A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 401

The One Who Came Home

Amber POV

News that Jason was awake traveled through the family faster than anything I could have organized myself.

I called Grandpa first.

“He’s awake.”

There was silence on the other end before I heard him exhale.

“He’s awake?”

“Yes. He’s disoriented, and his memory is coming back in pieces, but he knows who he is. He knows me. He remembers the children.”

“And the babies?”

I smiled. “His first observation was that I’m very pregnant.”

Grandpa laughed, the sound rough with relief. “That sounds like Jason.”

I heard movement in the background and lowered my voice. “Are the children awake?”

“All of them.”

“How much do they know?”

“Only that we found him and he’s in the hospital.”

I looked toward Jason. He was resting with his eyes closed, although I was beginning to suspect he wasn’t actually asleep.

“Would you bring them? Warn Alice and Alex that they cannot jump on him.”

Without opening his eyes, Jason murmured, “Especially Alice.”

“You’re eavesdropping.”

“Hospital room. Not much else to do.”

Grandpa laughed again through the phone. “We’ll be there soon.”

Pamela helped notify everyone else while I called Mrs. Sun. She had apparently already heard, because she answered with a broken, “Is it true?”

“Yes. He’s awake.‘

She started crying.

“My baby.”

Jason opened one eye.

“Grandma?”

I nodded.

He sighed. “She’s going to squeeze me.”

“Probably.”

“Head injury.”

“I suggest mentioning that to her yourself.”

He closed his eye again. “Cruel wife.”

By the time Grandpa arrived, Jason had endured another neurological check and lost an argument with his doctor about when he could leave the hospital. He was awake but exhausted, his memories still returning unevenly.

Then the door opened.

Alice saw him first.

“DADDY!”

Every adult in the room reacted at once.

“Alice-”

She ran anyway.

Fortunately, she remembered the warning before launching herself onto the bed. She stopped at the side and stretched both arms toward him instead.

Jason's face changed instantly.

"Come here, princess."

I helped her close enough to hug him without putting pressure on his injuries. Alice wrapped herself around his arm and burst into tears.

"You went away."

"I know."

"You can't do that anymore."

Jason glanced at me.

I raised an eyebrow.

"I'll try very hard not to," he promised.

That seemed acceptable to Alice.

Alex hadn't moved from beside Grandpa.

He was staring at Jason's bruises with an expression far too serious for a six-year-old.

Jason noticed him.

"Hey, buddy."

Alex approached slowly.

"Did they hurt you?"

"A little."

"Are they in jail?"

"Some of them."

"All of them should be."

Jason's mouth twitched. "I agree."

Alex took his hand.

That was all.

He didn’t cry or demand explanations. He simply stood there holding Jason’s hand as though he needed physical proof that his father was actually in front of him.

Jason seemed to understand because he didn’t make Alex talk.

Rose was next, quieter than the others. She studied Jason carefully before asking, “Are you really okay?”

“I’m getting there.”

“The doctor said so?”

“The doctor said he’s improving,” I corrected.

Jason glanced at me. “Same thing.”

absolutely isn’t.”

e smiled and carefully leaned against the mattress while Jason rested his hand

ainst her hair.

Iris stayed near Grandpa until Jason looked at her.

“Are you planning to say hello?”

She folded her arms.

“You’re an idiot.”

Jason blinked.

I covered my

Grand

“H

at.”

e.”

he wall fascinating.

on said.

her glare for another two seconds before leaning down and carefully

tagain.”

arm settled around her.

dd that to the growing list of instructions.”

door opened again.

rs. Sun stepped inside.

e stopped the moment sh

The One Wris Came Home

Then she sobbed.

Not the restrained tears she’d allowed herself during the search. Not the controlled grief of the head of the Sun family trying to remain useful.

She simply cried.

“My baby.”

Jason looked at me.

I shook my head.

I wasn’t saving him.

Mrs. Sun reached the bed, cupped his face carefully and kissed his forehead.

“I’m okay, Grandma.”

“No, you’re not.”

“I’m getting there.”

“You disappeared.”

“Technically-”

“Jason.”

He shut his mouth.

I smiled.

Concussion or not, some survival instincts remained perfectly intact.

Mr. Sun came in behind her and rested one hand on Jason’s shoulder. He didn’t say much. He didn’t need to. The way his hand tightened was enough.

For a little while, the room filled with the kind of noise I’d missed without realizing it.

Alice told Jason everything that had happened while he was gone, including several events that had absolutely nothing to do with his disappearance. Alex corrected her timeline. Rose corrected both of them. Iris pretended not to participate until Alice got something particularly wrong and she couldn’t resist.

Jason mostly listened.

That was enough.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 402

Marked By Numbers

Amber POV

Eventually, the nurse appeared and took one look at the number of people surrounding her patient. “Out.”

Mrs. Sun immediately turned toward her. “My grandson—”

“Has a concussion.”

“I am his grandmother.”

“And I am his nurse.”

I bit the inside of my cheek to keep from laughing. Jason looked between the two women before apparently deciding which one represented the greater immediate threat.

“Grandma, I think she can have this one.”

Mrs. Sun looked genuinely betrayed, but the children laughed, and just like that, the argument was over. Grandpa began gathering everyone while Mrs. Sun extracted a promise from the nurse that she would be contacted if anything changed. Alice demanded one last hug, Alex sternly instructed Jason to sleep, and Rose waved from the doorway. Iris lingered for a few seconds longer, watching Jason as though she needed one final confirmation that he was really there, before following the others.

When the door closed behind them, silence returned so abruptly that it almost felt

strange.

Jason exhaled. “Your family is exhausting.”

I stared at him. “Your family.”

He considered that for a moment before saying, “Oh.”

“Head injury?”

“Using it as long as I can.”

“Of course you are.”

I adjusted his blanket, but when I started to move away, his fingers caught mine. “Stay.”

The teasing disappeared from me immediately. I turned my hand over and laced my fingers through his. “I’m not going anywhere.”

MA

That seemed to be all he needed. His eyes closed, and within minutes his breathing deepened. I remained beside him, listening to the steady monitor and watching the tension slowly leave his face.

For the first time since his disappearance, I didn’t watch him sleep because I was afraid he might stop breathing. I didn’t stare at a map wondering whether he was cold, injured or alone. I wasn’t waiting for a tracker to move, a phone to ring or someone to tell me another search team had found nothing.

He was right here.

His children had seen him. His grandparents had touched him. He had complained, flirted with me, argued with his doctor and irritated me within an hour of waking up. It was so painfully normal that I hadn't realized how desperately I'd missed it until now.

For the first time in more than a week, I allowed myself to believe the worst part might actually be over.

Then I noticed Emory standing on the other side of the glass panel in the door.

He wasn't trying to come in. He was simply standing there, waiting, and the relief I'd been holding onto disappeared before he ever touched the handle.

Emory knew Jason was awake. He could have come in with everyone else if he'd only wanted to see him. Instead, he'd waited until Grandpa had taken the children away and

Mr. and Mrs. Sun had left.

Whatever he'd come to tell me, he hadn't wanted them to hear it.

I carefully slipped my hand from Jason's and crossed the room. Emory opened the door before I reached it and stepped inside quietly.

"How long have you been standing out there?" I asked.

"A few minutes."

"You waited for the children to leave."

It wasn't a question.

His eyes moved past me toward Jason. "He's really awake?"

"Yes."

For just a moment, something in Emory's expression eased. "Good."

Then his gaze returned to mine, and that brief relief disappeared.

I knew that look. I'd seen it too many times over the past few months, usually right before someone told me we'd uncovered another room, another victim or another piece of a nightmare that was always larger than we'd thought.

I glanced back at Jason. He was sleeping peacefully, and suddenly I didn't want whatever Emory was carrying anywhere near that bed.

