inside me become very, very still.

Not anger.

Anger was loud.

This was colder.

“Emory.”

He looked at the screen.

“Keep Oscar safe.”

Oscar’s eyes widened slightly.

I continued before anyone misunderstood me.

“Not comfortable. Safe. He knows things we need, and if Mr. White realizes we have him, Oscar becomes a liability.”

Emory nodded.

“Understood.”

I looked at Oscar one last time.

“You spent seven years pretending to build a future with me because your father wanted-iny family.”

“Amber-”

“But right now, you’re going to helpine get my husband back.”

I ended the call.

Within twenty minutes, my hospital room became a command center.

Panuela searched corporate records.

Marcus mobilized Chronos

Grandpa contacted people who had spent decades handling property transactions throughout River City,

Mr and Mrs Sun refused to leave my side.

Target

The children remained close, protected inside the secured hospital wing.

Outside, Mr. Stait expanded the military perimeter.

Officers guarded every hospital entrance.

Vehicles were checked before entering the grounds.

No unidentified visitor reached our floor.

Jasmine, Noah and Daniel still considered themselves my personal protection detail, although Daniel's definition of protecti included glaring at me every time my blood-pressure monitor changed.

But for the first time since Jason disappeared, we had something concrete

A name.

Jacob Sin.

Properties hidden beneath an identity nobody had been searching.

I opened the property database Pamela sent me.

Results began appearing.

One.

Three.

Seven.

Then more.

Warehouses.

Apartments.

Commercial buildings.

Old houses.

Properties scattered throughout River City.

Places Mr. White could have prepared years ago.

Places nobody would connect to him.

Places where Jason could be right now.

I stared at the list.

Mr. White had made one mistake.

He'd spent years teaching Oscar how his operation worked.

And then he'd frightened his own son badly enough that Oscar ran.

Now Oscar was talking.

I placed my hand over my stomach and looked at the first address.

"You look him once," I whispered.

Mrs. Sun looked at me.

I didn't take my eyes off the screen.

"You don't get to keep him this time."

+15 Bo

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 382

Talk

Talk

Amber POV

We searched every property connected to the name Jacob Sin.

Every single one.

Warehouses were entered by tactical teams. Apartments were cleared room by room. Houses that had sat apparently empty for years were searched from attic to basement. Commercial properties were checked, storage units opened, underground garages inspected.

Nothing.

No Jason.

No Mr. White.

Not even evidence that either of them had recently been there.

By the time the final team reported back, I was sitting upright in my hospital bed with my laptop balanced across my legs, staring at another useless camera feed.

“Clear,” the officer said.

I closed my eyes.

That was the last property.

Pamela lowered her tablet.

Marcus said nothing.

Nobody needed to.

We had followed Oscar’s only useful lead and found absolutely nothing.

“Check them again.”

Marcus looked at me.

“Amber.”

“Check them again.”

“We had tactical teams physically enter every location.”

“Then find properties connected indirectly. Companies owned by Jacob Sin. People associated with the name. Previous owners. Rental agreements. Anything.”

“We’re doing that.”

I knew.

That was the worst part.

Tak

Everyone was doing everything they could.

Jason was still gone.

My phone remained beside me with the volume turned all the way up. Every time it lit, my heart jumped.

Every time the caller wasn’t Jason, something inside me sank a little further.

Mrs. Sun had stopped asking whether I wanted food.

Now she simply put it in front of me and stared until I ate.

Grandpa had barely left the hospital since arriving. Mr. Sun seemed to have aged ten years in two days.

The children were trying.

That somehow hurt more.

Alice drew pictures for Jason.

Rose sat beside her and helped.

Alex kept asking Marcus questions about the search-not emotional questions, but logistical ones. How many people were looking? How many cameras had been checked? Did Jason have emergency trackers?

I recognized what he was doing.

Turning fear into information.

Apparently, it ran in the family.

And Iris understood enough not to tell him everything was going to be okay when none of us knew that.

I hated that my children were learning how to wait for someone to come home.

The call came that afternoon.

Not from Jason.

Mr. Stait.

“Alexander Vincent is talking.”

I stared at him through the screen.

“About Jason?”

“I don’t know yet.”

My disappointment must have shown because he immediately continued.

“But he specifically asked for you.”

“Why?”

“He says he has information.”

Talk

That got my attention.

“What kind?”

“He won’t tell us.”

Of course he wouldn’t.

Alexander Vincent had spent his entire life treating information like currency.

Apparently, prison hadn’t cured him.

“What’s happening with his trial?”

Mr. Stait’s expression hardened.

“He’s accepting responsibility.”

I actually laughed.

“Alexander?”

“Yes.”

“Voluntarily?”

“Not exactly.”

That sounded more believable.

The evidence Oliver had provided had destroyed him.

Alexander could deny accusations.

He could attack witness credibility.

He could blame his father, Mr. White, secondary families, employees, governments-anyone convenient.

What he couldn’t explain away was his own operational planning.

His own files. 1

His own instructions.

His own improvements to the trafficking network.

His own lists of future victins.

And the person who had delivered that evidence was his eleven-year-old son.

Oliver.

Alexander’s obsession with bloodline had created the person who finally ended him.

“What does he want?” I asked.

“Reduced sentence recommendations where legally possible and protection while incarcerated.”

FORK

“In exchange for?”

“Names.”

I stopped.

“How many?”

“He claims he can identify families, officials, financial intermediaries, transport networks, properties, and people involved in moving victims between countries.”

That could save lives.

Which meant I couldn’t dismiss it simply because I hated the man offering it.

“Can he actually negotiate that?”

“That’s for prosecutors and the relevant jurisdictions to determine. Nobody is promising him freedom.”

“Good.”

“He knows he’s going to prison, Amber.”

I stared at Mr. Stait.

“Then why me?”

“He won’t say.”

I looked toward Pamela.

She didn’t like it.

Neither did Marcus.

Mrs. Sun looked ready to personally reach through the screen and strangle Alexander if he wasted my time.

But there was only one thing I cared about.

If Alexander knew where Mr. White might take Jason, I needed to hear it.

“I’ll talk to him.”

Alexander appeared on my screen fifteen minutes later.

He wasn’t in a normal courtroom.

The proceedings surrounding him had become complicated enough that parts of the case were being handled under heavy security, with multiple jurisdictions coordinating evidence and charges.

He was restrained.

There were officers behind him.

A lawyer sat nearby.

Alexander looked different.

Talk

Not physically.

The arrogance was still there.

The confidence.

That irritating ability to look like he owned whatever room he happened to occupy.

But something had changed behind his eyes.

He knew he'd lost.

"Amber Asher."

"Where is Jason?"

No greeting.

No games.

Alexander blinked.

Then leaned back.

"I don't know."

My disappointment immediately became anger.

"Then this conversation is over."

I reached toward the screen.

“Wait.”

I stopped.

“I said I have information.”

“If it doesn’t help me find my husband, I don’t care.”

“It might.”

My hand froze.

Alexander studied me.

Then he said, “First, my son.”

I stared at him.

“What about him?”

“Is Oliver safe?”

I almost laughed.

“You don’t get to ask me that.”

f

Talk

Something flashed across his face.

“He’s my son.”

“He was found underneath an island with trafficked women.”

“I didn’t put him there.”

“No. You merely helped improve the organization responsible for putting countless other children in places just like it.”

His jaw tightened.

Good.

I wanted that to hurt.

“Is he safe?”

I hesitated.

Not because Alexander deserved an answer.

Because Oliver did.

“Yes.”

Close tc.bete

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 383

Close to home

Amber POV

Alexander’s shoulders relaxed slightly.

“Does he know what’s happening?”

“Enough.”

“He gave you the chip.”

It wasn’t a question.

“Yes.”

Alexander looked down.

For several seconds, he said nothing.

“My own son.”

There was something almost amused in his voice.

Not happy.

Just bitter.

“My own son had the evidence that finally ended me.”

“Your actions ended you. Oliver simply made it harder for you to lie about them.”

Alexander looked at me again.

Then, surprisingly, nodded.

“Fair.”

I hadn’t expected that.

“I want something from you.”

“No.”

“You haven’t heard it.”

“I don’t make deals involving children.”

“It’s not a deal.”

His expression changed.

“Make sure he’s okay.”

I stared at him.

Alexander Vincent-the man who had planned the abduction of other people’s children as a business

Close to bene

strategy was asking me to protect his.

“Mr. Stait is protecting Oliver.

“I’m not asking about today.

He leaned forward as far as his restraints allowed.

“When this is finished, make sure he grows up fine.”

I said nothing.

“Don’t let my family turn him into me.”

That silenced the room.

Alexander glanced away.

“He’s a Vincent heir. There will be people who want him because of that. People who will try to control him. Others will want revenge because of me.”

“Then give investigators every name.”

“I am.”

“Every one.”

His eyes returned to mine.

“I said I am.”

I studied him.

“I’ll make sure Oliver knows he has choices.”

Alexander nodded once.

It was the only promise I was willing to give him.

Then my patience ended.

“Jason.”

Alexander’s expression became serious.

“I told you. I don’t know where my uncle took him.”

“Then you have nothing for me.”

“You’re searching River City.”

I froze.

“How do you know that?”

Alexander smiled faintly.

Close to berme

“Because that’s what my uncle would expect you to do.”

Marcus stepped closer to the screen.

“Explain.”

Alexander ignored him.

His eyes remained on me.

“You’re thinking like Amber Asher.”

“What does that mean?”

“Companies. Properties. Shell corporations. Warehouses. Cameras, Financial records.”

My stomach tightened.

“You’re looking for where White would hide someone.”

“Yes.”

“Wrong question.”

I hated riddles.

“Then give me the right one.”

Alexander leaned toward the camera.

“Where did the Vincents hide people before companies and cameras existed?”

Silence.

Something cold moved through me.

Sum.

I knew the answer before he said anything else.

“Your home,” Alexander said.

My fingers tightened around the phone.

“My home is the castle.”

“Your other home.”

Sum.

The land connected to my family’s original history.

The Embers.

My mind started moving.

The Ember tamily had once been the largest family in Sum.

Close TC

They had defeated the Vincents.

Exiled them.

Their history went back generations.

So did their land.

Alexander watched realization spread across my face.

“Closer,” he said quietly.

“Closer to what?”

“Your home in Sum.”

I stared at him.

“What exactly am I looking for?”

He smiled.

Not arrogantly this time.

Almost like he couldn’t believe I hadn’t realized it yet.

“You’re very proud of your mine, aren’t you?”

My blood went cold.

The mine.

I sat straighter.

Daniel immediately glanced at my monitor.

I ignored him.

“What about it?”

Alexander’s expression became unreadable.

“My family has been operating in Sum for generations, Amber. So has yours.”

“Alexander.”

“Old families didn’t build one tunnel and stop.”

My heart began pounding.

“Say what you know.”

He leaned back.

“Your mine was connected to other sites.”

Nobody in my hospital room moved.

Canve

Ithought about the mine.

The land.

Old maps.

Generations of construction.

Properties that existed long before modern ownership records.

Underground passages wouldn’t appear on traffic cameras.

They wouldn’t require a property registered under Jacob Sin.

They wouldn’t need a hotel.

Or an airport.

Or a warehouse.

And if some of those tunnels extended beyond the land I knew-

“Oh my God.”

Pamela was already reaching for her laptop.

Marcus pulled out his phone.

Grandpa stood so quickly his chair scraped across the floor.

“What?” Mrs. Sun demanded.

I looked at my grandfather.

“Do we have the original maps of the mine?”

His face changed.

“Some.”

“Some?”

“The oldest sections haven’t been used in decades.”

“Are they sealed?”

“I thought they were.”

Thought.

Not knew

I turned back toward Alexander.

“How many sites?”

“I don’t know.”

Close taber

“Where do they lead?”

“I don’t know every route”

“Could Mr. White know?”

Alexander’s silence answered me.

I felt sick.

“Could he have taken Jason there?”

Alexander looked directly at me.

“If I wanted to hide Jason Sun from Chronos, River City police, international investigators, the military, and Amber Asher…”

He paused.

“I wouldn’t hide him in River City.”

My hand covered my stomach.

Alexander finished quietly.

“I’d take him somewhere your own family stopped searching generations ago.

I ended the call.

“Grandpa.”

He was already dialing.

“Get me every map.”

Pamela stood.

“I’ll contact Sum.”

Marcus was heading for the door.

“Military too,” I said. “Nobody enters those tunnels alone.”

Mrs. Sun came beside me.

“Amber-”

“I’m not going.”

Everyone stopped.

I looked around the room.

“What? I do occasionally learn.”

Daniel appeared genuinely impressed.

+15 Bonul

Tignored him.

“Send teams to the mine Search every known entrance, Compare modern surveys with historical maps. Thermal imaging, ground penetrating equipment, drones small enough for tunnels-whatever they can safely use.”1

Grandpa nodded.

“And don’t assume sealed means sealed.”

Because Alexander had just given us something we hadn’t had since Jason disappeared.

Not an address.

Something better.

A place Mr. White believed we’d never think to search.

I grabbed Jason’s phone from the bedside table-the one I’d called so many times that his number might as well have been permanently burned into the screen.

The mine,

Old tunnels.

Other sites.

My family’s land.

All this time, we’d been searching Mr. White’s properties.

Maybe we should have been searching mine.

And if Jason was beneath Ember land somewhere in Sum, then Mr. White had made a very serious mistake.

He’d taken my husband into my family’s territory.

P

G

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 384

Endden

Hidden

Amber POV

Mr. Sun left for Sum before sunrise. Mrs. Sun wanted to go with him; I could tell from the way she stood beside him in my hospital room, holding his hand as though letting go would somehow mean losing both her husband and her grandson at once. But someone needed to remain with the children, and neither she nor Grandpa Asher was willing to leave me while I was still hospitalized.

Sum's president would be waiting for them when they arrived. The moment Mr. Stait contacted his government and explained what Alexander had revealed, Sum had mobilized its own people. Whatever political tensions existed between our families, governments, and the investigation could wait. Jason was missing, and there was now a very real possibility that he was somewhere beneath Sum.

r

Marcus left with Mr. Sun. Before leaving my room, he stood beside my bed and looked at me. "We'll find him.

"I know."

"That's supposed to be the part where you say thank you."

"I'll thank you when you bring my husband back."

He smiled faintly. "There's the Amber I know."

I caught his wrist before he could move away. "Marcus." The smile disappeared from his face. "Bring him home."

His expression softened. “I will.”

Then he was gone. I stared at the closed door for several seconds before Mrs. Sun came beside me and squeezed my shoulder. Neither of us said anything. There wasn’t anything left to say. We needed to find

Jason.

The Ember Association answered my call immediately. By then, I’d given up pretending my hospital room was anything other than a command center. There were laptops everywhere, charging cables running across tables, maps on screens, military personnel outside the secured floor, and enough private security throughout the building to make attacking the hospital an exceptionally stupid idea. Jasmine remained near the door. She’d appointed herself my protection detail and apparently intended to take that position to the grave. Grandpa sat beside one of the windows, Pamela had three screens open, and I was in the middle of all of it.

In bed.

As ordered.

I considered that personal growth.

When representatives from the Ember Association appeared on the secure video call, I didn’t waste time. “I need everything you have on the mines.”

“We anticipated that,” one of the older members said.

A file appeared, and Painela immediately downloaded it to an isolated system. Maps began opening across

Hidden

the screen, but they weren’t modern maps. Some had clearly been copied from documents that had existed long before River City was what it was today. I stared at the network of lines stretching beneath Sum.

“Those are all tunnels?

“Not exactly. Some are natural cave systems. Others were expanded into mines. Some became transportation routes between Ember-controlled sites.”

“How far do they go?”

The woman hesitated. “Farther than the modern maps suggest.

Of course they did.

Pamela enlarged one section. The mine I'd known was only part of it. Beneath it, older routes branched outward. Some ended abruptly, while others disappeared beyond the edges of surviving maps. Several connected to locations I didn't recognize.

"What happened here?" I asked, pointing toward a thick mark cutting through one of the routes.

"That passage was blocked centuries ago because of the Vincents."

My skin prickled. Grandpa looked up while the representative continued. "When the Ember family moved against the Vincent family, those tunnels were strategically important. Your ancestors knew the underground routes better than anyone.'

My eyes returned to the map. The Ember family had defeated the Vincents and driven them out of Sum. I'd always imagined political maneuvering, money, alliances, perhaps military force. Apparently, part of the war had happened underground.

"This route allowed access behind several Vincent-controlled sites," she explained, highlighting one of the oldest passages. "The Embers used it during the campaign that ultimately broke Vincent control."

"And then?"

"It was sealed."

"By whom?"

"The Embers. They didn't want anyone using the same route against them."

That made sense. Unfortunately, there was one rather significant problem.

"If it was sealed centuries ago, why does Alexander think Mr. White could use it?"

The Ember representative exchanged a look with someone outside the camera. "We've been reviewing geological surveys and older records since you contacted us. We believe someone reopened it."

The room became silent.

"When?"

"We don't know."

"Who?"

Hidden

“We can’t prove it yet.

“But you have a theory.

“Yes.”

I already knew the answer, “The Vincents”

She nodded.

Hes worb

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 385

His watch

Amber POV

I stared at the map. Centuries ago, my family had used that route to destroy theirs, and sometime afterward, the Vincents might have quietly reopened it. Maybe they’d spent generations rebuilding access. Maybe Mr. White knew those tunnels because his family had never actually stopped using them.

Suddenly, Alexander’s clue made perfect sense. Look closer to your home. He hadn’t been talking about a single mine. He’d been talking about history.

“Send everything to Sum’s government, Mr. Stait, Marcus, and Mr. Sun. Anything else you find comes directly to me.”

“We’re already searching our archives.”

I stared at the ancient route. The same path the Ember family had once used to take down the Vincents.

History apparently had a sick sense of humor.

Then I remembered Oliver’s other warning.

The island.

There were still people there.

I looked toward Jasmine. “I need you to do something.”

“No.”

I blinked. “I haven’t asked yet.”

“If you’re about to tell me to leave, no.”

“Jasmine.”

“No.”

I stared at her. She stared back. I had recruited this woman. That was clearly one of my poorer strategic

decisions.

“Oliver said there are more victims on the island.”

Her expression changed. “I remember.”

“The investigators haven’t found them yet.”

“They’re searching.”

“They don’t know that island the way we do. You, Noah and Daniel survived it with me. We know the mountains, the cave, the hidden rooms, the terrain. I want you to help them search.”

Jasmine crossed her arms. “No.”

“People might be trapped.”

His watch

+35 Sort

“I know.”

“Then why are you arguing?”

“Because someone kidnapped your husband. You’re hospitalized, your blood pressure is unstable, you’re pregnant with twins, and you declared war on an international trafficking network on television.”

“I clarified that I meant the network.”

“Very responsible.” 1

I narrowed my eyes.

“I’m staying,” she said firmly.

“Jasmine.”

“Noah and Daniel can go.”

I stopped. “You already discussed this.”

“Obviously.”

Traitors. All three of them.

Jasmine pulled out her phone. “Daniel’s a medic. If they find victims in bad condition, he’s more useful than I am. Noah knows the island, and I’m staying here to make sure nobody gets anywhere near you.”

“So we’re just assigning ourselves jobs now?”

“Apparently.”

She was already calling Noah.

We were apparently settled.

Noah and Daniel left for the island that afternoon, but Noah did something before boarding the flight that none of us expected. He went public. His celebrity status had always been something I’d almost forgotten about because on the island he’d simply been Noah-the quiet defense specialist who somehow managed to survive Jasmine’s insanity and Daniel’s complaints. The rest of the world didn’t see him that way. They knew his face, and they listened when he spoke.

So Noah used it.

His video spread within hours. He explained that investigators had reason to believe additional trafficking victims might still be hidden in locations connected to the network. Without exposing operational details that could endanger anyone, he asked the public to

pay attention to suspicious properties, people being moved unexpectedly, children who appeared frightened or isolated, vehicles repeatedly entering supposedly abandoned buildings-anything that didn't feel right.

Bui he made one thing very clear: don't intervene. Don't confront anyone. Repors it and let trained authorities investigate.

The message was shared millions of times, and tips started arriving. Most would probably lead nowhere Some would be misunderstandings. But it even one found someone who had been waiting years for help, it

His watch

was worth it.

For once, celebrity obsession could be useful.

Marcus reached the mine several hours later.

Franklin went with him.

That surprised me. Franklin had been staying with us for his family's protection, and after everything that happened on the island I would have expected him to remain far away from another dangerous operation. Apparently, I'd underestimated how deeply that experience had changed him. His mother had objected loudly.

He went anyway.

The Sum government divided the search teams. Military specialists handled unstable areas and potential breaches. Engineers examined sealed routes. Search teams followed the historical maps provided by the Ember Association.

Marcus wore a camera.

That had been my condition.

If I couldn't be there, I wanted to see everything.

The image on my laptop shook slightly as Marcus moved deeper underground, his flashlight sweeping across stone. The mine looked nothing like the maintained sections I remembered. This was older. Rougher.. Some passages were narrow enough that the search teams had to move single file, and water dripped somewhere in the darkness.

"Intersection ahead," someone said.

Marcus's camera turned.

Three tunnels.

The historical map showed only two.

I leaned forward. “Stop.”

Marcus heard me through his earpiece. “What?”

“Your map. There’s not supposed to be a third route.”

“I noticed.”

An engineer moved forward. The third opening had been partially concealed behind what looked like a natural rockfall.

Except it wasn’t natural.

Someone had moved the stones.

Recently.

HIS watch

My pulse accelerated.

“Amber,” Jasmine warned from beside me.

“I’m calm.”

“You say that like someone being actively not calm.”

“I’m fine.”

Marcus entered the passage, and Franklin followed several feet behind him. The tunnel narrowed before widening again. Then the lights moved across the ground.

Marks.

Boot prints.

Not ancient.

Not centuries old.

Recent.

“Marcus.”

“I see them.”

The search team stopped while one of the officers crouched to examine the prints.

“Multiple people.”

“How recent?” Marcus asked.

“Can’t tell yet.”

My hand tightened around the blanket.

Jason.

Please.

They continued.

The tunnel divided again, except this intersection wasn’t on any map. Marcus turned slowly, giving me a complete view through the camera.

Four directions.

“Which one?” Franklin asked.

Nobody answered.

Then Franklin’s flashlight moved across the ground.

He stopped.

“Wait.”

His watch

The camera turned toward him.

“What?” Marcus asked.

Franklin walked toward the wall. Something was lying near the edge of the tunnel, half hidden beneath dirt and small fragments of stone.

Metal.

My heart stopped.

Franklin crouched but didn't touch it immediately. "Marcus.

Marcus moved closer, and the camera focused.

A watch.

Black.

Damaged along one side.

For half a second, my brain refused to understand what I was seeing.

Then it did.

"No."

Marcus froze.

I leaned so close to the laptop that Pamela reached out and steadied it.

"Zoom in."

Marcus moved the camera closer.

I knew that watch.

I'd seen it on Jason's wrist thousands of times. I'd watched him check it during meetings. I'd complained when it vibrated in the middle of dinner. I'd seen it on him the morning he left for the DNA test.

My throat closed.

"That's his."

Nobody spoke.

"That's Jason's watch."

Mrs. Sun rushed toward the screen. Grandpa stood. Jasmine moved behind me.

Franklin looked toward Marcus, who crouched beside the watch. There were scratches across the face, and one side of the strap was torn.

It hadn't fallen off naturally.

My eyes moved toward the four tunnels.

His worch

Someone had brought Jason through here.

He had been here.

Maybe he'd dropped the watch deliberately. Maybe he'd fought. Maybe he'd known we would come looking.

"Amber," Marcus said through the speaker.

I couldn't answer.

"We have his trail now."

I closed my eyes for one second. Not because I was breaking, but because I needed exactly one second to put myself back together.

Then I opened them.

"Don't touch the watch until forensics clears it.'

Marcus nodded. "Already called them."

"Check for blood."

"We will."

"Search every branch."

"We are."

I swallowed. "And Marcus?"

He looked directly into the camera.

"He's close."

My hand moved over my stomach as one of the twins kicked. For the first time since Jason disappeared, we didn't have a theory.

We had proof.

He had been inside those tunnels.

Mr. White could erase camera footage. He could disable trackers. He could hide vehicles. He could use names and properties we'd never heard before.

But he hadn't erased everything.

Jason had left something behind.

And whether he'd dropped that watch intentionally or lost it fighting, it had given us exactly what we needed.

A trail.

I stared into the darkness beyond Marcus's camera.

"Keep going."

Because somewhere beyond that intersection was my husband.

P

}

+15 Bonul

GET IT

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 386

Blood

Amber POV

Two hours after Franklin found Jason's watch, the search team reached something that wasn't on any of the maps.

By then, they'd traveled so far through the underground passages that they were no longer beneath Sum's capital city. The tunnels continued deeper into the country, branching through old mines and natural cave systems that, according to the Ember Association's records,

shouldn’t have been accessible at all.

Apparently, the Vincents had spent centuries making sure our records were wrong.

I remained in my hospital bed with Marcus’s camera feed open on the largest screen Pamela could find. Mrs. Sun sat beside me, Grandpa stood near the window speaking quietly with someone from the Ember Association, and Jasmine hadn’t moved farther than a few feet from me. The children were in another secured room with Mr. Sun’s people, protected from the details of what we were finding.

I was grateful for that.

Because the deeper Marcus went, the worse everything became.

The passage ahead suddenly widened.

Marcus slowed.

“There’s something here.”

His flashlight swept across a stone wall.

Then metal.

1 leaned forward.

“What is that?”

“Door.”

It wasn’t ancient.

The tunnels surrounding it might have been centuries old, but someone had installed a reinforced metal door inside the rock. Cables ran along one side, and what appeared to be an old electronic access panel had been mounted beside it.

One of the military officers examined it.

Blood

“Recently used.”

“How recently?” Marcus asked.

“Can’t tell yet.”

The door wasn’t completely closed.

That immediately put everyone on alert.

Marcus’s camera moved as the officers took positions. Weapons came up. Someone signaled for Franklin to remain behind them, and for once he didn’t argue.

The team pushed through.

The camera feed shook briefly.

Then stopped.

“Oh my God,” Pamela whispered.

It wasn’t another mine.

It was a camp.

An entire underground camp.

Rooms had been carved into the stone. Electrical lines ran across the ceiling. There were

generators, storage areas, tables, chairs, old computers, communication equipment and boxes stacked against walls. Some of the equipment looked abandoned.

Other parts didn’t.

“This wasn’t temporary,” I said.

“No,” Marcus answered.

His voice echoed through the cavern.

Someone had lived here.

Worked here.

Operated here.

For years.

Maybe decades.

The military teams spread out carefully, checking every section.

Then one of the officers called out.

“Two down!”

My heart jumped.

Marcus ran.

His camera swung toward another passage where two men lay unconscious on the ground.

Guards.

At least, that’s what they appeared to be.

Both were dressed in dark clothing. Weapons lay nearby, and one had a communication device clipped to his belt.

“Alive?” Marcus asked.

A medic crouched beside them.

“Both breathing.”

“What happened?”

“Don’t know yet.”

One had bruising along the side of his face.

The other appeared to have been struck hard enough to leave him unconscious.

Then Marcus’s flashlight moved.

Red.

Across the ground.

I stopped breathing.

“Marcus.”

“I see it.”

Blood.

Not much.

But enough.

A trail of droplets crossed the stone before disappearing farther into the cavern.

Mrs. Sun stood beside me.

“Jason?”

Nobody answered.

There was no way to know.

It could belong to the guards.

Mr. White.

Someone else.

Jason.

“Test it,” I said.

“We will.”

“Now.”

Marcus looked directly toward his camera.

“Amber, the forensic team is behind us. They’ll test everything.”

I forced myself to breathe.

The twins moved beneath my hand.

Right.

Stay calm.

I hated those words more every hour.

The search continued.

And then they found the cells.

At first, I didn’t understand what I was looking at.

Marcus entered another section of the underground camp, and his camera moved across what appeared to be a narrow corridor. Metal doors lined both sides.

Each had a small reinforced window.

I stared at the screen.

“No.”

Nobody in my hospital room spoke.

Marcus approached the first door.

Unlocked.

He pushed it open.

The room inside was small.

A narrow bed.

A toilet.

A sink.

Nothing else.

The next room was almost identical.

Then another.

And another.

Holding cells.

“This is where they kept them,” Grandpa said quietly.

I looked at him.

His face had gone pale.

The Vincents had spent generations kidnapping children from powerful families. Heirs. Daughters. Sons. People whose disappearances could alter entire bloodlines and transfer

control of fortunes.

And they'd hidden them here.

Beneath the land of the family that had once defeated them.

Practically beneath the nose of their greatest enemies.

The Ember family had driven the Vincents out of Sum centuries ago, believing we'd taken

+15 Bo

their power away.

Meanwhile, they'd apparently found a way back underneath us.

Literally.

Marcus entered another cell.

There were scratches on the wall.

I couldn't look away.

Lines.

Names.

Dates.

Some had been carved deeply enough into the stone that whoever made them must have spent hours doing it.

One name appeared repeatedly.

Another was followed by what looked like a child's attempt to count days.

Mrs. Sun covered her mouth.

"Turn it off," Jasmine said quietly.

I shook my head.

"Amber."

"No."

“You don’t need to see this.”

“If Jason went through there, I’m watching.”

Jasmine didn’t argue again.

Marcus continued.

The cells were empty now.

That should have been a relief.

It wasn’t.

Blood

Because there was evidence everywhere that they hadn’t always been.

Clothing.

Old blankets.

Shoes.

Some painfully small.

Then they found the records room.

Someone had tried to destroy part of it.

Cabinets had been opened, files scattered across the floor, and several hard drives were missing from computers.

But whoever had cleared the camp hadn’t gotten everything.

Not even close.

“Marcus.”

“I know.”

There were shelves.

Boxes.

Photographs.

Video recordings.

Paper logs.

Names.

Dates.

Arrival records.

Transfer records.

Medical information.

Family affiliations.

Even behavioral notes.

I felt physically ill.

They had documented the children.

Not as victims.

As inventory.

One of the officers opened a folder.

Marcus immediately turned his camera away.

Too late.

I’d seen the photograph.

A little girl.

Maybe six.

Standing against the stone wall.

A number had been written on a board she held in front of her.

I closed my eyes.

“No.”

Pamela reached for the laptop.

I stopped her.

“I need to know.”

+15 Bon

“Amber, you don’t need to see every picture.”

“No. But someone does.”

And this time, those records weren’t going to disappear.

“Secure everything. Every photograph. Every recording. Every hard drive. Nobody removes anything without documenting exactly where it was found.”

Marcus nodded.

“Already happening.”

“Copies go to investigators in Sum and River City.”

“We’ll coordinate it.”

“And the originals?”

“Evidence.”

Good.

Because this place had been built with the expectation that nobody would ever find it.

That was obvious from the records.

They hadn’t simply documented what happened there.

They’d been comfortable doing it.

Children appeared in recordings walking through those corridors.

Some alone.

Some being escorted.

Some crying.

Others frighteningly quiet.

There were photographs documenting arrivals.

Transfers.

Injuries.

Even failed escape attempts.

Logs recorded when children were moved from the camp and where they were supposedly going next.

Some destinations were coded.

Others weren't.

Families.

Properties.

Countries.

The operation was bigger than we'd understood.

Proor

And this wasn't even the entire network.