"Come outside." 1

We stepped into the corridor, and I pulled the door almost closed behind me, leaving enough of a gap that I could still hear if Jason called for me.

“What happened?”

Emory didn’t try to soften it. “We got an update from the island.”

For a second, my mind refused to move away from Jason. Then it clicked.

The island.

Oliver’s warning.

He’d told us there were more places hidden underground. Search teams had continued working even while everything happening in Sum had consumed our attention.

“They found another section?” I asked.

“Yes. Underground. Sealed.”

Something about the way he said the last word made my stomach tighten. “Was anyone inside?”

Emory hesitated, and I knew before he answered.

“Alive?”

“No.”

The happiness I’d felt only minutes earlier suddenly seemed painfully fragile. I folded my arms over myself and asked, “How many bodies?”

“They don’t know yet. The first team stopped as soon as they understood what they’d entered. Mr. Stait has forensic teams taking over.”

“Adults?”

“Some.”

I stared at him. That one word told me everything he hadn’t wanted to say.

“And the others?”

His jaw tightened. “Children.”

Through the narrow opening behind me, I could hear the steady rhythm of Jason’s

monitor.

Less than fifteen minutes ago, Alice had been crying against her father's arm because she'd gotten him back. Alex had stood beside the bed holding Jason's hand because he needed physical proof that his father was alive. Rose and Iris had been able to walk into this hospital and see the man they'd feared they might never see again.

I had gotten my reunion.

Somebody else hadn't.

"Does Mr. Stait have the site secured?" I asked.

"Completely. He's treating the entire underground section as both a crime scene and a burial site."

"Good. Please keep me informed, but don't let anyone rush the recovery because of me. Whoever is down there deserves to be handled properly."

"They will be."

Emory didn't move to leave, and I noticed immediately.

"There's more."

He glanced toward Jason's door before looking back at me. "They found markings beside the bodies."

"What kind?"

"Numbers. The forensic team photographed the chamber before sealing it, and from what they could see, there appears to be a number associated with nearly every set of

remains they've identified so far." 1

I frowned. "Identification numbers?"

"We don't know yet."

For several seconds, I simply stared at him. Then my mind went to the transfer ledgers recovered beneath Sum–the names, ages, origins, destinations, purposes and outcomes carefully documented by people who had treated human beings as inventory.

"Have they compared the numbers to the ledgers?"

“Not yet. Mr. Stait knows about the records, and the president’s people are already arranging secure access to copies.”

I nodded slowly and looked through the opening in the door again.

Jason was still asleep.

Only minutes earlier, I’d allowed myself to believe that the worst part was over. Maybe for Jason it was. He was alive. He was awake. Whatever came next, he would face it surrounded by people who loved him.

But the network we’d uncovered had existed for generations, and not everyone it swallowed had been lucky enough to find their way back.

The numbers on those walls might correspond to the ledgers. If they did, the bodies beneath the island might finally have names, families and histories again. Somewhere, there could be parents who had died wondering what happened to their children, siblings who had spent decades searching, or grown children who had never known why a parent disappeared.

I had spent more than a week refusing to accept that Jason might never come home, and I’d been lucky enough to be right.

Others had been waiting far longer.

I looked through the doorway at my sleeping husband one last time before turning back to Emory. 1

We had brought Jason home alive.

Now we had to find out who had been waiting to bring the others home, even if all we could return to them was the truth.

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 403

The Names Left Behind

Amber POV

It took Jason two weeks to get out of bed.

His recovery was steady but frustratingly slow. His memories returned in pieces, his head injury continued healing, and physical therapy became the part of every day he hated most.

I wasn’t doing much better at following medical instructions.

My blood pressure started climbing again, and being almost eight months pregnant with twins meant the doctors had very little patience for my argument that I felt perfectly fine.

“Bed rest,” my doctor announced.

Across the room, Jason smiled.

I pointed at him. “Don’t.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“Your face did.”

The doctor continued, “Strict bed rest. Short trips to the bathroom and very limited walking.”

I sighed. There was no point fighting her, especially after the scare we’d already had during Jason’s disappearance.

“Fine. Then put me in here.”

Jason looked at me.

I gestured toward the empty space in his private room. “Bring me another bed. I’m not spending the next few weeks arguing with nurses every time I want to see my husband.”

The doctors exchanged a look.

Jason raised his hand. “I support this plan.”

“Nobody asked you.”

“It’s my room.”

“It’s a hospital room.”

“Still mine.”

The doctors eventually agreed, probably because they realized containing both of us in one room would be easier than trying to keep us apart.

By that afternoon, a second hospital bed had been brought in beside Jason’s.

Alice called it a sleepover. Alex wanted a third bed. Mrs. Sun brought enough clothes and personal items for a month, while Pamela arranged for my tablet and the investigation reports I was still permitted to review.

So Jason and I recovered together.

He had physical therapy. I had blood-pressure checks. Neither of us was allowed to go anywhere without permission.

The Nores Left Behind

Marriage had apparently become a shared medical detention.

the fourteenth day, Jason finally stood.

I watched from my bed as he gripped the support frame and slowly pushed himself upright. His legs trembled, but he stayed standing.

Then he took one step.

Two.

Three.

His therapist guided him back toward the bed before his legs gave out.

Jason looked irritated.

I was smiling.

“Three steps.”

“That’s pathetic.”

“Two weeks ago you were unconscious.”

He looked at me.

“Tomorrow, four.”

“Tomorrow, whatever your therapist says.”

“Four.”

I rolled my eyes. “Fine.”

Another notification appeared on my tablet.

I almost ignored it. Pamela had been sending updates throughout the day, and most could wait until later.

Then I saw the classification.

SURVIVOR MATCH – VERIFIED

I opened it.

For several seconds, I didn't understand what I was reading.

"What?" Jason asked.

I read the first line again.

"They found one."

"One what?"

I looked across the room at him. "One of the children."

Jason went completely still.

"Alive?"

The Nores leti Betund

"Alive."

e girl had disappeared more than thirty years ago. The ledger recorded her transfer under a number, followed by the surname of the family that received her. Investigators had followed that name through school records, employment records and eventually a marriage certificate.

She was now in her forties.

She had children.

She had a grandchild.

She had spent almost her entire life believing the people who raised her were her biological family.

Jason's expression tightened. "Does she know?"

“Not yet.”

River City military investigators had verified the match before contacting anyone. A team was already preparing to approach her privately with a victim–support specialist. They would offer DNA testing and explain what had been found, but the choice of what happened afterward would be hers.

I continued reading.

Then I stopped.

“What is it?” Jason asked.

I couldn’t answer immediately.

The investigators hadn’t only found her.

They’d found her original family.

Her parents were dead.

But two of her siblings were alive.

One had been only seven when she disappeared. The other had been twelve.

Both had spent decades searching.

Old missing–person reports had been filed again and again whenever new databases became available. DNA had been submitted. Photographs had been preserved. One sibling had even renewed the missing–person appeal after their mother’s death because she’d made them promise they wouldn’t stop looking,

I swallowed.

“They never gave up on her.”

Jason watched me silently.

“They still have her pictures,” I said. “They’ve been searching for more than thirty years.”

My eyes returned to the final paragraph.

The military wasn’t contacting the siblings yet.

First, they would tell the woman who she had been.

ev

ne Nomes Left Behind

They would show her the records from the mine and explain that the name she’d carried as a little girl had not

sappeared when someone replaced it.

Then they would ask whether she wanted to know who had been waiting for her.

I lowered the tablet.

For more than thirty years, two siblings had lived with the same unanswered question.

Where did she go?

Somewhere else, their little sister had grown up. She had gone to school, built a life, become a mother and eventually a grandmother, never knowing there were people still searching for the child she’d once been.

The network had changed her name.

It had changed her family.

It had stolen more than thirty years from all of them.