It was one facility.

One.

I stared at the screen as Marcus moved through the abandoned camp.

"This is where Jason was kept."

Mrs. Sun looked at me.

"We don't know that."

"Not now."

My voice sounded strange even to me.

"When he was a child."

She went completely still.

I looked at the cells.

Maybe not this exact location.

Maybe another one like it.

But Jason had described being isolated. Losing his identity. Forgetting his own name.

These places had been designed to do exactly that.

Take a child.

Remove their family.

Remove their name.

Control everything around them until whatever identity they'd arrived with began to disappear.

Then move them wherever the network needed them.

I suddenly understood why Mr. White had chosen the mines.

This wasn't merely somewhere he knew how to hide.

This was familiar territory.

Bloon

His family's territory.

"Anything on Jason?" I asked.

"Not yet."

"Mr. White?"

"Nothing."

My chest tightened.

The guards were unconscious.

There was blood.

Jason’s watch had been found two hours behind them.

Someone had passed through this camp recently.

“Check the guards’ communications.”

“We are.”

“Find out who knocked them out.”

“We will.”

“Follow the blood.”

“Amber.”

“Marcus.”

He sighed.

“We’re not stopping.”

Good.

Because neither was I.

The camera turned as another officer called Marcus from farther inside the facility.

There was another tunnel.

Not one of the entrances they’d used.

An exit.

It continued deeper into the country.

U

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 387

tow buttery

+15 Bc

Low battery

Amber POV

Mr. White hadn’t brought Jason here to stay.

He’d brought him through here.

The camp was a waypoint.

A place hidden so deeply underground that nobody had expected it to be discovered, connecte to a network of tunnels my own family hadn’t known still existed.

I stared into the darkness beyond Marcus’s flashlight.

The evidence we’d found could expose crimes spanning generations. It could identify missing children, connect victims to families who had spent decades searching for them, and prove exactly how the Vincents had maintained their power.

But at that moment, I cared about only one thing.

Jason wasn’t there.

Which meant he was still somewhere ahead.

“Keep going,” I whispered.

Marcus heard me.

“We will.”

I looked at the dark tunnel leading farther beneath Sum.

Mr. White had spent his entire life hiding behind other names, other families and other people’s suffering.

Now his secrets were being dragged into the light one room at a time.

And somewhere beyond that camp, he still had my husband.

A week passed.

Seven days without Jason.

Seven days of waking up and reaching toward the empty space beside me before remembering he wasn't there. Seven days of calling his phone even though I knew it was useless. Seven days of watching search teams disappear into the mines and return exhausted, dirty, and empty-

handed.

low battery

The doctors eventually allowed me to leave the hospital, but only under conditions that made my home feel suspiciously like a private medical facility. My blood pressure had stabilized, the twins were doing well, and I was under strict instructions to remain on bed rest at the castle. After what happened the last time I ignored those instructions, even I wasn't stupid enough to argue too much.

Mostly.

Oscar remained in custody. Everything he'd told us about Mr. White was being investigated, and every piece of information he gave opened another door into a life none of us had known existed. Alexander Vincent was still undergoing trial, simultaneously admitting his involvement and trading names for whatever consideration prosecutors across several countries were willing to give him.

Meanwhile, the island I had never asked for and still couldn't get rid of was being torn apart based on the word of an eleven-year-old boy who had already gone through more hell than most adults could survive.

Noah and Daniel were there with investigators.

They had found more underground structures.

Not victims.

Not yet.

But Oliver had been right about the island having secrets we hadn't discovered the first time.

So the search continued.

Everything continued.

Except Jason hadn't come home.

The mines had given us more evidence than anyone could process quickly. Records of kidnapped children. Photographs. Videos. Transfer logs. Names of families we had never connected to the network before. Evidence of crimes spanning generations.

But after finding Jason's watch, his trail disappeared.

There had been blood in the underground camp, but preliminary testing hadn't given us the answer I wanted quickly enough. The unconscious guards couldn't-or wouldn't-give investigators anything useful.

The tunnels went on for miles.

Some collapsed.

Some flooded.

Others split into passages that weren't recorded on any map the Ember Association possessed.

The Vincents had built an entire world underneath Sum.

And somewhere inside it, Jason had vanished again.

I hated that word.

Again.

Because this had happened to him before.

He'd been a child then.

He wasn't now.

I held onto that.

Jason was trained. Intelligent. Ruthless when necessary. He had spent years building Chronos into something even governments occasionally struggled to understand. If anyone could

survive Mr. White, it was Jason.

But seven days was a long time.

Too long.

That afternoon, I was lying in bed with Alice curled beside me drawing while Rose sat on the floor with a book. Alex and Iris were in the adjoining sitting room, and Mrs. Sun had downstairs to argue with someone about dinner.

Grandpa was somewhere in the castle.

Jasmine was outside my bedroom door.

gone

Pamela had finally gone to shower after I threatened to have security physically remove her if she didn't sleep for at least four hours.

For the first time all day, the room was quiet.

Then my phone rang.

I glanced at the screen.

Unknown number.

Low battery

I froze.

Every instinct I had screamed at once.

I picked it up.

"Hello?"

Nothing.

I sat straighter.

"Hello?"

Still nothing.

But the line was connected.

I could hear something.

Breathing.

Faint.

Uneven.

My heart started pounding.

I gently moved Alice away from me.

“Sweetheart, go get Jasmine.”

Alice looked at my face and didn’t argue.

She ran.

I pressed the phone harder against my ear.

“Who is this?”

Br

Low battery

I reached for my laptop with my free hand.

The door opened.

Jasmine came in with Alice behind her.

I raised one finger.

Quiet.

Jasmine immediately understood.

She took Alice’s hand and moved her toward Rose.

I activated my tracking system.

Unknown number.

Weak connection.

The signal bounced strangely.

Not cellular.

Not entirely.

Something routed through an emergency connection.

“Please,” I whispered. “Say something.”

The breathing stopped.

My heart stopped with it.

Then-

“Amber.”

Everything inside me shattered.

One word.

Rasm

thave recognized it.

Low battery

“Jason.”

Jasmine’s head snapped toward me.

I couldn’t breathe.

“Jason?”

A faint sound came through the phone.

He was there.

Alive.

“Oh my God.”

My hands started shaking.

Jasmine moved beside me immediately.

“Is it him?”

I nodded.

Tears blurred the screen.

“Jason, listen to me. Don’t hang up.”

Nothing.

“Please. Stay with me.”

I began typing.

Trace.

Come on.

Come on.

The signal jumped across the screen.

River Cit

WT

The connection bounced again.

I realized what was happening.

The signal wasn’t coming through normal infrastructure.

It was underground.

Deep underground.

I pulled up the mine maps.

“Jason, I need you to keep the phone connected.”

Breathing.

I could still hear him.

That was enough.

“Don’t talk if it hurts. Just stay on the line.”

Jasmine was already calling Pamela from her own phone.

I sent the live trace to Marcus.

The signal narrowed.

Sum.

Outside the capital.

Past the underground camp.

My blood went cold.

“He’s deeper.”

Jasmine looked at me.

“How deep?”

“I don’t know.”

The trace updated,

I stared.

“Much deeper.”

Low Battery

+15 Bon

The old Ember maps ended before the signal did.

That was the terrifying part.

Jason wasn’t simply somewhere in the mines we’d already searched.

He was beyond them.

Beyond the known routes.

Beyond the old Vincent camp.

Somewhere underneath the country in tunnels we didn’t even know existed.

“Jason.”

A faint noise.

“I’m here.”

I didn’t know whether I was telling him or myself.

“We found your watch.”

Silence.

Then breathing.

“We know you were in the camp. Marcus is searching. Your grandfather is in Sum. Everyone is looking for you.”

I swallowed the lump in my throat.

“You are not alone.”

The breathing changed.

For a second, I thought he was trying to laugh.

It sounded painful.

“Jason, don’t try to talk.”

He ignored mo

Low buttery

I leaned closer to the phone.

“What?”

“…battery.”

No.

“Okay.”

If

yself to stay calm.

Kay. Don’t hang up. Let it die on its own.”

working.

ocation narrowed again.

gion.

A tunnel system.

Something beyond the maps.

I sent everything to Marcus.

“Hold on for me.”

Jason breathed.

“Just a little longer.”

I didn’t know how injured he was.

I didn’t know whether he was alone.

I didn’t know whether Mr. White was nearby.

None of it mattered at that moment.

I had his voice.

After sever

+15 Bor

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 388

Casters

Sisters

Amber POV

I wiped my face.

“The twins are okay.”

His breathing hitched.

“They’ve been kicking me constantly. I’m pretty sure they’re already conspiring against us.”

A faint sound.

Maybe a laugh.

Maybe pain.

I chose laugh.

“Alice keeps drawing pictures for you. Alex is pretending he isn’t terrified because apparently he inherited your habit of turning feelings into logistics.”

Jasmine looked away.

“Rose is reading everything she can get her hands on, and Iris is helping everyone.”

My voice broke.

“Your grandmother is driving the entire castle insane.”

The sound coming through the phone changed again.

I imagined Jason smiling.

I needed him to be smiling.

“Grandpa is here too. Nobody left.”

I pressed my hand against my stomach.

“We’re waiting for you.”

The connection crackled.

“No.”

I looked at the screen.

The signal weakened.

“Jason?”

Static.

“Jason, stay with me.”

I tried to stabilize the connection.

“Jasmine, call Marcus.”

“Already trying.”

“Jason?”

A breath.

Then nothing

“Jason!”

The call ended.

I immediately called back.

Nothing

Again.

Unavailable.

“No, no, no.”

I tried again.

Nothing.

But I had the trace.

I had enough.

I looked at the map.

“Marcus.”

Jasmine shook her head. “He’s not answering.”

“Keep calling.”

She did.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

Finally, someone answered.

Marcus.

“What happened?”

“I found him.”

Silence.

Susters

“What?”

“Jason called me.”

Marcus started speaking to someone near him.

I continued quickly.

“The call died. His battery was almost gone, but traced it before we lost the connection.”

“Send me everything.”

“It’s already sent.”

I heard movement on his side.

“How accurate?”

“Not enough to give you a room, but enough to give you a completely different search area.”

“Where?”

“Deeper than the camp.”

Marcus went silent.

“How much deeper?”

“Much.”

I enlarged the location.

“The signal came from beyond the Ember maps.

I heard him swear.

“He’s alive, Marcus.”

My voice broke again.

“He’s hurt. I don’t know how badly, but he’s alive.”

That changed everything.

Marcus’s voice hardened.

“We’re moving.”

“Take military teams.”

“Already calling them.”

“Don’t wait.”

“We won’t.”

The call ended.

For several seconds, I simply stared at my phone.

Seven days imagining every possible outcome and refusing to let myself accept any of them.

Now I knew.

He was alive.

Hurt.

Somewhere deep beneath Sum.

And he'd found a phone–or stolen one, knowing Jason-and used whatever battery remained for one thing.

To call me.

Mrs. Sun appeared in the doorway.

She took one look at my face.

"What happened?"

I smiled.

For the first time in a week, it wasn't forced.

"Jason called."

Her hand flew to her mouth.

Alice ran toward me.

"Daddy?"

"He's alive."

The room changed instantly.

Mrs. Sun started crying.

Alice climbed onto the bed and hugged me.

Rose ran for Alex and Iris.

Jasmine stood beside the window, already coordinating additional security and search information.

I looked down at the location blinking on my screen.

A tiny point beneath miles of rock.

A place none of our maps showed.

An hour ago, it would have meant nothing.

Now it meant everything.

Because Jason had given us something we'd been losing with every passing day.

Sisters

A direction and hope.

The search began again.

Marcus called me less than an hour after the search teams reached the new coordinates from Jason's call.

I answered before the first ring finished. "What did you find?"

No greeting. No wasting time.

Marcus sounded out of breath, and the echo behind his voice told me he was still underground. "Another route. It's not on the Ember maps or the newer mine surveys."

My fingers tightened around the phone. "Recently used?"

"Looks like it. Disturbed dust, fresh scrape marks, footprints. Someone has been through here recently."

My heart immediately started pounding. "How deep?"

"Deeper than the section we've been searching. Much deeper. We're bringing in equipment before anyone moves farther."

"How long?"

"Amber."

"How long, Marcus?"

"A few hours, minimum."

That was enough for me.

I threw the blankets back and reached for the clothes I'd left on the chair beside the bed.

Jasmine, who had been standing near the doorway, immediately straightened.

"What are you doing?"

“Going to the mines.”

“No, you’re not.”

“The entrance is less than thirty minutes away.”

“That’s not the point.”

“It is to me.”

Marcus heard me through the phone.

“Amber.”

“I’m not sitting here anymore.”

“We’re searching.”

“And Jason called me from somewhere beyond the area you’ve been searching.”

Sisters

“We know that.”

“Then you also know he’s hurt.”

I stood.

Slowly, because apparently my body had decided that at almost eight months pregnant with twins, standing quickly was no longer an option.

But I stood.

Marcus sighed.

“Amber, don’t.”

“Find him before I get there.”

I ended the call.

Jasmine stared at me.

I stared back.

Then I reached for my shoes.

That was when she apparently realized I wasn't threatening anyone.

I was actually going.

"You're serious.".

"Very."

"Amber."

"I'm not asking permission."

I sat down long enough to put on my shoes, which had become an annoyingly complicated process recently.

Jasmine watched me struggle for approximately five seconds before walking over, taking the shoe from my hand and crouching in front of me.

"I can do it."

"I know."

She helped anyway.

"You can't go down there."

"I can."

"You shouldn't."

"Different argument."

She looked up at me.

Sisters

+15 Bon

There was no sarcasm in her face anymore.

Jason had been gone for over a week.

We'd found his watch.

We'd found blood.

We'd found the place where generations of kidnapped children had been held.

Then we'd finally heard his voice.

One word.

My name.

I wasn't capable of sitting still anymore.

"I need to find him, Jasmine."

"I know."

"No, you don't."

Her hands stopped.

I regretted the words immediately.

Because something changed in her face.

"Actually," she said quietly, "I think I do."

I said nothing.

Jasmine stood.

For once, she didn't make a joke.

"You think you're the only person in this castle terrified of losing someone?"

My anger disappeared.

"Jasmine-"

"No. Listen."

She sat beside me.

"I don't have what you have."

I frowned.

"What does that mean?"

“You have this enormous, ridiculous family. The Suns. The Ashers. The kids. Parnela. Marcus. Half the Ember Association would probably commit a felony if you asked politely enough.”

Despite everything, I almost smiled.

Sisters

Jasmine didn’t.

“I don’t have that.”

Her voice was quieter now.

“I have Noah.”

She paused.

“And Daniel.”

Something tightened in my chest.

“That’s it.”

I looked at her.

“My family is Noah and Daniel,” she continued. “They’re the people I trust. They’re the people I know will come looking if I disappear. They’re the people I’d go into hell for.”

Then she looked directly at me.

“And now you,”

I froze.

Jasmine looked almost uncomfortable saying it.

That alone told me how serious she was.

“I consider you my sister, Amber.”

My throat tightened.

She looked away almost immediately.

“Which is extremely inconvenient, by the way.”

i

I laughed softly despite the tears suddenly burning behind my eyes.

“Obviously.”

“I’m serious.”

“I know.”

“And sisters apparently have to stop each other from doing catastrophically stupid things.”

“I don’t think that’s an official requirement.”

“It is now.”

She stood.

“I’m going.”

I blinked.

Srators

“What?”

“Into the mines.”

“No.”

Her eyebrows rose.

“Interesting.”

“What?”

“Five seconds ago, you were going.”

“That’s different.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s Jason.”

“And you’re my sister.”

That shut me up.

Jasmine crossed her arms.

“You can’t have it both ways.”

I hated when people used logic against me.

Especially my own logic.

“I can send someone else.”‘

“You could.”

“Marcus is already there.”

“He is.”

“There are military teams.”

“Correct.”

“Then why you?”

“Because I can move faster than a tactical team.”

That was unfortunately true.

“And because,” she continued, “if you stay here, you can keep tracing Jason if he manages to call again. You can coordinate the maps. You can watch the trackers. You can connect information faster than anyone down there.”

I knew exactly what she was doing.

She was giving me a reason to stay that wasn’t simply you’re pregnant.

And it worked.

Sisters

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 389

Hooked toward the mine maps spread across the monitors.

Then back at her.

“You’d really go?”

“I already said I would.”

“With Marcus?”

“No.”

I stared at her.

“What do you mean, no?”

“I’m going alone.”

“Absolutely not.”

Jasmine laughed.

“Oh, now we’re concerned about safety.”

“Don’t start.”

“I’m faster alone.”

“You’re also easier to kill alone.”

“Very supportive.”

“Jasmine.”

She became serious again.

“I’ll have a tracker. Marcus and the military will know which route I’m taking. I’ll check in. But I don’t want people directly behind me.”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t want anyone holding me back.”

That answer was so perfectly Jasmine that I couldn’t even pretend to be surprised.

She continued before I could argue,

“A team makes noise. A team moves slower. If there are still people down there working for Mr. White, they’ll hear a group coming. One person has a better chance of getting ahead unnoticed.”

I didn’t like it

But I understood it.

“What are your conditions?” I asked.

Jasmine smiled faintly.

Sisters

+15 Bor

“You know me so well.”

“Unfortunately.”

Her expression became serious again.

“Noah, Daniel and Emory come back to the castle.”

I blinked.

“All three?”

“All three.”

“They’re helping search the island.”

“And the investigation teams can continue without them for a while. They’ve already mapped the sections they know and passed everything to the teams there.”

“Emory too?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Because if I’m going underground, I’m not leaving you here unless I know exactly who is protecting you.”

“I have security.”

“I know.”

“Military officers.”

“I know.”

“Castle guards.”

“I know.”

“Then why do I need three more people?”

“Because I trust them.”

Simple.

No hesitation.

No argument.

Jasmine looked at me.

“I trust Noah with my life. I trust Daniel with yours.”

“And Emory?”

“I trust Emory to recognize trouble before it reaches the front door.”

That was fair.

“And it something happens to you while I’m underground, she continued, “I need to know these are people

who aren’t going to freeze.”

I stared at her

“Nothing is going to happen to me

“Great. Then having them here won’t hurt.”

“You’ve become incredibly annoying,”

“I learned from my sister.”

That one got me.

I looked down for a moment.

Then nodded.

“Fine.”

“Fine?”

“Noah, Daniel and Emory come to the castle.”

“Then I’ll go.”

“But not before they’re here.”

Jasmine nodded.

“Not before they’re here.”

P

Come boektrome

Come back home

Amber POV

It took one day.

One painfully long day.

+15 Bon

The search teams continued moving through the newly discovered route while Jasmine stayed at the castle with me. Marcus sent updates whenever he had signal, and every new photograph showed the same thing: tunnels tha shouldn’t exist, signs of recent movement, and passages leading farther beneath Sum.

No Jason.

Not yet.

Then, late the following afternoon, vehicles came through the castle gates.

Jasmine saw them first.

“They’re here.”

I looked toward the window.

Noah stepped out of the first vehicle.

Daniel followed.

Then Emory.

Jasmine released a breath.

I noticed.

She pretended she hadn’t.

Minutes later, Daniel walked into my room and immediately looked me over.

“How are you feeling?”

“Wonderful.”

He narrowed his eyes.

“That’s not an answer.”

“It was intended to prevent follow-up questions.”

“It failed.”

Noah entered behind him and walked straight toward Jasmine.

“You’re really doing this?”

“Yes.”

“Alone?”

Come hack me

“Yes,”

He looked irritated.

“You could have just asked me to go with you.”

“I could have.”

“And?”

“I didn’t.”

Daniel sighed.

“She’s been like this since we met her.”

Emory came through the doorway last.

“Marcus knows?”

“Yes,” Jasmine answered.

“Military?”

“Yes.”

“Tracker?

I held it up.

“Right here.”

Jasmine looked at me.

“Possessive.”

“Alive.”

“Fair.”

I activated the tracker myself before clipping it securely onto her gear.

A small green signal appeared on my laptop.

“This stays on you.”

“It will.”.

“You check in every ten minutes.”

“Fifteen.”

elve.”

Come back tomo

She stared at me.

I stared back.

“Fine. Ten.”

“If you miss one check-in, I’m sending Marcus after you.”

“Fine.”

“If you find Jason-”

“I tell you immediately.”

“If he’s injured, don’t move him unless staying there is more dangerous.”

“I know.”

“If you see Mr. White-”

Jasmine smiled.

I pointed at her.

“No.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“Your face did.”

Apparently, we’d spent too much time together.

“You call Marcus.”

“Fine.”

“Before doing anything.”

“Define anything.”

“Jasmine.”

She laughed.

“Fine.”

Then she picked up her bag.

For a moment, neither of us moved.

Finally, I walked toward her.

She eyed me suspiciously.

“What?”

langged her.

i

Come back tome

She froze for half a second.

Then her arms came around me.

“Come back,” I whispered.

“I will.”

“And bring Jason with you.”

Her grip tightened.

“I’ll do everything I can.”

I pulled away.

Jasmine looked at Noah and Daniel.

Something silent passed between the three of them.

Her family.

Then she looked at Emory.

“Keep her here.”

I frowned.

“Excuse me?”

Emory nodded solemnly.

“I’ll sit on her if necessary.”

“You’re all becoming far too comfortable discussing my captivity.”

Jasmine grinned.

“Love you too, sister.”

Then she left.

Less than thirty minutes later, the tracker showed her reaching the mine entrance.

Noah sat beside me while Daniel remained close enough to monitor me without being irritating about it. Emory stood near the windows, speaking quietly with castle security.

The little green dot began moving.

Underground.

Deeper.

Past the routes we’d already searched.

Past the hidden camp.

Toward the last area where we’d traced Jason’s call.

Come bosttöme

AM

Ten minutes passed.

My phone buzzed.

Jasmine.

Still alive.

I stared at the message.

Theed back.

Yo

nine minutes to learn how to write a proper status report.

onse came almost immediately.

clear. Moving deeper. Signs of recent movement.

another message appeared.

prints.

leaned forward.

Noah saw my expression.

“What?”

I turned the phone toward him.

He read it.

Then we both looked at the tracker.

Jasmine’s green dot stopped.

Five seconds passed.

Then ten.

My fingers tightened around the phone.

“Come on.”

The dot moved again.

Deeper..

I released

Sop

best.

a sister was walking into the darkness to bring him home.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 390

Come back home

Amber POV

It took one day.

One painfully long day.

The search teams continued moving through the newly discovered route while Jasmine stayed at the castle with me. Marcus sent updates whenever he had signal, and every new photograph showed the same thing: tunnels that shouldn’t exist, signs of recent movement, and passages leading farther beneath Sum.

No Jason.

Not yet.

Then, late the following afternoon, vehicles came through the castle gates.

Jasmine saw them first.

“They’re here.”

I looked toward the window.

Noah stepped out of the first vehicle.

Daniel followed.

Then Emory.

Jasmine released a breath.

I noticed.

She pretended she hadn’t.

Minutes later, Daniel walked into my room and immediately looked me over.

“How are you feeling?”

“Wonderful.”

He narrowed his eyes.

“That’s not an answer.”

“It was intended to prevent follow–up questions.”

“It failed.”

Noah entered behind him and walked straight toward Jasmine.

“You’re really doing this?”

“Yes.”

“Alone?”

Come no

“Yes,”

He looked irritated.

“You could have just asked me to go with you.”

“I could have.”

“And?”

“I didn’t.”

Daniel sighed.

“She’s been like this since we met her.”

Emory came through the doorway last.

“Marcus knows?”

“Yes,” Jasmine answered.

“Military?”

“Yes.”

“Tracker?

I held it up.

“Right here.”

Jasmine looked at me.

“Possessive.”

“Alive.”

“Fair.”

I activated the tracker myself before clipping it securely onto her gear.

A small green signal appeared on my laptop.

“This stays on you.”

“It will.”

“You check in every ten minutes.”

“Fifteen.”

“Ten.”

“Twelve.”

“Ten,”

She stared at me.

I stared back.

“Fine. Ten.”

“If you miss one check–in, I’m sending Marcus after you.”

“Fine.”

“If you find Jason-”

“I tell you immediately.”

“If he’s injured, don’t move him unless staying there is more dangerous.‘

“I know.”

“If you see Mr. White-”

Jasmine smiled.

I pointed at her.

“No.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“Your face did.”

Apparently, we’d spent too much time together.

“You call Marcus.”

“Fine.”

“Before doing anything.”

“Define anything.”

“Jasmine.”

She laughed.

“Fine.”

Then she picked up her bag.

For a moment, neither of us moved.

Finally, I walked toward her.

She eyed me suspiciously.

“What?”

I hugged her.

She froze for half a second.

Then her arms came around me.

“Come back,” I whispered.

“I will.”

“And bring Jason with you.”

Her grip tightened.

“I’ll do everything I can.”

I pulled away.

Jasmine looked at Noah and Daniel.

Something silent passed between the three of them.

Her family.

Then she looked at Emory.

“Keep her here.”

I frowned.

“Excuse me?”

Emory nodded solemnly.

“I’ll sit on her if necessary.”

“You’re all becoming far too comfortable discussing my captivity.”

Jasmine grinned.

“Love you too, sister.”

Then she left.

Less than thirty minutes later, the tracker showed her reaching the mine entrance.

Noah sat beside me while Daniel remained close enough to monitor me without being irritating about it. Emory stood near the windows, speaking quietly with castle security.

The little green dot began moving.

Underground.

Deeper.

Past the routes we'd already searched.

Past the hidden camp.

Toward the last area where we'd traced Jason's call.

Exuma se inme

Ten minutes passed.

My phone buzzed.

Jasmine.

Still alive.

I stared at the message.

Then typed back.

You have nine minutes to learn how to write a proper status report.

Her response came almost immediately.

Tunnel clear. Moving deeper. Signs of recent movement.

Then another message appeared.

Footprints.

I leaned forward.

Noah saw my expression.

"What?"

I turned the phone toward him.

He read it.

Then we both looked at the tracker.

Jasmine’s green dot stopped.

Five seconds passed.

Then ten.

My fingers tightened around the phone.

“Come on.”

The dot moved again.

Deeper.

I released the breath trapped in my chest.

Somewhere beneath Sum, Jason was alive.

And now someone I had never expected to call a sister was walking into the darkness to bring him home.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 391

Blood trail

Amber POV

Six hours.

Jasmine had been underground for six hours, checking in constantly as she moved farther beyond the tappet sections of the caves. Some updates were detailed-coordinates, intersections, signs of recent activity-wille others were distinctly Jasmine.

Still alive. Moving east.

Found another reinforced passage.

Fresh boot prints. Continuing.

I kept her tracker open on one screen while Marcus's search teams occupied another. Noah sat nearby, Daniel moved between the monitors and his medical supplies, and Emory coordinated with the security teams at the

castle.

Then my phone rang.

Not a message.

A video call from Jasmine.

I answered immediately.

Her face appeared on the screen, illuminated by the light attached to her gear. Dirt streaked one cheek, and several strands of hair had escaped around her face.

"I found something."

Noah was beside me almost immediately.

"What?"

Jasmine turned the camera toward the cave floor.

Blood.

A trail of it disappeared along the stone and around a bend.

"Fresh?" I asked.

"Very."

My fingers tightened around the phone.

"Do you know whose?"

"No. And before you decide it's Jason's, I haven't tested it."

Then the camera shifted.

"And I found him."

A blund man sat against the cave wall with his hands secured behind him. His hair was tied back, his nose had been bleeding, and exhaustion covered his face.

I looked at Jasmine.

“What happened to him?”

“He wasn’t particularly cooperative.”

The man laughed bitterly. “That’s one way to describe it.”

Jasmine glanced at him.

He stopped.

Noah rubbed a hand over his face.

“How long have you been interrogating him?”

“Forty-three minutes.”

“What did he tell you?”

Jasmine crouched beside him and pointed the camera directly at his face.

“Tell her.”

The man looked at the screen.

“Who is she?”

“Amber Asher.”

His reaction was immediate.

Recognition.

And fear.

“You work for Mr. White,” I said.

He looked away.

Jasmine nudged his boot with hers.

“Answer.”

“Yes.”

“Where is Jason?”

“I don’t know where he is now.”

Now.

That single word changed everything

“What happened?”

The inem swallowed.

“He escaped,”

Noah’s hand landed on the back of my chair.

I stared at the man on the screen.

“When?”

“A few hours ago.”

“Tell me everything”

He shifted against the wall.

“We had him at the orphanage.”

“The what?”

“The orphanage. That’s what the Vincents called the cave facility.”

For a moment, I couldn’t speak.

The holding cells.

The children’s clothes.

The names scratched into walls.

The records.

They had called that place an orphanage.

Jasmine’s expression hardened.

“Keep going”

“We moved him out after the searches started getting closer. White wanted him deeper in the caves.”

“Mr. White was there?”

“Yes.”

“What happened?”

“We thought Jason was unconscious. He’d been in and out for hours.”

Daniel moved closer.

“Was he badly injured?”

The man glanced toward the unfamiliar voice.

“Yes.”

“Head injury?”

Al-

“I think so. There was blood around his head. His ribs were hurt too. He could barely stand earlier.”

I forced myself to focus on what came next.

“He woke up during the transfer?”

“Suddenly. One second he wasn’t responding, and then he attacked the guard beside him.”

“What did he do?”

“Took him down. Grabbed his weapon. Another guard tried to stop him, but Jason hit him too.”

Despite everything, pride flickered through me.

Mr. White had underestimated him.

Again,

“And then?”

“He ran.”

“Which direction?”

The man glanced toward the tunnel.

“”That way.”

Jasmine moved the camera back to the blood trail.

“That’s where I found him. Following this.”

“Why were you following it?” I asked.

“We were ordered to find them.”

“Them?”

“Jason and White.”

I went still.

“Mr. White went after Jason?”

“Immediately.”

“How many people followed?”

“White went first. Four or five others followed afterward.”

Jasmine turned the camera toward the ground.

“There are several sets of prints. Some overlap, so I can’t separate them reliably.”

“And the blood?”

“Continues deeper.”

“Could it belong to Mr. White?”

“Could belong to any of them.”

At least she wasn’t guessing.

I looked at the blond man again.

“Why did Mr. White take Jason?”

“I don’t know.”

Jasmine gave him a look.

He hurried to explain.

“I swear. I wasn’t involved in planning it. I was brought in after Jason was already there. White only said we couldn’t let him get back to you.”

“Why?”

“He didn’t tell us.”

“Did he mention the DNA test?”

The man hesitated.

That was enough.

“Yes,” I said quietly.

“He mentioned it once.”

“What did he say?”

“That Jason should never have taken the test.”

Noah and I looked at each other.

Connor St. Johns.

The pending DNA results.

Mr. White had taken Jason immediately after his sample was collected.

The connection was getting harder to dismiss.

“Anything else?”

“He said too many things were coming out at once. The Vincents, the records, the boy with the chip...”

“Oliver.”

The man nodded.

“And he was angry about the press conference.”

Of course he was.

I had publicly named the network he had spent decades hiding behind.

Jasmine stood.

“That’s everything useful I’ve gotten so far.”

“Marcus?”

“I sent him my coordinates before calling.”

“How far away is he?”

“Closer than I expected. There’s another connecting passage. He said about an hour.”

“Wait for him.”

Jasmine glanced down the tunnel.

“No.”

“Jasmine.”