But it hadn’t managed to erase her.

I looked at Jason.

“They found her.”

This time, the words felt different.

Not a body.

Not a number beside a grave.

Her.

And if she chose to open that door, two people who had spent most of their lives looking for their little sister were finally going to hear the words they’d stopped allowing themselves to hope for.

She’s alive.

Comments

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 404

Father

Amber POV

“Have they found Mr. White?”

Jason had asked the same question every morning for the past several days.

I looked up from my tablet. He was sitting on the edge of his bed after physical therapy, looking tired but significantly steadier than he had a week ago.

“No.”

His jaw tightened.

It was still strange hearing him call the man Mr. White.

For as long as I’d known Jason, that man had occupied the place of his father, however complicated and damaged that relationship had been. Jason had spent most of his life believing they shared blood. Even after learning that he and Oscar weren’t related, there had still been questions.

Then we’d found the ledger.

Mr. White hadn’t merely known Jason wasn’t his biological son. He had certified it decades ago before authorizing Jason’s transfer to the Becker family.

He had known.

And now Jason refused to give him even the title of father.

Lunderstood.

Sometimes distance began with something as small as a name.

“They’re still searching the tunnels,” I told him. “And the alert is international now.”

“Nothing from the prototype?”

“Not anymore.”

The tag had given investigators another lead, but Mr. White had managed to disappear again. Whether the battery had finally died or the tag had been discovered, we didn’t know.

Jason rubbed a hand over his face. “He can’t keep disappearing.”

“He has fewer places to disappear to.”

That much was true.

Mr. White wasn’t merely wanted for Jason’s kidnapping anymore.

As arrests spread through the trafficking network, people started talking.

Families that had once protected one another were suddenly very willing to provide names when prosecutors began placing evidence in front of them. Mr. White’s name had surfaced repeatedly.

Middleman.

Negotiator.

Broker.

The person who connected families that wanted something done without being directly connected to it.

Several people arrested outside Sum had identified him independently. Different countries, different operations, different years, but the same man kept appearing between them.

Multiple countries were now looking for him.

Mr. White had spent decades hiding behind respectable families and other people’s crimes.

He was running out of both.

“He’ll make a mistake,” I said.

Jason looked at me. “You sound very confident.”

“I’m married to the man he kidnapped and failed to keep. I’m feeling optimistic.”

That earned me the smallest smile.

A knock interrupted us.

Pamela stepped inside.

“There are people here to see Jason.”

Jason immediately looked suspicious. “Doctors?”

“No.”

“Police?”

“No.”

“Grandma?”

Pamela smiled. “You’d hear her before I needed to warn you.”

I laughed.

Then I noticed the folder in Pamela’s hand.

My amusement disappeared.

“Who is it?”

“The representatives overseeing the St. Johns DNA verification.”

Jason stopped moving.

For a moment, neither of us spoke.

The test.

With everything that had happened since Jason walked out of that testing appointment, I had almost fo that somewhere outside this hospital rooia, people had continued processing the sample that might a of the biggest questions of his life.

Jason hadn’t forgotten.

Totwit

I could see that immediately.

Results?” he asked.

Pamela nodded. “They asked to give them to you personally.”

Jason looked at me.

I reached for his hand.

“Let them in.”

Pamela returned a few moments later with three people. Two I recognized from the legal team overseeing the st. Johns trust verification. The third was an independent genetic specialist.

They greeted us quietly before taking the chairs beside Jason’s bed.

The attorney placed a sealed folder on his lap.

“Mr. Sun, before we begin, I want to confirm that the testing was completed under the independent chain of custody established before your appointment. Your sample was secured before your disappearance and processed without interruption.”

Jason nodded. “Just tell me.”

The attorney glanced at the genetic specialist.

She spoke first.

“Your DNA was compared against the verified St. Johns family reference samples maintained for succession purposes.”

Jason’s hand tightened around mine.

“The result confirms a direct biological relationship.”

He didn’t react.

Not immediately.

“How direct?” he asked.

The specialist looked at him.

“Direct paternal descent.”

The room seemed to become very still.

Jason swallowed.

“Connor?”

“The available genetic and genealogical evidence identifies Connor St. Johns as your biological father.”

Jason stared at her.

I felt his fingers tighten around mine.

Connor St. Johns.

The man his mother had been so close to in college. The man whose place in her life had remained a question Because everyone had believed Mr. White was Jason’s father.

Except Mr. White himself,

He had known the truth wasn’t that simple.

Jason looked down at our joined hands.

“So he was my father.”

“Yes.”

His voice was quieter when he asked, “Is he alive?”

The attorney answered this time.

“No.”

Jason closed his eyes briefly.

It wasn’t grief exactly. How could he grieve a father he’d never known existed?

But it was still a loss.

A possibility disappearing at the exact moment it became real.

The attorney gave him a moment before continuing.

“There is something else you need to understand about the result.”

Jason opened his eyes.

The folder was placed on the table between us.

The St. Johns trust was established to remain intact until a verified direct blood relative could be identified. Over the decades, extensive genealogical searches were conducted."

I already knew where this was going.

Jason apparently didn't.

The attorney continued.

"Your DNA has now been compared against every verified branch available to the trustees. We also completed the required genealogical review."

Jason frowned.

"What does that mean?"

"It means there are no other surviving direct St. Johns descendants."

Silence.

Jason stared at him.

The attorney spoke carefully.

"You are the only verified living direct relative of the St. Johns line."

+15 BOLS

Jason actually laughed once, but there was no humor in it.

course I am."

I squeezed his hand.

The attorney continued. "Under the terms of the trust, that makes you the legal successor."

Jason looked at the folder but didn't touch it.

"Successor to what?"

“The St. Johns estate, trusts, corporate holdings, land interests and all assets preserved under the fifty-year structure.”

Jason leaned back against his pillows.

He looked exhausted all over again.

“How much?”

The attorney hesitated.

That was never a good sign when discussing money with people like us.

“An updated valuation is being prepared. The original assets have remained invested throughout the trust period.”

Jason stared at him.

“So?”

“Mr. Sun, this is not simply an inheritance.”

I almost smiled.

Jason did not.

The attorney slid the folder toward him.

“It is one of the largest privately held inherited estates currently under trust.”

Jason looked at me.

I lifted one shoulder.

“Congratulations?”

“Don’t.”

I laughed.

The attorney seemed uncertain whether we understood the significance of what he’d just told us.

We did.

That was precisely why neither of us cared about the number yet.

Jason looked back at the genetic specialist.

“I want a copy of everything related to Connor.”

+15 BONS

“Of course.”

Not the estate. Him.”

Her expression softened. “We have genealogical records, photographs and some archived family documents. The trustees can provide everything they’re legally permitted to release.”

Jason nodded.

That was the first thing he’d asked for.

Not the companies.

Not the land.

Not the money that had been accumulating for half a century.

His father.

I looked at the man beside me and understood why.

Mr. White had spent decades helping decide what Jason was worth to other people.

A useful child.

A future marriage placement.

An asset that could be transferred.

A connection that could be exploited.

Now another enormous inheritance had landed in Jason’s lap because of his blood, and somehow that felt almost insulting in its timing.

Jason didn’t need another fortune to tell him who he was.

But he deserved to know where he came from.

The attorney opened the folder and turned the first page toward him.

There was an old photograph clipped to the file.

A young man stared back at us.

Jason froze.

I did too.

The resemblance wasn't perfect.

It didn't need to be.

The shape of the eyes. The jaw. Even something in the way Connor St. Johns stood in front of the camera felt painfully familiar.

Jason reached for the photograph.

His thumb stopped just short of touching the man's face.

For most of his life, Jason had believed his father was a man who had eventually been revealed as one of the

monsters responsible for destroying children's lives.

day, he finally had a different name.

Connor St. Johns.

Jason stared at the photograph for a long time before whispering the words as though he were testing how they felt.

"My father."

␣

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 405

Make It Public

Amber POV

The St. Johns representatives returned the next morning with enough paperwork to make Jason regret having living proof of his ancestry.

I was still confined to the second bed in his hospital room, which gave me an excellent view as two folders became four, then six, before a tablet containing the complete preliminary inventory was placed in front of

him.

Jason stared at it. “Is this all property?”

“Property, corporate holdings, trusts and associated assets,” the attorney explained. “The formal transfer will take time, but this gives you an overview of what has been preserved under the St. Johns trust.”

Jason scrolled through the list. There were properties in several countries, commercial buildings, residences, agricultural land and investment holdings that had continued accumulating value while the trust waited for a verified successor. Some properties had belonged to the St. Johns family for generations.

He stopped scrolling. “There’s an estate in Sum.”

“Yes.”

“How long has the family owned it?”

“Several generations.”

That caught my attention. The St. Johns had once been among the Ember family’s closest allies. Their family had vanished, yet pieces of their history had remained behind, preserved in trusts and deeds while everyone waited for someone carrying their blood to return.

The attorney eventually raised another matter.

“As the sole direct successor, you are also entitled to legally adopt the St. Johns surname.”

“No.”

The answer came immediately.

The attorney paused.

Jason looked up. “My name is Jason Sun.”

“Of course. I only wanted you to understand that the option ”

“I understand.”

His voice wasn’t harsh. It was simply certain.

Sup had been his mother’s maiden name. It belonged to the grandparents who had searched for him when he disappeared as a child, found him after he’d forgotten his own identity and brought him home.

Finding his biological father didn’t erase his mother.

Becoming a St. Johns successor didn’t make him less of a Sun.

The attorney nodded. Then the succession documents will remain under Jason Sun.”

“Thank you.”

Jason returned to the property list, and smiled.

Some decisions didn’t require lawyers.

A knock came at the door twenty minutes later.

Mr. Stait entered carrying a folder.

The sight of him immediately shifted my attention away from the St. Johns estate.

“Island?”

He nodded.

Jason put his tablet aside.

Mr. Stait walked toward my bed. “The forensic teams finished the initial recovery from the newly opened underground sections.”

“Initial?”

“There are still areas being examined.”

Something tightened in my chest.

I held out my hand for the folder.

He didn’t give it to me.

That frightened me more than anything he could have said.

“How many?”

Mr. Stait looked at me.

“Two hundred and seventeen.”

For a second, I thought I’d misunderstood him.

“Bodies?”

“Sets of human remains.”

I stared at him.

“Two hundred and seventeen?”

“That’s the current count.”

Current.

Not final

I looked at the folder ap

I’d expected a list.

Maybe twenty people.

Even that would have been horrifying

Two hundred and seventeen wasn’t a list.

It was a population.

Mr. Stait finally handed me the folder.

I opened it.

There weren’t names on the first page.

There were numbers.

Unknown Male.

Unknown Female.

Unknown Juvenile.

Estimated ages appeared beside some. Approximate recovery locations appeared beside others. The condition of the remains varied enough to suggest the dead hadn't arrived on the island together.

I turned the page.

More numbers.

Another page. 1

More.

I stopped halfway through.

"How long?"

Mr. Stait knew what I meant.

"We don't know yet. Some remains appear to have been there for decades. Others are significantly more recent."

My fingers tightened around the paper.

I remembered arriving on that island for the competition.

'The flags.

The beaches.

The forests.

The ridiculous strategies we'd created because we'd believed we were participating in a military competition.

Then people started dying

We learned the island owner had been blackmailed. We learned wealthy families had paid to use parts c island as a hunting ground. People had been kidnapped, released into the wilderness and hunted.

I'd known that.

But until that moment, some part of my mind had still treated the words human hunting ground as a description of what had happened there.

Two hundred and seventeen bodies made me understand what it really meant.

It had been routine.

People had arrived on that island knowing they were about to hunt another human being.

Someone had transported the victims.

Someone had guarded them.

Someone had released them.

Someone had cleaned up afterward.

And then another group had come.

I looked down again.

A woman estimated to have been in her twenties.

A man perhaps in his fifties.

Another woman.

Another man.

Then-

Unknown Juvenile. Estimated age: 7-10.

My eyes stopped.

I couldn’t turn the page.

Jason noticed.

“What?”

I didn’t answer.

He understood anyway.

“Children?”

J nodded.

Mr. Stait’s voice was quiet “Yes.”

“How many?”

“The age assessments aren’t complete.

I looked at him.

“How many?”

He hesitated.

“Dozens.”

My hand went instinctively to my stomach.

Alice was five.

Alex was six.

Rose was still so young.

Iris had already survived things no child should have understood.

I looked at the estimated age again.

Seven to ten.

Someone had brought a child to that island.

Not to sell.

Not to hide.

Not even to use as leverage.

To hunt.

I closed the folder because suddenly I couldn’t look at another number.

For a moment, none of us spoke.

Then I remembered the underground chamber we’d found during the competition.

The women.

Oliver.

The evidence.

At that time, there had been more beneath our feet.

While we planned routes across the island, someone was buried below us.

While we argued over flags, someone was buried below us.

Mr. Stait watched me carefully.

“All two hundred and seventeen?”

“Especially the number.”

Jason looked at me.

I could see the same anger in his face that was burning through mine.

Mr. Stait finally nodded. “I’ll coordinate with the governments involved. We’ll prepare a public releas secure process for families of missing persons to submit information.”

“Thank you.”

He reached for the folder.

I held onto it for another second.

“When you identify someone, their family finds out first.”

“Yes.”

“And don’t call the children numbers when you announce this.

“We won’t.”

I released the folder.

After Mr. Stait left, the room was silent.

On Jason’s tablet sat a list of everything his family had preserved for its missing heir.

Estates.

Land.

Companies.

Money.

For fifty years, the St. Johns had built legal structures designed around one hope that someday someone belonging to their family might be found.

The folder Mr. Stait carried out of our room represented families who had never been given that protection.

Two hundred and seventeen people had been recovered so far.

Somewhere, there might be a mother still waiting for a child who would never walk through her door. There might be children who had grown old without knowing why a parent never came home. There might be brothers and sisters who still searched names online in the middle of the night because they couldn't quite make themselves stop hoping.

Jason broke the silence.

"You're going to speak publicly."

"Yes,"

"From that bed?"

"If that's what it takes."

He nodded.

This time he didn't tease me.

"Then make sure they hear what that island really was.

I looked toward the window.

The world had called it a military competition.

Then a massacre.

Then a trafficking site.

Those words still weren't enough.

More than two hundred men, women and children had been buried there after an island was turned intc hunting ground for human beings.

They had been hidden long enough.

I wasn’t going to release photographs of their bodies or turn their deaths into spectacle. I wasn’t going t let reporters race families to an identification.

But I would give the dead one thing their killers had worked very hard to take from them.

I would make sure the world knew they existed.

P

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 406

Make It Public

Amber POV

The St. Johns representatives returned the next morning with enough paperwork to make Jason regret having living proof of his ancestry.

I was still confined to the second bed in his hospital room, which gave me an excellent view as two folders became four, then six, before a tablet containing the complete preliminary inventory was placed in front of

him

Jason stared at it. “Is this all property?”

“Property, corporate holdings, trusts and associated assets,” the attorney explained. “The formal transfer will take time, but this gives you an overview of what has been preserved under the St. Johns trust.”

Jason scrolled through the list. There were properties in several countries, commercial buildings, residences, agricultural land and investment holdings that had continued accumulating value while the trust waited for a verified successor. Some properties had belonged to the St. Johns family for generations.

He stopped scrolling. “There’s an estate in Sum.”

“Yes.”

“How long has the family owned it?”

“Several generations.”