“The blood is fresh.”

“And whoever made it may still be ahead of you.”

“Exactly.”

“No.”

She looked at me through the screen.

“I’ll wait until Marcus gets here.”

I narrowed my eyes.

“Then what?”

“Then he gets the prisoner.”

“And you?”

She smiled faintly.

I knew that smile.

“Jasmine.”

“I said I’d wait for Marcus.”

That was all I was getting.

The call ended a few minutes later after she sent me every photograph, coordinate and piece of information she’d collected.

For the next hour, I watched two points on the map.

Jasmine stayed in place.

Matius moved toward her.

When the two signals finally met, Mateus called.

His face appeared on my screen.

“I’m here,”

Behind him, two members of his team were securing the blond man.

“Did he confirm everything?”

“Yes. We’re sending him back under guard. Forensics will collect blood samples, but we’re following the trail now.

“Good.”

Marcus turned slightly.

“Where’s Jasmine?”

My eyes went immediately to the tracker.

Her green dot moved.

“Marcus,”

His expression changed.

He looked toward the tunnel.

Jasmine was already walking away.

“Jasmine!”

She didn’t stop.

Marcus went after her.

“Jasmine, wait.”

She turned around while continuing to walk backward.

“You have the prisoner.”

“We also have a search team.”

“Exactly. You don’t need me anymore.”

“Then where are you going?”

She pointed behind herself.

“Jason went that way.”

Then she turned and disappeared around the bend.

Marcus stared after her.

I looked at the tracker.

Her signal was moving quickly again.

“She waited for you because she wanted someone to take custody of the man, I said.

She had kept her promise.

She’d stayed until Marcus reached her.

She’d made sure the prisoner was secured.

She’d made sure someone else knew exactly where the blood trail began.

Then she’d left.

Alone.

Because Jasmine had never promised to wait after that.

“Go,” I said.

Marcus stared at the tunnel.

“I’m going to kill her.”

“Get in line.”

He started moving.

I looked at the tracker on my laptop.

Jasmine’s green dot was already pulling away from Marcus’s position.

Following the blood.

Following Jason. 1

And somewhere ahead of her, my injured husband was running through the darkness with the man who had stolen years of his childhood hunting him again.

But this time Jason wasn’t a little boy.

And this time he wasn’t alone.

We were coming. 2

D

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 392

und them

Amber POV

Marcus went after Jasmine, and for almost two hours I waited at the castle for the next update.

Before Jasmine left, I had personally attached her tracker to her gear. I had tested it twice, made sure it was transmitting, and connected my tablet as an emergency receiver. I hadn't intended to monitor her every second from the castle. The actual tracking equipment for both Jasmine and Marcus was posted at the command center at the mines, where the teams could coordinate their movements underground. 1

My tablet was only the backup.

That was why, when it suddenly screamed, everyone in the room froze.

A sharp alarm cut through the quiet, and a red warning filled my screen.

SOS REQUEST RECEIVED.

Jasmine.

I opened it immediately.

A location ping appeared beneath the warning.

Deep underground.

Far beyond the historical Ember routes.

I stood.

"Noah."

He was beside me immediately.

"Jasmine?"

"Yes."

Emory woke in the chair across the room and came toward us.

"What happened?"

"She triggered the SOS."

"Did command call?"

“No.”

That bothered me immediately.

They should have known before I did.

The command center at the mines had the primary tracker feeds. If Jasmine activated an emergency signal, their screens should have lit up before my tablet ever made a sound.

I grabbed my phone.

“I’m going.”

Emory stepped in front of me.

“No.”

“Move.”

“Amber, we don’t know what happened.”

“Exactly.”

“And until we do, you’re not walking into an unknown situation.”

“I can be at the mine in less than thirty minutes.”

“The entrance isn’t the problem. Jasmine is hours underground.”

“Then I’ll go as far as I can.”

“No.”

I glared at him.

Emory didn’t move.

“Give me two minutes,” he said. “Command should already have teams heading toward her. Let me find out what’s happening before you leave the one place where her emergency signal is actually coming through.”

That stopped me.

Barely.

Emory called the command center.

They answered quickly.

“This is Emory. Status on Jasmine Park.”

There was a pause.

Emory frowned,

“What do you mean?

Noah moved closer

I stared at my tablet,

The SOS continued flashing,

Emory put the call on speaker.

“We don’t have an emergency registered for Park, the officer sad

I felt cold,

“She activated her SOS,” Emory said. “Amber’s receiving fast now”

Another pause,

“We haven’t received anything”

“What are her coordinates?”

“We’re pulling up-”

Silence,

Not disconnected silence.

The kind that happened when somebody realized something was very wrong

Emory’s expression changed.

“What?”

“Stand by.”

“Don’t tell me to stand by. What do you see?”

“We’re checking the tracking system.”

1 gripped the tablet harder.

“Check Marcus too,” I said.

Emory immediately repeated it.

“Pull Marcus’s tracker at the same time.”

There were volces in the background now

ī

Then the officer returned.

“We have a problem.

“What problem?”

“The underground tracker feeds aren’t active.”

Noah straightened.

“What?”

Emory’s voice went frighteningly calm.

“Explain.”

“The receivers are online, but the feeds from the underground units aren’t coming through.”

“Since when?”

“We don’t know yet.”

“You don’t know?”

“We’ve been receiving delayed position data because of interference. The system wasn’t showing a failure warning.”

I stared at my tablet.

“No.”

Everyone looked at me.

“That’s not interference.”

I knew because I’d configured Jasmine’s tracker myself.

Her SOS had reached me.

The tracker worked.

The command center simply wasn’t receiving it.

Emory understood at the same moment.

“Amber is receiving Park’s signal at the castle.”

Silence on the other end.

“That means the tracker isn’t the problem,” Emory continued.

Found the

“No, sir.”

“The command system is.”

“We’re checking it now.

“Check Marcus.”

“We don’t have his live position.”

My stomach dropped.

Emory’s jaw tightened.

“When was his last confirmed location?”

The officer gave him a time.

Too long ago.

I looked at Jasmine’s SOS coordinates.

Someone had disabled the tracking system at the mine command center while our people were underground.

Whether they'd disabled the entire system or only the feeds we needed didn't matter.

It meant the search teams had been moving blind without realizing it.

"Send them Jasmine's coordinates," Emory ordered.

"They aren't appearing on our system."

"I don't care about your system. I'm sending them from Amber's tablet. Write them down if you have to."

I forwarded everything.

Coordinates.

Timestamp.

Tracker identification.

Last signal strength.

Emory didn't wait for confirmation.

"Get your closest operatives moving toward that location now. I want an emergency extraction team, tactical support and medics underground immediately."

Found ther

"Yes, sir."

"Do not rely on the command tracking system. Radio every team manually. Confirm their positions verbally."

"Understood."

"And lock down that command center."

The officer hesitated.

"Sir?"

"Your tracking system was disabled during an active search for a kidnapped man while multiple suspects may still be inside those caves. Nobody leaves that command center until you know whether this was a technical failure or sabotage."

"Understood."

Emory ended the call.

Then he grabbed his medical bag.

“I’m going.”

Daniel entered from the adjoining room, drawn by the alarm and raised voices.

“What happened?”

“The mine tracking system was disabled,” Noah said. “Jasmine sent an SOS. Amber’s backup received it.”

Daniel’s expression changed instantly.

“I’m coming.”

“No,” Emory said.

“There could be casualties.”

“Which is why I’m going. Emergency medics are already being sent underground.”

Daniel stared at hân.

“And you?”

“I know Jason and Jasmine. If either one of them is down there injured, I’m useful.”

“So am I.”

Found Tham

“You stay with Amber.”

I would normally have objected to being spoken about like a medical assignment.

Not now.

Emory came to me.

“Keep that tablet with you.”

“I wasn’t planning on throwing it away.”

“I’m serious. Right now, your connection to Jasmine may be more reliable than the equipment at the mine.”

I looked at the red SOS.

“Bring them back.”

His expression softened.

“I’ll find out what happened.”

Then he left.

Less than thirty minutes later, Emory reached the mine command center.

By then, the situation had changed completely.

Teams underground were being contacted manually and redirected toward Jasmine’s coordinates. Tactical units were checking intersections and securing known exits. Technicians were tearing through the command system to determine exactly how the tracker feeds had been disabled.

Emory joined the emergency team and went underground.

I stayed at the castle with my tablet.

The first useful report came almost an hour later.

Emergency team reached lower passage. Blood trail located.

Twenty minutes after that:

Signs of struggle. Continuing toward SOS coordinates.

Nobody tried to guess what that meant.

Pamela took over communications while Mrs. Sun and Grandpa joined us. Noah stayed close, and Daniel prepared for whatever might happen when they reached the surface.

found the

Then another report arrived.

Multiple persons located. Medical response required.

Daniel immediately contacted the mine.

“Identities?”

Static swallowed most of the answer.

“...three detained... injured... extraction...”

“Jason?”

Nothing.

“Jasmine?”

The connection failed before we got an answer.

The next few hours carried us into early morning.

Then my phone rang.

Unknown number.

I answered immediately.

“Hello?”

Static crackled before Emory’s voice reached me.

“Amber?”

“Tell me.”

“We found them.”

Alive

Amber POV

1 couldn’t breathe.

“Jason?”

“He’s alive.”

The entire room stopped,

Mrs. Sun stood, Noah closed his eyes, and Grandpa’s shoulders dropped as if he’d been carrying something impossibly heavy.

“Say it again.”

“Jason is alive. He’s unconscious, but he’s breathing on his own. Weak pulse, dehydration, blood loss, multiple injuries and possible head trauma. We’re stabilizing him for extraction.”

Tears blurred my vision.

“You’re with him?”

“Right beside him.”

“Don’t leave.”

“I won’t.”

“What happened?”

“We’re still piecing it together. There was a fight in a lower chamber. Mr. White was there.”

“Where is he?”

“Gone. He escaped through another passage. Three of his men are in custody.”

At least we had something.

“Jasmine?”

“She’s alive.”

Beside me, Noah released a breath so sharply that I heard it.

Then Emory continued.

“she was shot in the upper arm. Through–and–through. It’s not critical, but she lost some blood We’re taking her to the hospital with Jason.”

Alives

“What the fuck?”

I turned.

Noah had gone completely still.

For a moment, he simply stared at the phone in my hand as though he might have heard Emory wrong.

“She was shot?”

“Upper arm,” Emory repeated. “She’s stable.

Noah dragged both hands through his hair.

“That crazy woman.”

“Noah-”

“She got herself shot?”

His voice rose with every word.

“She went down there alone, chased armed men through tunnels by herself, refused to wait for Marcus, and now she’s been fucking shot?”

He turned away, took three steps, then turned straight back.

“Is she conscious?”

“Very,” Emory said.

“Of course she is.”

Noah began pacing.

“Of course she’s conscious. Why wouldn’t she be? Getting shot probably just pissed her off, she thinks she is invincible.”

Despite everything, I almost laughed.

Noah wasn’t laughing.

His face had lost its color, and his hands kept clenching at his sides.

“How inuch blood did she lose?”

“Not enough to make the wound critical.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

Allve

Emory paused.

“She’s stable, Noah.”

“That’s still not what I asked.”

“Noah,” Daniel said quietly.

He stopped.

For a second, the anger cracked.

“What if it hadn’t been her arm?”

Nobody answered.

His jaw tightened.

“What if it had been her chest? Her neck? Her fucking head?”

There it was.

Not anger.

Fear wearing anger’s clothes. 1

Noah rubbed a hand over his face.

“I’m going to kill her.”

“That would somewhat undermine the rescue,” Emory said.

“I don’t mean literally.”

A beat.

“Probably.”

I actually laughed then.

Noah pointed at me.

“Don’t. Of course she is your sister, both of you are insane.”

“She is sister because we are crazy?”

He froze.

I raised an eyebrow.

Noah looked away.

Heef

“Whatever.”

Even now.

Even terrified.

I filed that away for later.

“Can she walk?” he demanded.

“Yes.”

“Why is she walking?”

“Because she’s Jasmine.”

“Tell her to sit the fuck down.”

A distant voice came through Emory’s phone.

“I CAN HEAR HIM!” 1

Noah stopped.

Jasmine.

Alive.

Awake.

Loud.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 393

Fo

His eyes closed.

The relief that crossed his face lasted less than a second before irritation replaced it.

“GOOD!” he shouted toward my phone. “THEN SIT YOUR CRAZY ASS DOWN!”

“FUCK YOU, NOAH!”

His shoulders finally dropped.

“Yeah,” he muttered. “She’s fine.”

Emory sighed on the other end.

“I have several injured people underground and somehow the two of you are still my biggest problem.”

That was all I needed.

At

Istood.

“We’re leaving.”

This time, nobody argued.

Daniel grabbed his medical bag. Noah already had his jacket in his hand before I’d finished speaking. Pamela transferred the communications feed to her tablet, and Mrs. Sun headed

toward the door.

Grandpa started to follow.

Then he looked toward the hallway leading to the children’s rooms.

r

Alice, Alex, Iris and Rose were still asleep.

He stopped.

“I’ll stay.”

“Grandpa-,”

“They shouldn’t wake up alone.”

Several military operatives were stationed throughout the castle and around its perimeter. Grandpa turned toward the senior officer outside the room.

“Your team stays with me.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Nobody enters without clearance.”

“Understood.”

Mrs. Sun hugged him quickly.

“Call when they wake.”

“I will.”

I stepped toward him.

“Don’t tell thern about the hospital until we know more.”

“I’ll take care of them.”

He hugged me.

“Go get Jason.”

We hurried outside.

Noah was moving faster than everyone.

I caught up enough to look at him.

“She’s stable.”

“I know.”

“Emory said the wound isn’t critical.”

“I heard him.”

“Then breathe.”

He opened the vehicle door for me.

“I’ll breathe when I see her.”

There was no joke in his voice this time.

I climbed inside.

Mrs. Sun joined me while Daniel and Pamela took the other vehicle. Noah climbed into the front and immediately pulled out his phone.

“What are you doing?”

“Calling the hospital.”

“Why?”

“Because I want to know who’s treating Jasmine.”

I stared at him,

He looked back.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“Amber.”

“Absolutely nothing.”

He narrowed his eyes.

I looked out the window before he could see my smile.

Alive

As our vehicles pulled away from the castle, Emory called again.

“They’re almost at the extraction point.”

“Jason?”

“Still unconscious. Still breathing.”

“And Jasmine?”

“Still complaining.”

“Give me the phone!” Jasmine shouted somewhere behind him.

Noah spun around so quickly I almost laughed again.

“Put her on speaker.”

A moment later, Jasmine’s voice came through.

“Amber.”

“I’m here.”

“I found him.”

My eyes filled.

“I know.”

r

“He was unconscious when I reached him. I couldn’t wake him, but he was breathing. That’s why I hit the SOS.”

“You’d already been shot?”

A pause.

“Yes.”

Noah exploded.

“YOU WERE SHOT BEFORE YOU SENT THE SOS?”

Silence.

Then Jasmine said, “Why is he there?”

“Because I live here at the moment, psycho!”

“Nobody asked you.”

Alive

“You got shot and didn’t call for help!”

“I did call for help ”

“For Jason!”

“He needed it!”

“So did you!”

“I was busy!”

“BUSY BLEEDING!”

Mrs. Sun covered her mouth.

I wasn’t sure whether she was trying not to laugh or cry.

Possibly both.

Jasmine scoffed through the phone.

“It barely hit me.‘

“It went through your fucking arm!”

“Exactly. It didn’t even stay.”

Noah stared at the phone in disbelief.

“That is not how bullets become less serious!”

Emory’s exhausted voice interrupted them.

“I’m taking the phone away now.”

“No-”

The call ended.

Noah stared at my screen.

Then he leaned his head back against the seat and closed his eyes.

“Crazy woman.”