That caught my attention. The St. Johns had once been among the Ember family’s closest allies. Their family had vanished, yet pieces of their history had remained behind, preserved in trusts and deeds while everyone waited for someone carrying their blood to return.

The attorney eventually raised another matter.

“As the sole direct successor, you are also entitled to legally adopt the St. Johns surname.”

“No.”

The answer came immediately.

The attorney paused.

Jason looked up. “My name is Jason Sun.”

“Of course. I only wanted you to understand that the option—”

“I understand.”

His voice wasn’t harsh. It was simply certain.

Sun had been his mother’s maiden name. It belonged to the grandparents who had searche the disappeared as a child, found him after he’d forgotten his own identity and brought him

Finding his biological father didn’t erase his mother.

Becoming a St. Johns successor didn’t make him less of a Sun.

The attorney nodded. “Then the succession documents will remain under Jason Sun.”

“Thank you.”

Jason returned to the property list, and smiled.

Some decisions didn’t require lawyers.

A knock came at the door twenty minutes later.

Mr. Stait entered carrying a folder.

The sight of him immediately shifted my attention away from the St. Johns estate.

“Island?”

He nodded.

Jason put his tablet aside.

Mr. Stait walked toward my bed. “The forensic teams finished the initial recovery from the newly opened underground sections.”

“Initial?”

“There are still areas being examined.”

Something tightened in my chest.

I held out my hand for the folder.

He didn’t give it to me.

That frightened me more than anything he could have said.

“How many?”

Mr. Stait looked at me.

“Two hundred and seventeen.”

For a second, I thought I’d misunderstood him.

“Bodies?”

“Sets of human remains.”

I stared at him.

“Two hundred and seventeen?”

“That’s the current count.”

Corrent

MORE IN

Not final.

I looked at the folder again.

I'd expected a list.

Maybe twenty people.

Even that would have been horrifying.

Two hundred and seventeen wasn't a list.

It was a population.

Mr. Stait finally handed me the folder.

I opened it.

There weren't names on the first page.

There were numbers.

Unknown Male.

Unknown Female.

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Estimated ages appeared beside some. Approximate recovery locations appeared beside others. The condition of the remains varied enough to suggest the dead hadn't arrived on the island together.

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-membered the underground chamber we'd found during the competition.

Moke 2ueNT

hile helicopters came and went and sošolciers moved through the forest, more than two hundred people had een waiting underground for somebody ty to find them.

he island belonged to me now.

he thought made me sick.

Can they identify them?" Jásason asked.

We're trying," Mr. Stait said D'ONA, dental records, missing–person databases. We're also comparing the umbered remains against shehe mine records and Oliver's evidence. With victims potentially originating om multiple countries escédentification will take time."

Then tell people.b

net his eyeses.

Make it publiclit."

Ambebeletrave an active multinational investigation.”

I’m mot as asking you to release evidence.”

Pibilitisisclosure this early creates complications.”

Sostodo es keeping two hundred and seventeen missing people secret.”

They aren’t all confirmed missing persons yet.”

They were people.”

My voice cracked on the last word.

I hated that it did, but I didn’t take it back.

“They were people before we gave them numbers.”

Mr. Stait said nothing.

I opened the folder again and looked at the first page.

L

“Somebody knows these faces. Somebody remembers these voices. Families may have spent decades *ing their children ran away, their parents abandoned them or their siblings simply disappeared. If we <-milies don’t even know they should contact investigators.”

Information that could

Cake It Bure

e and a rata

y someone

I protection.

‘r door. There

might be

uldn’t quite

“Yes.”

“From that bea? bed?”

“If that’s what it uttakes.”

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This time time he didn’t tease me

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P

Super Support

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D

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 407

Fifteen Minutes

Amber POV

+15 8on

By lunchtime, I was tired enough to admit that bed rest right not be the completely unreasonable torture I’d accused my doctor of prescribing.

Jason had finished physical therapy that morning and was pretending it hadn’t exhausted him I had spent more time than I was supposed to reviewing reports, which meant Pamela had already threatened to confiscate my tablet twice.

A nurse entered carrying our lunch trays.

I recognized her immediately. She'd been attending Jason since he'd arrived at the hospital. She wasn't his only nurse, but she'd been around often enough that neither of us paid much attention when she entered anymore.

"Food," she announced as she set the trays down. "And before either of you complains, I don't cook it."

Jason inspected his plate. "Convenient excuse."

"I'll tell the kitchen you've recovered enough to insult them."

She checked my blood–pressure monitor, adjusted Jason's IV and began organizing supplies around the room while we ate.

There was nothing unusual about her staying. She was constantly finding something to check or straighten whenever she was in the room.

I ate about half my lunch before giving up.

Jason looked at my tray. "That's all?"

"Don't start."

"Your doctor said-'

"If you become responsible now, I'm divorcing you."

"Too late."

I smiled and reached for my water.

About fifteen minutes later, the words on my tablet blurred.

I blinked.

They didn't clear.

Fifteen Miren's

"Jason."

He looked at me immediately.

My glass slipped from my fingers and hit the floor.

“Amber?”

My arms felt heavy. My head fell back against the pillow, and when I tried to lift it again, my body barely responded.

Something was wrong.

I looked toward the nurse.

She wasn’t coming toward me.

She was moving toward Jason.

Her hand disappeared into her pocket.

When it came out, there was a syringe between her fingers.

My hand searched blindly beside the mattress.

The alert button.

I found it and pressed.

“Jason-”

Then everything disappeared.

Jason POV

Amber went limp.

“Amber!”

I threw the blanket aside and tried to stand on instinct.

My legs immediately reminded me that I couldn’t.

My right knee buckled before I was fully upright, and I dropped back against the mattress hard enough to send pain through my hip. I caught the bed rail and tried again, but my legs were already trembling.

“Amber!”

She didn’t respond.

The nurse should have gone to her.

She didn’t.

Instead, she walked toward me.

For half a second, my brain tried to make the situation normal. I knew this woman. She’d been part of my care team since I’d been brought into the hospital. She had checked my vitals, changed dressings, helped with medication and watched me argue with physical therapists.

Then I saw the syringe.

“Check my wife.”

“I will. I need to give you this first.”

“No.”

She stepped closer.

That was her mistake.

I couldn’t chase her. I couldn’t fight her. I could barely stand without someone beside me.

But I could still use my hands.

When she reached toward the IV port, I caught her wrist with both of mine and pulled it against the bed rail.

My arms shook from the effort.

“Mr. Sun, let go.”

“What is that?”

“Your medication.”

“Then put it down.”

She tried to pull away.

I couldn’t overpower her.

The moment she realized that, she pulled harder.

My shoulder screamed as my grip began slipping.

“Let go!”

She twisted her wrist.

Fifteen Minute’s

The needle moved toward my IV line.

I used my weight instead of my strength, dropping backward onto the mattress while keeping both hands locked around her wrist. The sudden movement pulled her off balance and slammed her forearm against the rail.

The syringe fell onto the bed.

She reached for it.

I slapped it away.

It hit the floor.

Then the door burst open.

Security came through first, followed immediately by medical staff responding to Amber’s alert.

Two officers seized the nurse and pulled her away from me.

“Get off me! I’m his nurse!”

“Amber!” I shouted. “She collapsed!”

The medical team went directly to her bed.

One doctor checked her airway while another called for monitors and blood work.

I tried to stand again.

A nurse pushed me firmly back.

“Mr. Sun, stay down.”

“My wife-”

“She’s breathing.”

“The babies?”

“We’re checking.”

The nurse who had brought our food was still struggling against security.

“I didn’t do anything! That was his medication!”

An officer pointed toward the syringe on the floor. “Nobody touches it.”

“It’s medication!” she shouted. “Check his chart!”

Fifteen Minstes

“What medication?” one of the doctors demanded.

“Penicillin.”

I stopped breathing for a second.

“What?”

The doctor looked at me.

“I’m severely allergic to penicillin.”

He immediately pulled up my chart.

His expression hardened.

“Confirmed. Severe allergy.”

The nurse shook her head. “I didn’t know.”

“You’ve been caring for me for two weeks.”

“I have other patients!”

I barely heard her.

My eyes went to Amber’s tray.

Half eaten.

Then to mine.

I’d eaten too.

I felt tired, but I wasn’t dizzy.

I wasn’t unconscious.

“Check the food.”

D

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 408

The Only Choice

Jason POV

“Check the food.”

The security officer beside me frowned.

“Check Amber’s food,” I repeated, louder this time. “We both ate, but only she collapsed. Test her tray, her water, the utensils–everything.”

For one brief second, the nurse stopped struggling.

That was enough.

Security immediately secured both trays, glasses and utensils as evidence while the medical team continued working around Amber. Then the sound of the fetal monitor changed, and every doctor near her reacted at once.

“Find Baby B.”

My stomach dropped.

The obstetrician moved the monitor across Amber’s abdomen while another doctor checked the readings. Their expressions were enough to make panic rise in my throat.

“What’s happening?”

The obstetrician looked at me. “The babies aren’t moving normally.”

“They were moving this morning.”

“I know. We still have cardiac activity, but both babies have stopped showing expected movement, and their heart–rate patterns are becoming concerning.”

“Then wake Amber up.”

“We’re trying to determine what she ingested.”

“Reverse it.”

“We may not have time.”

A member of the medical team entered with preliminary toxicology information. The obstetrician read it quickly before looking back at me. «

“The remaining portion of Amber’s meal has tested positive for a very powerful sedative.”

“Then that’s why the babies aren’t moving,”

The Only Choice

+15 Bor

“No.” Her answer came carefully. “The sedative cati affect fetal activity, but what we’re seein is more severe than we would expect from that substance alone. We believe Amber was exposed to another drug, toxin or chemical agent as well, something capable of crossing the placenta and affecting the babies directly.”

I looked at Amber lying motionless on the bed. “What did they give her?”

“We don’t know yet. Toxicology is working on identifying it.”

“How long can you wait?”

“We can’t.” 1

The doctor moved closer to me. “Amber is almost nine months pregnant with twins. At this point, delivery is safer than continuing to expose the babies to whatever is circulating through her system. Their heart–rate patterns are becoming unstable.”

“Will taking them out save them?”

The doctor hesitated, and that hesitation scared me more than anything else she’d said.

“We’re going to do everything we can, but I can’t promise you they’ll be okay. Once they’re delivered, however, the neonatal team can treat each baby independently instead of waiting for Amber’s body to metabolize an unknown substance.”

My eyes returned to Amber. She couldn’t ask questions. She couldn’t argue with them or demand another option. She couldn’t make the decision herself.

The obstetrician seemed to understand exactly where my thoughts had gone. “Mr. Sun, Amber is unconscious. This is an emergency, and we need consent for an immediate cesarean delivery.

“You need me to decide?” T

“Yes.”

I looked at my wife, but there was nothing to decide.

I knew Amber.

If there was even a chance that getting the twins out would protect them, she would already be demanding to know why the doctors were still standing around talking to me.

She would choose our children.

Every single time.

“Do it.”

The Only &

The doctor nodded. “Mr. Sun, I need you to clearly confirm that you consent-”

“I consent to the C–section. Get them out.”

My voice broke, but I forced myself to continue. “Do whatever you have to do to save Amber and our babies.”

“We’re going to do everything possible for all three of them.”

“Then go.”

The room erupted into controlled movement. The obstetrician called the operating room while someone else summoned the neonatal team. Nurses transferred Amber onto portable monitoring and began preparing her bed for immediate transport.

I tried to stand again when they released the brakes.

My legs folded almost instantly.

A nurse caught me beneath the arm before I could hit the floor and pushed me back onto the mattress. “Mr. Sun, you cannot walk.”

“That’s my wife.”

“I know.”

“They’re taking my children.”

“And you just made the decision that gives them the best chance.”

I hated hearing it. I hated knowing she was right even more.

As Amber’s bed passed mine, I reached out and caught her fingers. Her hand was warm but completely limp in mine.

“Amber.”

She didn’t move.

I squeezed her hand. “I made the decision you’d make. The babies need you, but if you can’t wake up yet, I’ll do this part for you.”

The obstetrician allowed me only a few seconds before quietly saying, “We have to go.”

Amber’s fingers slipped from mine as they wheeled her into the corridor.

Then I heard Grandpa Asher’s voice.

“What happened?”

He had arrived with Grandpa and Grandma Sun, and all three of them stopped in the middle of the corridor when they saw Amber unconscious on the hospital bed, surrounded by doctors moving rapidly toward the emergency surgical wing.

Grandma Sun went white. “Amber?”

Grandpa Asher immediately moved toward the bed. “What happened to my granddaughter?”

Security stopped him before he could interfere with the medical team, and his expression turned murderous until Grandma Sun saw me through the open doorway.

“Jason!”

Grandpa Sun looked from Amber to the doctors and then directly at me. “What happened?”

“Someone poisoned her.”

The words stopped all three of them.

Grandpa Asher stared at me. “What?”

“Her food was drugged. They found a powerful sedative, but the doctors think there was something else too. Something that’s affecting the twins.”

Grandma Sun covered her mouth while Grandpa Asher looked toward Amber’s stomach. “The babies?”

“They’ve stopped moving normally, and their heart rates are becoming unstable. The doctors are taking them out now.”

“Now?” Grandma Sun whispered.

“Emergency C–section.”

Grandpa Asher stared at Amber’s unconscious face as the medical team continued moving her down the corridor. “Does she know?”

“No.”

That single word nearly destroyed what little control I had left.

“The doctors needed consent because she couldn’t give it.”

Grandpa Sun’s eyes met mine. “You gave it?”

“Yes.”

There was no hesitation in my answer. I had already questioned too many things in the last few minutes. I wouldn’t question this.

“Amber would have agreed. She would want them to get the babies out if that’s what gives them the best chance.”

Grandpa Asher looked at me for several seconds before his face crumpled slightly. He nodded.

“Yes,” he whispered. “She would.”

The operating–room doors opened at the end of the corridor, and the medical team disappeared through them with Amber. 2

P

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 409

While We Wait

Jason POV

Hospitals were never supposed to hold that many people for one family.

Within an hour, the private waiting area outside the surgical wing was full Grandmother and Grandfather were there, while Mr. Asher hadn't moved far from the operating–room doors since Amber disappeared through them. Marcus arrived with Pamela, followed shortly by Noah, Jasmine and Daniel. Mr. Stait came with additional military security, and even the president arrived with a small detail after being informed that someone had managed to poison Amber inside a secured hospital.

Then the children came.

Alice ran toward me the moment she saw me. I barely had time to brace myself before she reached my wheelchair.

"Daddy!"

I caught her carefully and pulled her against me. My body protested immediately, but I didn't care.

"Hey, princess."

"Where's Mommy?"

There it was. The question nobody wanted to answer,

Alex stood behind her, holding Rose's hand. Iris was beside them, already watching the adults closely enough that I knew she understood this wasn't a normal hospital visit.

“She’s with the doctors,” I said.

Alice looked around. “Because of the babies?”

“Yes.”

“Are they coming today?”

My throat tightened. “Yes.”

Her eyes widened. Under any other circumstances, that would have been happy

news.

+16 BS

“Can we see them?”

When the doctors say it’s okay.”

“And Mommy?”

“As soon as we can.”

Alex didn’t ask the easy questions.

“Is she okay?”

I looked at him. He knew. Maybe not everything, but enough to understand that nobody gathered this many people because everything was fine.