His voice was quieter this time.

Almost affectionate.

Almost terrified.

Sked out at son as morning, spread across the horizon

hind us, Grandpa Ather remained at the castle with the military operatives, protecting four eeping children.

Ahead of us, Jason and Jasmine were being carried toward the surface

Jason was alive,

Jasmine was alive,

And judging by Noah's expression, surviving the tunnels might turn out to be the easier part for my newly claimed sister once Noah got his hands on her

Ove to rating to show your son

ᵾ

Suppor

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 394

Safe

Amber POV

+15 PS

By the time we reached the hospital, the emergency entrance was already surrounded by security. Military vehicles occupied part of the drive, officers controlled every entrance, and a trauma team waited outside with two stretchers. Daniel had called ahead, so everyone knew Jason was the priority, with Jasmine following behind him.

We arrived only minutes before the rescue vehicles.

I was out of car almost as soon as it stopped.

For more than a week, I had lived with one goal: find Jason.

Everything had been about that. Every map, every interrogation, every phone call, every tunnel, every scrap of evidence. I had refused to think beyond finding him because the possibilities beyond that point had been unbearable.

Then the rescue vehicle arrived, and for the first time I understood that finding him had never been the finish line

The doors opened.

Emory climbed out first.

Then I saw my husband.

I stopped.

I'd imagined Jason walking out of those caves. I'd imagined him exhausted and furious, maybe leaning on Marcus while complaining that we'd taken too long. I'd even imagined him injured.

I hadn't imagined him looking so terribly still.

His face was pale beneath dirt and dried blood. Bruises darkened his jaw and temple, and another mark disappeared beneath his hair. An oxygen mask covered part of his face. His clothes had been cut open where the medics had treated him, an IV line was secured in his arm, and there were injuries everywhere I looked.

"Jason."

His name came out broken.

The stretcher moved past me.

For one terrible second, my body refused to follow.

Mrs. Sun made a sound beside me, and that broke whatever had frozen inside me.

I moved.

"Jason."

I reached him as they crossed the doors.

Emory stayed beside the stretcher. “He’s breathing on his own. Pressure is low but improving. We’ve started fluids.”

“Why isn’t he awake?”

“We don’t know yet.”

+15 B

I hated that answer.

Not because Emory didn’t know,

Because I had spent more firan a week believing that if we could only find Jason, I could fix everything else.

Now he was right in front of me, and I couldn’t eveti make him open his eyes.

They rushed him through the trauma doors. Someone stopped Mrs. 3un and explained that only one family member could go farther.

She pointed at me immediately.

“Her.”

I followed Jason.

The room became a blur of people and instructions. Doctors cut away what remained of his shirt, examined the bruising across his ribs and abdomen, checked his pupils, drew blood and ordered scans. They found needle marks on his arms. Emory explained that Jason had apparently been drugged repeatedly during captivity.

I stared at those marks.

Someone had held him down long enough to put needles into him.

Someone had decided when he could wake and when he couldn’t.

My nails dug into my palm.

“What did they give him?”

“We’re running toxicology,” one of the doctors answered.

“Can it hurt him?”

N4

“That depends on what was administered and in what doses.”

Another answer that wasn’t an answer.

I wanted names.

I wanted quantities.

I wanted someone to tell me exactly what had been done to my husband so I could put it into a neat column beside the name of the person responsible.

That was what I did when I was afraid.

I made lists.

I made plans.

I found weaknesses.

I destroyed problems.

There was nothing useful I could do here.

The realization was almost unbearable.

Then one of the doctors moved Jason’s hair aside.

There’s trauma here.”

I stepped closer.

Swelling covered part of the back of his skull.

“What kind?”

“Blunt force.”

My stomach turned.

“You mean he fell?”

“Possibly. But I don’t think that’s the most likely explanation.”

I stared at the injury.

“He was hit.”

The doctor didn’t answer immediately.

He didn’t need to.

I looked at Jason’s face.

All those hours underground, I had imagined him fighting.

I had been proud when we’d learned he’d escaped. Jason had woken during a transfer, attacked a guard, taken a weapon and run.

Of course he had.

That was Jason.

He fought.

Even when he was hurt.

Even when nobody knew where he was.

Even when he had no reason to believe anyone was coming.

And somewhere during that fight for freedom, somebody had hit him hard enough that now he couldn’t wake up.

My anger came clean and cold.

Mr. White had done this.

Maybe not with his own hand.

I didn’t care.

This belonged to him.

But anger couldn’t help Jason either.

So when they took him for scans, I did the only thing left to me.

+15 BS

I held his hand.

When they brought him back, someone had cleaned the dirt and most of the blood from his face. Somehow that made it worse.

He looked more like himself.

My Jason.

My husband.

The man who stole food from my plate after ordering the exact same thing. The man who could turn a business meeting into a battlefield and then come home and let Alice climb all over him. The man who had stood beside me in front of the entire world and spoken about losing his own name as a child because he wanted other survivors to know they weren't invisible.

His wedding ring was still on his finger.

I touched it with my thumb.

They had taken his phone.

His watch.

His freedom.

They had drugged him, beaten him and dragged him through tunnels beneath Sum.

But somehow that ring was still there.

"Stubborn," I whispered.

He didn't respond.

My throat tightened.

"You'd better be."

The doctor returned with the scan results and pulled a chair closer.

"The imaging confirms blunt–force trauma to the head. He was struck with something."

My hand stopped over Jason's.

"How bad?"

“He has a significant concussion and some swelling. At the moment, we aren’t seeing anything that requires emergency surgery, which is encouraging. But the head injury isn’t the only issue. He’s severely dehydrated, he’s lost blood, he’s physically exhausted, and we’re still determining what substances were administered to him.”

“Then why isn’t he waking up?”

“It may take time.”

Four harmless words.

I hated them.

“How much?”

“I can’t give you an exact answer.”

Nooked at Jason.

“He woke up underground.”

“That’s what we were told.”

“He fought them.”

“Yes.”

“He escaped.”

The doctor nodded.

“Then he was conscious.”

“At some point, yes.

“So something happened afterward.”

“That’s possible. The head injury could have occurred during the escape or afterward. His current condition may also be the cumulative effect of everything he’s endured.”

I swallowed.

“Is he in a coma?”

“We’re not making that determination right now. His neurological responses are encouraging, but we need to monitor him.”

Encouraging.

I could work with encouraging.

It wasn't a promise.

But it wasn't hopeless either.

"Will he wake up?"

The doctor hesitated.

That hesitation nearly destroyed me.

"We have good reasons to be hopeful."

I looked away before he could see my face collapse.

I had demanded certainty from everyone for the last week.

Where was Jason?

Who had him?

Which tunnel?

Which property?

+16 B

Which family?

Who knew?

Who lied?

There had always been another question I could ask, another person I could pressure, another record could pull.

There was no question I could ask that would force Jason to wake up.

So I nodded.

"Do what you need to do."

"We will."

When the doctor left, I moved my chair until my knee touched the side of Jason's bed.

Then I lowered my forehead against his hand.

For the first time since he'd disappeared, I let myself cry without immediately trying to stop.

Not loudly.

Not dramatically.

I was simply too tired to keep holding everything in place.

"I found you," I whispered.

My tears fell against his fingers.

"I found you, Jason."

Except that wasn't true.

Not completely.

Jasmine had found him.

Marcus had reached them.

Emory had brought him out.

Hundreds of people had searched while I sat at the castle staring at maps because my own body had made going after my husband impossible.

I knew logically that staying behind had been necessary.

Logic didn't stop the guilt.

"I'm sorry."

His hand remained still.

"I should've found you sooner."

Nothing.

"I should've known where he would take you. I should've-"

+15 P

I stopped.

Because I could hear exactly what Jason would say if he were awake.

Something sarcastic.

Probably rude.

Definitely involving the fact that I was almost eight months pregnant with his twins and apparently thought crawling through unstable underground tunnels was a reasonable marital obligation.

A laugh escaped me through the tears.

“Fine.”

I wiped my face.

“You’d yell at me.”

His expression didn’t change.

“I’d yell back.”

Still nothing.

“Then we’d both pretend I won.”

I brought his hand to my lips.

“So wake up and argue with me.

He didn’t.

Not yet.

I stayed beside him anyway.

Jasmine was two rooms away.

I refused to leave Jason, so Pamela brought me a tablet after Jasmine’s wound had been cleaned and treated.

P

S

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 395

Amber POV

Jasmine was two rooms away. I refused to leave Jason, so after her wound had been cleaned and treated, Pamela brought me à tablet and connected the video call from Jasmine's room.

The screen came to life, and Jasmine appeared sitting upright in bed with fier upper arm bandaged and secured. She looked exhausted, filthy and far too satisfied with herself for someone who had recently been shot. Noah sat beside her, looking furious and worried, the kind of angry that only happened when fear had nowhere else to go.

"Tell me exactly what happened," I said.

Jasmine's expression became serious. "I followed the blood trail. Once I got that deep, my phone lost all service but I knew Marcus was behind me, so I kept going."

Noah's jaw flexed, but he said nothing. That was probably an achievement.

Then I heard footsteps."

"What kind?"

"Several people moving quickly. I killed my light and waited near a turn." She glanced toward Jason through the screen. "When they came around the corner, two men were carrying him."

My hand tightened around Jason's. "He wasn't conscious?"

"No."

"Walking at all?"

"No. One had him under the shoulders, and the other had his legs. He was completely out."

I looked at Jason. The image formed too easily in my head-his body being carried through those tunnels like cargo, unable to fight or even know where they were taking him.

“Then what?”

“I shouted.”

Noah finally spoke. “You shouted.”

“Yes.”

“At armed kidnappers.”

“They already had Jason. Stealth had reached the end of its usefulness.”

He stared at her. “Continue before I develop an aneurysm.’

“The third guard came at me. I knocked him down.”

“The other two?”

“They dropped Jason.”

My stomach tightened. “Could that have caused the head injury?”

“No.” Her answer was immediate. “I saw blood in his hair before they dropped him.”

My eyes went to the back of Jason’s head. He had already been injured before Jasmine reached him.

mine continued, her expression hardening. “That’s when I saw Mr. White. He was behind them.”

My anger returned instantly. “How close?”

“Twenty feet, maybe less.”

“You saw him clearly?”

“Yes.”

“What did he do?”

She glanced toward her bandaged arm. “He shot me.”

Noah’s expression darkened immediately. “Without warning?”

“No.”

“Fucking coward.”

Jasmine glanced at him. “Mr. White wasn’t interested in a fair fight.”

“What happened?” I asked.

“I went down.”

Noah turned toward her. “You told Emory you stayed standing.”

“I may have simplified.”

“You fucking lied.”

“I’m sitting right here.”

“With a bullet wound through your arm.”

“Technically there are two holes.”

Noah stared at her. “Do you have some kind of biological inability to stop making this worse?”

Jasmine almost smiled. I didn’t.

“What did Mr. White do?”

“He ran deeper into the tunnels.”

“And you?”

For the first time, Jasmine hesitated. “I wanted to follow him.”

Noah swore under his breath.

“I really wanted to,” she continued. “He was right there, Amber. After everything he’s done, I could hear him getting away.”

I understood. If I had been standing there, I didn’t know whether I could have let him go either.

“But Jason was on the ground,” Jasmine said. “And the two men who’d been carrying him were still moving.”

+15 B9

That was the choice: revenge or rescue. Mr. White or Jason.

What happened to them?”

“One went for his weapon. I knocked him out. The other tried to get away.”

“And you knocked him out too,” Noah said.

“Yes.”

“While shot.”

“I still had one good arm.”

Noah closed his eyes.

“And two legs,” she added.

His eyes opened again. “Please stop helping.”

Then Jasmine looked back at me, and her voice changed. Everything playful disappeared.

“I went to Jason. He wasn’t moving.”

I looked down at him.

“I checked his pulse first. It was weak, but it was there. Then I checked whether he was breathing.” She paused. ” He was.”

Something inside my chest loosened, not because I hadn’t known. I’d been watching Jason’s chest rise for hours now. But Jasmine had been the first person to know. In the darkness beneath Sum, with Mr. White disappearing farther into the tunnels and blood running down her own arm, Jasmine had put her fingers against Jason’s neck and discovered that I hadn’t lost him.

“I tried waking him,” she continued. “Nothing. I saw the blood around the back of his head, so I didn’t move him more than I absolutely had to. My phone had no service that deep. I couldn’t call Marcus, the mine command center or you.”

“The tracker,” I said.

She nodded. “The SOS beacon you added.”

Before she'd left the castle, I'd personally attached the tracker to her gear. Its regular location beacon was designed to communicate through the repeater network installed throughout the active search routes and send her position back to the mine command center, just like Marcus's tracker.

But I'd added something else.

A separate emergency channel.

If Jasmine pressed the SOS control, the tracker would transmit a priority distress packet through every repeater it could reach. One copy went to mine command. The other went through an encrypted backup channel I'd

configured to mirror directly to my tablet at the castle.

Jasmine had made fun of me for being obsessive when I'd tested it three times.

I'd threatened to sew the tracker into her clothes if she took it off.

Now that extra emergency channel was the reason we'd known something had gone wrong.

"I pressed it," Jasmine said. "I didn't know whether the signal would make it through."

did. Mine received it."

Her eyes met mine through the screen. "Good."

"The command center didn't."

Her expression hardened. "What?"

"Your tracker was working. So was the emergency channel. But someone disabled the regular tracker feeds coming into the mine command center. They weren't seeing you or Marcus anymore, and because the system was still showing the repeaters as operational, the officers there initially thought the missing updates were normal underground interference."

"Mr. White."

"Maybe."

"Amber-"

"Later."

She stopped, and for once Jasmine understood immediately. I couldn't hunt Mr. White from Jason's bedside, and I wasn't going to let him steal this moment too.

"What happened after you triggered the SOS?"

"I waited."

Noah gave a disbelieving laugh. "You waited."

"Yes."

"For Marcus."

"For help."

"Instead of chasing Mr. White."

Jasmine looked at him, then back at me. "I could hear him getting farther away." Her gaze dropped. "I hated letting him go."

"Why did you?"

She looked through the screen toward Jason. "Because I didn't know if Jason had five minutes left."

The words hit me harder than anything else she'd said, and my eyes filled.

Jasmine continued quietly. "I kept checking his pulse and making sure he was still breathing. I talked to him even though I didn't know whether he could hear me."

"What did you say?"

She hesitated. "That you were waiting."

I couldn't speak.

"I told him he'd better keep breathing because you were going to be really annoying if I came back without him."

+15 RS

A laugh escaped me through my tears. "Accurate."

thought su."

"And?"

“I told him his kids were waiting too.”

I looked down at Jason, and that hurt differently: Alice would he waking soon. Alex would pretend he hadn’t been terrified. Iris would understand too much. Rose would probably stay close to everyone and say very little.

They had all waited.

“I told him he wasn’t allowed to make me explain to them why I hadn’t brought him home,” Jasmine said, her voice growing quieter. “So I stayed.”

I pressed my lips together. “You let Mr. White go for Jason.”

“There wasn’t a choice.”

There had been.

That was what mattered.

Jasmine had gone into those mines determined to bring Jason back for me. When the moment came, she had chosen him over the man responsible for everything.

“Thank you.”

She frowned. “We discussed this.”

“I know.”

“You don’t thank your sister.”

My throat tightened. “I’m not thanking you because you’re my sister.”

She went quiet.

“I’m thanking you because you were bleeding, the man who shot you was getting away, and you still stayed beside my husband.”

Her eyes lowered, and for once Jasmine didn’t have an answer.

Noah did.

“She should’ve triggered the SOS the second she was shot.”

Jasmine groaned. “And we’re back.”

“You had a bullet through your arm.”

“Jason was unconscious.”

“You were bleeding.”

“He was worse.”

“You didn’t know that.”

Won the WG

“Yes, I did.”

Now?”

“Because I was conscious enough to know I was conscious.”

Noah stared at her. “That sentence makes me want to strangle you.”

She smiled. “You’d miss me.”

His anger disappeared for half a second. “Yeah.”

One word. Quiet and completely unprotected.

Jasmine stopped smiling.

Noah looked at her bandaged arm. “You could’ve died.”

She didn’t make a joke this time. “I know.”

His jaw tightened. “Don’t fucking do that again.”

“I can’t promise nobody will ever shoot at me again.”

“That’s not what I said.”

“I know.”

Something passed between them that didn’t belong to me, so I looked away and back toward Jason, toward the man whose hand was still inside mine.

The fear was still there. The doctors hadn’t promised me he would wake up. Mr. White was still somewhere beneath Sum. Someone had deliberately interfered with the tracking system at the mine command center. There were three captured operatives to interrogate, evidence to secure, children to protect and an entire network still collapsing around us.

Normally, I would already have been planning my next move.

Instead, I watched Jason breathe.

For once, I allowed that to be enough.

Then his fingers moved.

I froze.

It was tiny, just a twitch against my palm, so small I might have missed it if I hadn't been holding his hand.

"Jason?"

The conversation on the tablet stopped.

I leaned forward. "Jason."

Nothing.

I stared at our joined hands.

"Amber?" Jasmine asked.

Soul hay

+15 RWS

"His fingers moved."

chair scraped backward as I stood and pressed the nurse-call button. "Jason, can you hear me?"

His eyes remained closed. The monitors didn't change.

I leaned closer until my forehead nearly touched his. "I'm here."

Nothing.

For one dangerous second, disappointment tried to swallow me, but I stopped it.

No.

I had spent the last week measuring hope in scraps-a damaged watch, a blood trail, a phone call that lasted seconds, a single word spoken through a dying battery. Those scraps had led me here.

I wasn't going to dismiss this one.

I sat again and wrapped both hands around his. "You moved," I whispered, my voice trembling. "I felt you.

The nurse came in, followed quickly by the doctor. They checked Jason again, asked me exactly what I'd felt, tested his responses and watched the monitors.

No miracle followed. Jason didn't suddenly open his eyes, say my name or squeeze my hand again, but when the doctor finished examining him, he looked at me.

"That's encouraging.

Earlier, I'd hated that word.

Now I held onto it.

For more than a week, I'd believed strength meant doing something-making the call, finding the clue, sending the team, anticipating the enemy before he could make another move.

Sitting beside a hospital bed had felt like surrender.

It wasn't.

Jason had fought his way through those caves. Jasmine had chosen to stay beside him. Marcus had followed her into the tunnels. Emory and the rescue team had brought them out..

Now it was my turn to stay.

I lifted Jason's hand and kissed his wedding ring. "I'm not going anywhere."

His eyes stayed closed.

That was okay.

For now.

"You took your time coming back to me," I whispered. "So I suppose I can give you a little time too."

I rested his hand against my cheek.

For the first time since he'd disappeared, I wasn't searching for him. I wasn't chasing a signal, studying a tunnel map or wondering whether he was cold, injured, frightened or alone.

He was here.

He was hurt, and he wasn't awake yet, but he wasn't alone anymore.

And neither was I. 1

␣

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 396

Paid out

Paid out

Amber POV

Jason still hadn't opened his eyes when the president of Sum arrived at the hospital.

By then, I had stopped looking at the clock. Time had become something measured by the rise and fall of Jason's chest, the quiet beeping of the monitors, the nurses coming in to check his pupils and blood pressure, and the doctors watching the swelling from the blow to his head. Every time the door opened, I looked up expecting another medical update, and every time someone said my name, some part of me braced for news I wasn't ready

to hear.

So when Pamela stepped into the room and told me the president was here, it took several seconds for the words to register.

"The president?"

She nodded. "With the secretary of defense."

I looked toward Jason. "Why?"

“Officially, to check on his condition.” Pamela paused before adding, “Unofficially, they found something.”

Of course they had. There was always something else waiting beneath the last horrible thing we uncovered.

I looked down at Jason’s hand inside mine. His fingers hadn’t moved again since that tiny twitch earlier, but I hadn’t let go. I kept my thumb resting over his wedding ring as if that small point of contact could somehow remind his body that I was still here.

“Bring them in. I’m not leaving him.”

“I didn’t expect you to.”

A few minutes later, the president of Sum entered with the secretary of defense and two members of his security detail. The hospital floor was already heavily protected, but their arrival turned the corridor outside Jason’s room into something resembling a military command post.

The president’s attention immediately went to Jason. There was no practiced smile, no formal greeting meant for cameras, and thankfully, there were no cameras anywhere near the floor.

“How is he?”

“Alive,” I answered.

The word still hurt.

“The doctors say the head injury doesn’t require surgery right now. He’s severely dehydrated, he lost blood, and toxicology is still trying to determine everything they gave him. He hasn’t woken up.”

The secretary of defense looked toward Jason, his expression hardening. “I’m sorry.”

I nodded once.

The president stepped closer, though he kept a respectful distance from the bed. “We’ve increased security here

Paid out

and at the castle. Additional officers have also been placed at the mine entrances and the command center.”

“Good,” I said. “Because someone already got close enough to sabotage the rescue.”

His expression changed.

“That’s part of why we’re here.”

I straightened slightly.

Pamela moved closer with her tablet in hand.

“What did you find?”

The secretary of defense answered. “A technician attached to the mine command infrastructure.”

My grip tightened around Jason’s hand. “Attached by whom?”

“He was brought in as a civilian systems specialist when the search expanded into the older tunnel network. His credentials checked out.”

“Apparently not well enough.”

“No,” the president said without trying to defend it. “Not well enough.”

That answer took a little of the edge off my anger, though not much.

“What did he do?”

“He didn’t shut the tracking system down completely,” the secretary explained. “That would have triggered an immediate technical alarm. Instead, he interfered selectively with incoming position feeds from teams moving into certain sectors of the underground network. The system remained active enough to make the gaps look like ordinary signal loss caused by depth and stone.”

I thought about Jasmine and Marcus moving underground while everyone at command believed the delayed signals were expected.

“He made sabotage look like interference.”

“Exactly.”

If I hadn’t personally added that separate emergency channel to Jasmine’s tracker, her SOS might never have reached anyone in time.

Jason could still be underground.

Jasmine could have bled beside him while the command center calmly assumed their signals had dropped.

I looked down at my husband.

“Where is the technician?”

“In custody.”

“Alive?”

+15 Borus

“Yes,”

“Good.”

The secretary of defense continued. “He started cooperating almost immediately after we showed him the system logs and financial records.”

Pamela gave a humorless smile. “Apparently prison was more frightening than whoever was paying him.”

“Mr. White,” I said.

The secretary nodded. “Yes.”

I wasn’t surprised, but hearing it confirmed still sharpened something inside me.

“How long had Mr. White been paying him?”

“Years.”

That made me look up.

“Years?”

“He wasn’t planted specifically for Jason’s kidnapping,” the secretary said. “He’d been monitoring the mine region and surrounding areas long before the current search began.”

The president finally took the chair Pamela offered him. “Roads, old mine entrances, service routes, private properties near the caves, changes in government patrols, construction activity. Whenever investigators, surveyors or military personnel got too close to certain areas, he passed the information along.”

My stomach turned.

“So this wasn’t only about hiding Jason.”

“No.”

“The caves were being protected.”

“We believe so.”

I looked toward Pamela.

The holding cells. The old records. The computers and generators hidden beneath the mountains. The routes that extended beyond Ember maps and into sections of Sum my family hadn’t searched in generations.

We had found an entire infrastructure

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 397

Bit late for that

Amber POV

“I suppose that explains how they operated beneath Sum for so long without constantly relocating,” I said.

“Partially,” the president replied. “Unfortunately, we’re beginning to see how extensive the support system

was.‘

“What has the technician told you?”

“Names.

The secretary of defense explained that investigators were tracing payments involving drivers, private security contractors, property managers, medical personnel, communications specialists and employees connected to transportation companies. Some appeared to have performed isolated jobs without understanding the entire operation. Others had been involved for too long to credibly claim ignorance.

The Becker and Vinny operations had already been dismantled, their assets and records seized, but the new investigation was exposing the support structure around them. Taking

down the families themselves hadn't automatically eliminated every person who had helped them operate.

Some had simply stopped moving and hoped the attention would pass.

It wouldn't.

"Are you finding connections to the Vincents as well?" I asked.

"Substantial ones," the secretary answered. "We're comparing the new information against the evidence recovered from Oliver Vincent's chip."

Pamela had been standing quietly near the window, reading something on her tablet. When she finally looked up, I knew there was more.

"They've also recovered ledgers from the underground facility."

"What kind?"

"Transfer records involving children."

My eyes moved instinctively toward Jason, although the information didn't surprise me.

"How extensive are they?"

"Hundreds of entries so far," the secretary said. "Possibly more once all the material has been preserved and processed."

Pamela handed me the tablet.

The document looked disturbingly ordinary. Faded paper, typed names, handwritten notes, dates, initials and carefully divided columns. There were categories for age, origin, family affiliation, destination and purpose.

Some of the codes had already been translated.

Bit late for that

+15 Boos

Placement.

Leverage.

Inheritance.

Debt settlement.

Marriage.

Children reduced to administrative entries.

I scrolled slowly through the document.

“I assume there’s a reasonable possibility my name is somewhere in these records as well.”

The president looked at me.

“I was taken when I was around four, you found me after all” I explained. “But if these records go back far enough, I may have been processed through the same system.”

“We’re aware of that possibility,” the secretary said carefully. “Investigators have already been asked to watch for your name.”

“Thank you.”

Finding it wouldn’t change who I was. Maybe it would answer questions about years I was too young to remember, but I wasn’t going to give an old ledger power over the life I’d built afterward.

Pamela scrolled farther.

“They’ve already found Jason.”

I looked at the screen again.

There it was.

Jason’s name was accompanied by his age at the time, a reference to his mother’s family and an intended destination.

Becker family.

Beside it was a code identifying the purpose as a future marriage placement.

I stared at the entry for several seconds before looking at Jason.

“So that’s where they intended to send him.”

“According to the records, yes,” the secretary said.

It wasn't the revelation it might once have been.

I already knew Jason had been trafficked. I knew he'd been taken, abused, stripped of his identity and passed through the same kind of system we'd spent months exposing. Learning that someone had planned to send him to the Beckers didn't change what had happened.

Bit late for that

It gave the crime paperwork.

"Have you been able to determine who within the Becker family he was intended to marry?"

"Not yet. The notation suggests the arrangement was connected to assets or bloodline access."

I nodded. "The records seized during the Becker investigation may help."

"That's our thinking as well," the secretary said. "We're already cross–referencing them."

There was another notation beside Jason's entry.

I pointed toward it. "Has this one been translated?"

The secretary hesitated briefly.

"Partially."

I looked at him.

"It states that Mr. White certified he had no paternal blood relationship to Jason."

My hand stopped over Jason's.

That mattered.

Not because we hadn't already questioned Jason's paternity. The DNA comparison with Oscar had proven that Jason and Oscar shared no blood relationship whatsoever, and the St. Johns test had been arranged because there were still unanswered questions about Jason's biological father.

But this record was decades old.

Mr. White hadn't discovered the truth recently.

He had known.

“Mr. White knew Jason wasn’t his son.”

“According to this record, yes,” the secretary confirmed. “He knew at the time of the transfer.”

I looked down at Jason.

All those years, Mr. White had allowed Jason to believe he was his father. He had allowed the Sun family to believe it. He had built an entire history around Jason supposedly being his difficult son and claimed he’d been pressured into sending him away.

But before Jason had even been transferred, Mr. White had acknowledged in writing that there was no paternal blood relationship between them.

“Does the record identify Jason’s biological father?”

“No.”

“I understand.”

Bit lute for that

I didn’t ask them to speculate.

The St. Johns DNA results were still pending, and whatever I suspected didn’t belong in an official investigation until evidence supported it.

“What role does the ledger assign to Mr. White?” I asked instead.

“Authorization for the transfer.”

I looked at the sleeping man beside me.

That stripped away another layer of Mr. White’s lies.

He hadn’t been a frightened father pressured into surrendering his son.

He had knowingly authorized the trafficking of a child who wasn’t his.

The president’s expression had hardened as well. “We’ve ordered the original evidence preserved under multiple chains of custody. Copies are being secured separately.”

“Thank you, Mr. President. Considering the technician’s access, I was concerned there might be other compromised people.”

“So are we,” he said. “We’re treating that possibility seriously.”

That was all I needed to hear.

There were questions I desperately wanted answered. Why had Mr. White been given authority over Jason if he knew Jason wasn’t his son? Why had the Beckers wanted him? What had interrupted the original arrangement? And what, if anything, did this have to do with the St. Johns family?

But the answers weren’t going anywhere.

Neither was I.

“Is there anything else you believe I should know right now?” I asked.

The president exchanged a glance with the secretary.

“One thing. Another set of ledgers appears to document outcomes rather than intended destinations. Delivered, recovered, escaped, relocated and deceased.”

I absorbed that.

“Would it be possible to have investigators check both Jason’s and my names against those records?”

“Of course.”

“And the other known victims as well. Some people may not even know they were taken as children.”

“That’s already becoming one of our priorities,” the president said.

“Thank you.”

The president and secretary stayed only a few minutes longer. Before leaving, the president assured me that the

But one for that

sabotage investigation and the broader trafficking inquiry would be handled by separate teams with independent evidence preservation.

I stood again as they prepared to leave.

“Mr. President, Mr. Secretary… thank you. Not only for coming here, but for the people you’ve committed to the search. I know how many of your officers have been underground for days.”

The president looked toward Jason.

“Bring your husband back to his family, Mrs. Sun. We’ll handle the people who tried to keep him from you.”

For once, I was perfectly willing to let someone else do exactly that.

After they left, Pamela remained near the window working through messages while I settled back into the chair beside Jason.

He hadn’t moved.

I took his hand again.

“They found out Mr. White knew,” I whispered.

Nothing.

“He knew you weren’t his son.”

The words felt uglier aloud.

Mr. White had known Jason wasn’t his child and still claimed authority over him. He had helped decide where Jason would be sent, what family would receive him and what purpose his future might serve. Then he’d allowed Jason to grow up carrying a lie about the relationship between them. 1

I rubbed my thumb across Jason’s knuckles.

“You deserved to know.”

That was what hurt more than seeing his name in a ledger.

Jason deserved to hear the truth while he was awake. He deserved the chance to be angry about it, to ask questions, to decide whether he even cared who his biological father was.

Instead, everyone else was discovering pieces of his life while he lay unconscious.

“You are going to be so pissed when you wake up.”

Pamela glanced over from the window.

“He definitely will.”

“The Beckers apparently had plans for his marriage.”

That earned a faint smile from her.

I looked at Jason’s wedding ring. “Bit late for that.”

Bit late for that

Still nothing.

“You’re supposed to say something sarcastic now.”

The monitor continued its steady rhythm.

My smile slowly disappeared.

I watched his face, searching for the smallest movement. A twitch of his eyelid. A change in his breathing. Another movement of his fingers.

Nothing came.

The investigation could continue without me for a few hours. The ledgers would be preserved. The technician would be interrogated. The president had an entire government working on the network, and for once I didn’t need to personally direct every moving piece.

My name might be somewhere in those records.

Jason’s already was.

I would deal with both when he opened his eyes.

P

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 398

Tagged

Amber POV

I woke because someone was touching my stomach.

Not enough to frighten me. Just the faintest movement against the curve of my belly, so light that for a few seconds I thought one of the twins had kicked beneath Jason's hand and pulled me out of sleep.

My head was resting beside his arm. At some point during the night, Pamela had covered me with a blanket, and I'd fallen asleep in the chair with one hand still wrapped around Jason's.