“The doctors are taking care of her.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

Of course it wasn’t.

I reached for his hand. “Mommy is very sick right now. Someone put something in her food, and the doctors are helping her and the babies.”

His fingers tightened around mine.

“Someone hurt her?”

“Yes.”

“On purpose?”

I hesitated, and that answered him.

Alex looked down. Alice had gone very quiet against my chest.

“The doctors found it quickly,” I told them. “Mommy pressed the emergency button before she fell asleep, and now there are a lot of people helping her.”

“She fell asleep?” Rose asked.

“Yes.”

“Can they wake her up?”

“They’re trying.”

Iris looked toward the operating room doors. “And the twins?”

“They’re being born.”

Her face changed.

I couldn’t tell them more than that because I didn’t know more than that.

Grandmother came over and gently took Alice from me when she noticed how pale I’d become. My body had already reached its limit, and my doctor had made it very clear that sitting in a wheelchair outside the surgical wing was the maximum compromise he was willing to make.

I hated the chair, but I hated being alone in that hospital room more.

So I stayed.

The waiting area settled into a strange silence despite being crowded. Pamela sat with the children. Marcus paced until Grandmother threatened to make him sit down. Jasmine had one arm still recovering from the gunshot and looked ready to personally interrogate half the hospital. Noah stayed near her, while Daniel spoke quietly with one of the doctors whenever someone came through the doors.

The president stood with Mr. Stait and Grandfather, speaking in voices too low for the children to hear.

Then I saw Emory near the entrance, speaking with hospital security.

“Emory.”

He looked over.

Mr. Stait followed his gaze toward me, said something to him, and Emory immediately crossed the waiting area.

He crouched beside my wheelchair.

“What do you need?”

“The compounds.”

He understood immediately

“The hospital’s toxicology department is already running everything.”

“I know. I want you looking at it too”

His eyebrows rose slightly.

“Personally.”

“Jason-”

“You made the medicine that helped me when I was poisoned.”

That stopped him.

I remembered far too much about that experience. The sickness, the weakness, everyone trying to determine what had entered my system and how to stop it before it did permanent damage. Emory hadn’t simply waited for someone else to solve it He had studied what was in my body and helped create the medicine that pulled me back from the edge.

Now Amber needed the same thing.

“The doctors said the sedative they found in her food isn’t enough to explain what’s happening to the babies,” I said. “They think there’s another agent in her system. I need you to find it.”

Emory’s expression softened slightly. “Jason, they’re already-”

“I don’t care how many people are already working on it.

A faint, tired smile touched his mouth.

“You know, Amber said almost exactly the same thing when you were poisoned.”

I stared at him.

He lifted one shoulder. “Actually, she was worse.”

+15 B500S

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 410

While We Wait 2

Jason POV

Despite everything, a breath that was almost a laugh escaped me.

“That sounds right.”

“She stood over me asking how long every test would take, why it couldn’t be done faster and whether I needed more equipment. Then she started offering to buy equipment.”

“Also sounds right.”

“At one point, I’m fairly certain she offered to buy the laboratory.”

I closed my eyes briefly.

Of course she had.

Emory’s smile disappeared as quickly as it had come.

“I’ll look at it myself.”

“Thank you.”

“I’ll need access to her blood work, the food samples and whatever they recovered from the syringe.”

“Mr. Stait has them.”

“I know. I work for him, remember?”

I looked toward Mr. Stait.

He was already watching us.

Emory followed my gaze and added, “And before you start ordering me to break six protocols, I’ll talk to him.”

“I’m not asking you to break protocols.”

“Amber said that too.”

I almost smiled again.

Almost.

Then I looked toward the operating–room doors.

Find out what they gave her.”

Emory became serious.

“I will.”

“And if you identify it, don’t just tell me the name. Find out how to counteract it.”

“That’s the plan.”

“The twins were exposed too.”

“I know.”

His voice was quieter now.

“I need something they can use on Amber and, if necessary, something the neonatal doctors can use on the babies.”

Emory nodded slowly. “Their bodies won’t process medication the same way Amber’s will. If the compound crossed the placenta, we’ll need to know the babies‘ exposure levels after delivery before anyone can determine treatment. But identifying the agent gives the doctors somewhere to start.”

“Then start there.”

“I will.”

Mr. Stait approached us before Emory could stand.

“I heard enough.”

I looked up at him.

Mr. Stait turned toward Emory. “Work directly with hospital toxicology. Take whatever samples you need within evidence protocols. I’ll authorize access.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And keep the surgical and neonatal teams updated in real time. If you identify anything useful, they hear it before I do.”

Emory nodded. “Understood.”

“Thank you, Mr. Stait,” I said

He gave me a brief nod before looking toward the surgical wing.

The nurse’s background is already being investigated. We’re reviewing her employment records, credentials, communications, finances and every access point she used while assigned to this floor. We’re also reconstructing the food chain from the kitchen to your room.”

“How did she pass security?”

“We don’t know yet.“!

“She cared for me for two weeks.”

“I know.”

“Then either she was planted before I got here, someone recruited her after I arrived, or she isn’t who her records say she is.‘

“Those are among the possibilities we’re checking.”

“And who is she working for?”

Mr. Stait’s expression hardened.

“We’ll find out.”

“Don’t assume Mr. White.”

His eyes narrowed slightly.

“He’s an obvious possibility,” I continued, “but Amber has exposed too many people. The Beckers and Vinnys are dismantled, the Vincent operations are collapsing, and the mine records connect people across multiple families and countries. There are plenty of people who might want her silent.”

“I agree.”

That was all I needed.

Mr. Stait wasn’t going to force the evidence toward the easiest suspect.

Emory stood.

“I’ll go to toxicology.”

I caught his arm before he could leave.

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He looked down at me.

“Emory.”

“I know.”

“No. You don’t.”

My voice dropped.

“If there’s something in her body that those doctors don’t recognize, find it.”

For once, he didn’t joke.

“I’ll find it.”

He left with one of Mr. Stait’s officers, heading toward the laboratory.

I watched him disappear down the corridor before turning back toward the operating - room doors.

Alice had climbed into the chair beside Grandmother and was whispering to Rose. Alex sat beside Mr. Asher, unusually still, while Iris held his hand without drawing attention to the fact that she was doing it. Grandfather stood near the president and Mr. Stait. Marcus had finally stopped pacing, although judging by the way his leg bounced, sitting hadn’t actually helped.

Nobody knew what to do.

That was the worst part.

We were surrounded by people who were accustomed to doing things. Marcus could organize half a city before breakfast. Pamela could tear apart financial records until they confessed. Mr. Stait commanded soldiers. The president could mobilize government agencies. Amber's unit had gone into places most people wouldn't willingly approach.

And none of us could open those doors.

Then Alice slipped away from Grandmother and came back to me. She leaned against my wheelchair and rested her head against my arm.

"Daddy?"

"Yeah?"

"When the babies come out, Mommy will wake up too, right?"

Every conversation in the waiting area seemed to quiet without anyone visibly reacting.

I looked down at my daughter.

I wanted to promise her. I wanted to tell her that Amber was impossible to keep down, that her mother had survived too much to lose to something hidden in a hospital meal.

But I'd spent too much of my childhood being told things adults wanted me to believe.

So I kissed Alice's forehead.

"The doctors are doing everything they can.

She thought about that before nodding and carefully climbing onto the edge of my lap.

I wrapped one arm around her.

Then the doors opened.

Every person in the waiting area stood.

Or tried to.

My hands locked around the arms of my wheelchair as the obstetrician stepped into the corridor.

There was blood on her surgical gown.

My heart stopped.

crowded waiting room until she found me.

voice work the first time.

oward me.

oved. Nobody breathed

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I had spent the last hour asking Mr. Stait who had gotten close enough to poison my wife, demanding that Emory identify substances I couldn't even name and trying to understand how someone had managed to turn a hospital room into another attack.