Then his fingers moved again.

I froze.

Not a twitch this time.

His fingertips dragged weakly across the fabric of my shirt.

My head snapped up.

Jason's eyes were open.

For one second, I couldn't move.

His gaze wasn't focused. He stared toward the ceiling with a faint crease between his brows, blinking slowly as though the light itself didn't make sense. His lips parted, but no sound came out.

"Jason?"

His eyes shifted.

Slowly.

They found me.

I stood so quickly the blanket slid to the floor.

"Jason."

His brows pulled together.

I reached for the call button without taking my eyes off him, but his fingers tightened weakly

around mine.

“Hey,” I whispered, leaning closer. “Don’t try to move.”

He stared at me.

There was confusion in his eyes. Heavy, drugged confusion that sent fear straight through me despite every warning the doctors had given me about what waking after a head injury might look

Jike.

His gaze moved over my face.

Then down to my stomach.

Then back to my face.

“You’re...” His voice was little more than air.

I leaned closer. “What?”

He swallowed and immediately grimaced.

“Very pregnant.”

A laugh burst out of me.

It was completely inappropriate.

I didn’t care.

My eyes filled so quickly I could barely see him.

“Yes.”

Jason continued staring at my stomach as if it had personally offended him.

“How long was I asleep?”

The question made my laugh break into something dangerously close to a sob.

“Not that long.”

He frowned.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

His hand moved against my stomach again, and one of the twins kicked directly beneath his palm

Jason’s eyes widened.

He looked at me.

I laughed through my tears.

““Twins.”

“I know,”

The answer came automatically.

Then confusion crossed his face.

“I know that.”

“Yes, you do.”

“I knew that.”

“You did.”

He stared at me suspiciously. “Why do you keep answering me like I’m stupid?”

“Because you have a head injury.”

“That’s rude.”

That did it.

I bent over him, laughing and crying at the same time.

Jason watched me for several seconds before his expression softened.

“Amber.”

“I’m here.”

His eyes moved across my face again.

This time, recognition settled more firmly.

“My wife.”

My throat closed.

“Yes.”

He gave me the faintest smile.

“Pretty.”

I covered my mouth.

Apparently brain trauma turned my husband into a flirt.

“You’re heavily medicated.”

“Still pretty.”

“Jason.”

His eyes closed briefly.

My amusement vanished immediately.

“Jason?”

He opened them again.

“Just tired.”

“Don’t do that.”

“What?”

“Close your eyes.”

He looked genuinely puzzled. “That’s usually how tired works.”

I almost laughed again, but the door opened before I could answer,

The nurse came in first, followed quickly by the doctor. I moved aside reluctantly while they checked Jason’s pupils, asked him questions and ran through the neurological assessment we’d been waiting hours for him to be awake enough to complete.

“Can you tell me your name?”

Jason stared at the doctor.

“Jason.”

“Last name?”

A pause.

“Sun.”

“Do you know where you are?”

His eyes moved around the room.

“Hospital.”

“Do you know why?”

That took longer.

Jason’s expression changed.

I saw the exact moment he reached for a memory and found something painful instead.

His brow furrowed.

“Something happened”

“Don’t force it,” the doctor said immediately. “It’s normal for memories to return gradually.”

Jason looked at me.

“You were looking for me.”

My fingers tightened around his.

“Yes.”

His eyes closed for a second before opening again.

“Caves.”

“Yes.”

“Mr. White.”

The warmth I’d felt seconds earlier disappeared.

he doctor glanced toward me.

Let the memories come naturally. Don’t push him.”

I nodded.

The examination continued. Jason knew who I was. He remembered the children, although he briefly asked whether Alice was still four and became offended when I told him she was five.

“She grew without permission.”

“Apparently.”

“Rude.”

The doctor tried very hard not to laugh.

Jason remembered Alex. Iris. Rose. The castle. Marcus. His grandparents. He remembered the twins and that I was almost eight months pregnant.

Other things came unevenly.

He remembered going for the St. Johns DNA test.

Then nothing.

Then a car.

Pain.

Someone talking.

A room underground.

Mr. White.

Then fragments again.

The doctor stopped him when his breathing became faster.

“That’s enough for now. Memory gaps are expected after a concussion, particularly with the additional drugs in your system. They may fill in gradually. Don’t try to force them. ”

Tagged

Jason didn’t look pleased about that.

“Can I leave?”

“No.”

“Tomorrow?”

“No.”

“Tonight?”

The doctor stared at him.

Jason stared back.

I folded my arms.

“Don’t look at me. I’m with him.”

“Betrayal.”

“Deeply.”

The doctor finished checking him and explained that Jason would remain under neurological observation. Fluids would continue, pain medication would be carefully managed, and they’d repeat imaging later.

The moment the medical team left, I pulled my chair closer again.

Jason watched me.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“You’re staring.”

“I spent more than a week trying to find you. I’in allowed to stare.”

His expression changed.

“A week?”

I immediately regretted saying it.

“Don’t worry about that right now.”

“Amber.”

“Jason.”

His eyes narrowed faintly.

Togged

There he was.

Not completely.

But enough.

“You look tired.”

“You look like you were dragged through a cave.”

“I was.”

“Then I win.”

He considered that.

“Fair.”

I smiled despite myself.

Then his hand moved toward my face. The motion was clumsy and weak, so I leaned closer until his fingertips reached my cheek.

His thumb brushed beneath my eye.

“You cried.”

“Once.”

His eyebrows rose.

“Maybe twice.”

He kept looking at me.

“Fine. A lot. Don’t get arrogant.”

“Too tired.”

“Good.”

For several quiet minutes, neither of us said anything.

I let him touch my face while I held his wrist gently, more to reassure myself that he was actually moving than because he needed the help.

Then his expression changed.

The softness disappeared.

“Did they get him?”

exactly who he meant.

Tagged

“Mr. White?”

Jason nodded.

“No.”

His jaw tightened.

“He escaped deeper into the tunnels when Jasmine found you. The search is still active.”

“Jasmine.”

“She found you.”

Memory flickered behind his eyes.

“Blonde.”

I frowned. “Jasmine is not blonde.”

“No.” He closed his eyes briefly. “Man. Guard.”

“One of Mr. White’s men?”

“Maybe.”

“Don’t push yourself.”

Jason ignored me, because apparently a concussion hadn’t damaged that particular habit.

“He ran?”

“Yes.”

His eyes opened.

Then, unexpectedly, he smiled.

It wasn’t a big smile.

It was the tired, irritating little curve of his mouth that usually meant he knew something I didn’t.

I immediately became suspicious.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“Jason.”

He looked toward the ceiling.

“Jason Sun.”

“I’m injured.”

“You’re about to become more injured.”

That faint smile grew.

I stared at him.

“What did you do?”

His gaze returned to mine.

“Tagged him.”

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 399

A test

Amber POV.

I leaned closer. “What do you mean you tagged him?”

Jason seemed to search through the fog in his head.

“A tag.”

“I gathered that.”

“Alex’s watch.”

That got my full attention.

“What about Alex’s watch?”

“New tags.”

His words were becoming slightly clearer the longer he was awake, but he still had to pause between thoughts.

“I made one that morning.”

“The morning you were taken?”

He nodded carefully.

“Why?”

“Wanted to test it.”

I stared at him.

Jason continued, apparently unaware that my blood pressure was beginning to rise.

Alex's watches had been designed with small tracking tags that could be attached to objects. Jason had been working on improvements to them, but as far as I knew, nothing new had been deployed.

Apparently that was because my husband had neglected to tell anyone he'd made another one.

"You had an active tracker on you the entire time?"

"No."

I exhaled.

Then he ruined it.

"Had a tag."

My eyes narrowed.

A rest

"Explain the difference before I murder a hospitalized man."

He smiled again.

"Tag wasn't active."

"Jason."

"Prototype."

I closed my eyes.

Of course it was.

"What did you do with it?"

His expression became more serious.

"When he got close."

A flash of memory crossed his face.

Jason swallowed.

"He leaned over me. Thought I was out."

His fingers tightened faintly around mine.

“I put it on him.”

My anger vanished beneath something colder.

“You were conscious?”

“Sometimes.”

“Did he see you?”

Jason shook his head slightly.

“No.”

“Where did you put it?”

“Inside his coat. Seam.”

I stared at him.

Mr. White had escaped.

But he might have escaped carrying a tracker.

“Can we locate it?”

Jason blinked.

A first

“Maybe.”

“Maybe?”

“Prototype.”

I looked toward the ceiling.

“You are impossible.”

“Still married.”

“Unfortunately.”

wife.”

ying to distract me.”

rked before.”

sed.

Before?”

He frowned.

“Don’t know.”

Then he looked pleased with himself anyway.

I grabbed my phone from the table.

“Who knows how to access the tag?”

“Me.”

“Anyone else?”

“No.”

I stopped.

Slowly, I turned toward him.

“No one?”

He shook his head.

“No Marcus?”

“No.”

“Emory?”

“No.”

A rest

“Your security team?”

“No.”

“Alex?”

“He’s six.”

“At this point, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

Jason’s mouth twitched.

I stared at him.

And then it hit me.

A week.

More than a week of sear

Hundreds of people w

Maps.

Drones.

Military tea

Tracker

Bl

all with a dying battery.

hot.

apart half of Sum looking for him.

d been carrying technology none of us knew existed.

orious second, I wanted to strangle him.

ade a secret tracker.”

not correct me right now.”

He wisely stopped.

“You made a secret tag the morning you disappeared, told absolutely no one about it, and then got kidnapped.”

“Didn’t plan that part.”

A tem

“Jason.”

“Important–distinction

I glared at him.

He looked ridiculously pleased for someone who had only recently regained consciousness.

“If I had known that tag existed—”

I stopped myself.

Because the anger arrived quickly, but so did reason.

If I’d known about it, we might have been able to search for its signal.

Maybe.

It was a prototype.

Maybe it hadn’t been

Maybe Jason hadn

There were too possessed.

Still.

I poin

opportunity to use it until Mr. White came close.

to rewrite the last week based on information none of us had

no longer swollen, we’re having a conversation about telling your wife when acking technology.”

ot allowed to look cute while I’m angry.”

s pulled together.

ntrol face.”

at him.

I laughed.

ouldn’t help it.

The sound came out half hysterical, half relieved.

Jason was awake.

He was being annoying

He was flirting badly.

He was correcting my terminology while concussed.

I had never been happier to want to strangle someone.

I bent carefully and kissed his forehead

“Idiot.”

His hand found mine again.

“Found me.”

My eyes burned.

“Yeah.”

I pressed my forehead

“I found you.”

st his.

For a few second

poke.

Then Jason w

aim.”

I pulled

His

tightened around mine.

d.

on swallowed.

Alex’s tablet.”

I frowned.

“What about it?”

“Prototype receive

My heart jum

the gene me that Saint sale again

“If battery’s aline”

I was already reaching for my phone.

*he’s not lose

I stared at my husband

Then I called Pamela

Because Mr. White hadn’t escaped empty–handed

He had escaped carrying Jason’s prototype tracker with him.

D

Sve it a rating to show your support!

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 400

Amber POV

I leaned closer. “What do you mean you tagged him?”

Jason seemed to search through the fog in his head.

“A tag.”

“I gathered that.”

“Alex’s watch.”

That got my full attention.

“What about Alex’s watch?”

“New tags.”

His words were becoming slightly clearer the longer he was awake, but he still had to pause between thoughts.

“I made one that morning.”

“The morning you were taken?”

He nodded carefully.

“Why?”

“Wanted to test it.”

I stared at him.

Jason continued, apparently unaware that my blood pressure was beginning to rise.

Alex’s watches had been designed with small tracking tags that could be attached to objects. Jason had been

working on improvements to them, but as far as I knew, nothing new had been deployed.

Apparently that was because my husband had neglected to tell anyone he’d made another one.

“You had an active tracker on you the entire time?”

“No.”

I exhaled.

Then he ruined it.

“Had a tag.”

My eyes narrowed.

“Explain the difference before I murder a hospitalized man.”

He smiled again.

“Tag wasn’t active.”

“Jason.”

“Prototype.”

I closed my eyes.

Of course it was.

“What did you do with it?”

His expression became more serious.

“When he got close.”

A flash of memory crossed his face.

Jason swallowed.

“He leaned over me. Thought I was out.”

His fingers tightened faintly around mine.

“I put it on him.”

My anger vanished beneath something colder.

“You were conscious?”

“Sometimes.”

“Did he see you?”

Jason shook his head slightly.

“No.”

“Where did you put it?”

“Inside his coat. Seam.”

I stared at him.

Mr. White had escaped.

But he might have escaped carrying a tracker.

“Can we locate it?”

Jason blinked.

“Maybe.”

“Maybe?”

“Prototype.”

I looked toward the ceiling.

“You are impossible.”

“Still married.”

“Unfortunately.”

“Pretty wife.”

“Stop trying to distract me.”

“It worked before.”

I paused.

“Before?”

He frowned.

“Don’t know.”

Then he looked pleased with himself anyway.

I grabbed my phone from the table.

“Who knows how to access the tag?”

“Me.”

“Anyone else?”

“No.”

I stopped.

Slowly, I turned toward him.

“No one?”

He shook his head.

“No Marcus?”

“No.”

“Emory?”

“No.”

“Your security team?”

A tel

“No.”

“Alex?”

“He’s six.”

“At this point, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

Jason’s mouth twitched.

I stared at him.

And then it hit me.

A week.

More than a week of searching.

Hundreds of people underground.

Maps.

Drones.

Military teams.

Trackers.

Blood trails.

A desperate phone call with a dying battery.

Jasmine getting shot.

All of us tearing apart half of Sum looking for him.

And Jason had been carrying technology none of us knew existed.

For one glorious second, I wanted to strangle him.

“You made a secret tracker.”

“Tag.”

“Do not correct me right now.”

He wisely stopped.

“You made a secret tag the morning you disappeared, told absolutely no one about it, and then got kidnapped.”

“Didn’t plan that part.”

“Jason.”

“Important distinction.”

I glared at him.

He looked ridiculously pleased for someone who had only recently regained consciousness.

“If I had known that tag existed-”

I stopped myself.

Because the anger arrived quickly, but so did reason.

If I’d known about it, we might have been able to search for its signal.

Maybe.

It was a prototype.

Maybe it hadn’t been active.

Maybe Jason hadn’t even had the opportunity to use it until Mr. White came close.

There were too many variables to rewrite the last week based on information none of us had possessed.

Still.

I pointed at him.

“When your brain is no longer swollen, we’re having a conversation about telling your wife when you invent secret tracking technology.”

“Okay.”

“And you’re not allowed to look cute while I’m angry.‘

His eyebrows pulled together.

“Can’t control face.”

I stared at him.

Then I laughed.

I couldn’t help it.

The sound came out half hysterical, half relieved.

Jason was awake.

He was being annoying.

He was flirting badly.

He was correcting my terminology while concussed.

I had never been happier to want to strangle someone.

A test

I bent carefully and kissed his forehead.

“Idiot.”

His hand found mine again.

“Found me.”

My eyes burned.

“Yeah.”

I pressed my forehead gently against his.

“I found you.”

For a few seconds, neither of us spoke.

Then Jason whispered, “Find him.”

I pulled back.

His eyes were clearer now.

Mr. White.

I nodded.

“We will.”

“No.”

His fingers tightened around mine.

“The tag.”

I waited.

Jason swallowed.

“Alex’s tablet.”

I frowned.

“What about it?”

“Prototype receiver.”

My heart jumped.

“Jason.”

He gave me that faint smile again.

“If battery’s alive…”

+15 Bora

I was already reaching for my phone.

“…he’s not lost.”

I stared at my husband.

Then I called Pamela.

Because Mr. White hadn’t escaped empty-handed.

He had escaped carrying Jason’s prototype tracker with him.