Now none of those answers mattered.

There was only one left that I needed.

"Just, please," I said, staring at the doctor. "Tell me they're alive."

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 411

Both

Jason POV

The doctor stopped in front oaff me, and for one terrible second, she said nothing. Alice was still tucked against my side, Grandmother had risen from her chair, Grandfather stood beside her, and Mr. Asher had moved so quickly that he was almost directly behind the doctor. Marcus, Pamela, the president, Mr. Stait and everyone else in the waiting area had gone silent.

I didn't give the doctor time to speak. "Amber? How is my wife?"

“Amber is stable.”

I closed my eyes for half a second, trying to make that one word enough. Stable didn’t mean awake, and it certainly didn’t mean fine, but it meant alive. Right then, I would take it.

“Is she awake?”

“No. We believe the substances she was exposed to are still affecting her. The sedative concentration in her system was significant, and we’re still looking for the second agent we believe contributed to the fetal distress.”

I looked toward the doors behind her. “Can I see her?”

“Not yet. She’s still in postoperative recovery, and there’s something else you need to know.” The doctor’s expression became more serious. “We had to place Amber on a ventilator. She’s currently unable to breathe adequately on her own.”

For several seconds, I stared at her because the words didn’t make sense. She had just told me Amber was stable, and somehow my brain couldn’t reconcile that with a machine having to breathe for her. My fingers closed around the arms of the wheelchair hard enough that my knuckles hurt.

“No. You just said she’s stable.”

“She is stable.”

“Then why is a machine breathing for her?”

My voice rose enough that Alice flinched against me. That tiny movement cut through my panic immediately, and I looked down at her. “Sorry, princess.”

Grandmother came over and gently took Alice from my lap. She went reluctantly, watching me over Grandmother’s shoulder, and I waited until she was several steps away before turning back to the doctor.

“Tell me exactly what you mean.”

“Amber isn’t maintaining sufficient spontaneous respiration. The ventilator is supporting her breathing and keeping her oxygen levels where they need to be.”

Amber couldn’t breathe.

That was the only part my mind seemed capable of keeping.

My wife couldn’t breathe.

I tried to stand before I even realized what I was doing. One second I was in the wheelchair and the next my hands were pushing against the arms, trying to force my useless legs beneath me.

“Jason.”

Marcus reached me first. My knees folded almost immediately, and he caught me beneath one arm while Grandfather caught the other before I could hit the floor.

“Let me go. I need to see her.”

“Jason, sit down,” Marcus said.

“Move.”

“You can’t stand.”

“I don’t care!” The words tore out of me louder than I intended. “She’s back there hooked to a machine

because she can’t breathe, and you’re telling me to sit down? I need to get to her.”

My body betrayed me again. My knees gave completely, and Marcus and Grandfather had no choice but to lower me back into the wheelchair.

I hated the chair in that moment. I hated my legs, the weakness left behind by everything that had happened to me, and the closed doors between Amber and me. For weeks, she had sat beside my hospital bed while I couldn’t stand, couldn’t walk and sometimes couldn’t remember what had happened. She had ordered another bed placed in my room because she refused to recover anywhere else.

Now Amber couldn’t even breathe on her own, and I couldn’t cross a corridor to reach her.

I pressed both hands against my face and tried to get myself under control. Somewhere nearby, Grandmother was crying quietly. Alice was asking Iris something, and people were moving around us, but all I could see was Amber laughing in our hospital room that morning, Amber threatening to divorce me because I’d told her to eat, Amber reaching for her water and then saying my name before collapsing.

Marcus put a hand on my shoulder. This time, I didn’t push him away.

“She pressed that button,” I whispered. “She knew something was wrong, and she still found that button.”

The nurse had been coming toward me with the syringe. Amber had barely been able to move, but she’d used whatever strength she had left to call for help.

“She saved me.”

And now she was the one behind those doors.

I looked at the doctor and finally forced myself to ask the question everyone else seemed afraid to say aloud. “Is she dying?”

“No.” The doctor’s answer came immediately.

“Don’t lie to me because my children are standing here.”

“I’m not lying to you. Amber is critically ill, but she is stable with ventilatory support. Those aren’t contradictory statements. The ventilator is doing what we need it to do while her body clears the

substances and while we identify the second agent.”

“Can she breathe at all?”

“She’s making some respiratory effort, but not enough to safely sustain her without assistance.”

“Could she stop completely?”

The doctor paused. “That’s why she’s on the ventilator. We’re not going to wait for her oxygen levels to fall before supporting her.”

I looked away as my stomach turned. I wanted to break something. I wanted to find the nurse. I wanted Mr. Stait to put every person who had touched that food in front of me and let me ask the questions myself, but

none of that would make Amber breathe.

“Do you think she’ll come off it?”

“Yes. Based on what we know right now, we have reason to believe the respiratory suppression is drug induced and reversible. Her oxygenation is being maintained, her cardiac function is stable, and we’re monitoring her continuously.”

“When?”

“I can’t give you a timeline until we identify everything she was given.”

“So it could be hours. Days.”

“It’s possible.”

I swallowed. “But you expect her to breathe again.”

“That is what we’re working toward.”

I held onto those words. Not hoping for it, not preparing us for the worst. Working toward it.

“When can I see her?”

“As soon as critical care finishes settling her after surgery.”

“I don’t care what she looks like,” I told her. “I don’t care about the tubes or machines. Don’t make me wait because you think seeing her like that will upset me.”

“We won’t.”

“I want to be there.”

“You will be.”

“And when you start taking her off the ventilator, I want to know.”

“We’ll tell you.”

“I want to know everything.”

“You will.”

inally nodded, but the doctor still hadn’t finished.

“There’s something else you should know about the surgery. Because we didn’t know what drugs Amber had been exposed to, we avoided giving her additional general anesthetic.”

I stared at her. “You operated on her without putting her under?”

“She was already deeply unconscious. Introducing general anesthesia without knowing what it might interact with could have worsened her respiratory suppression, caused cardiovascular instability or created another unpredictable reaction. We determined that adding another powerful drug presented the greater danger.”

My stomach turned again. “Could she feel it?”

“We saw no clinical indication that she regained awareness during the procedure.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

The doctor didn't look away. "We can't know with absolute certainty until Amber wakes and tells us what, if anything, she remembers."

I closed my eyes. I understood why they'd done it. Intellectually, every word made sense. They didn't know what poison was inside her, and giving her more medication could have killed her. Emotion didn't care about logic. All I could think about was Amber lying on an operating table, unable to tell anyone if she was hurting.

"When she wakes," the doctor continued, "we'll assess her immediately. As soon as toxicology gives us a clearer picture of what's safe, we'll manage her postoperative pain."

"When she wakes," I repeated quietly.

"Yes."

I forced myself to breathe and held onto the certainty in her answer before finally asking about our children.

"The babies?"

The doctor's expression softened. "Your babies are out of danger.

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The entire waiting area seemed to exhale with me. Grandmother began crying harder, Grandfather wrapped an arm around her, and Mr. Asher closed his eyes as his shoulders dropped for the first time since Amber had disappeared through those doors.

"Both?" I asked.

"Both. They're stable and doing very well. Their heart rates normalized after delivery, their oxygen levels are good, and we're not currently seeing signs of continued distress."

"Did whatever was in Amber's system hurt them?"

"At the moment, we don't see evidence of lasting injury. Because we still don't know exactly what Amber was exposed to, both babies will remain under continuous surveillance. We want to watch for delayed effects."

"Whatever they need."

"They'll remain in the neonatal unit as a precaution."

"Good."

I didn’t care how many doctors they assigned to them or how many machines surrounded them. If watching them every second kept them safe until we knew exactly what had happened to Amber, they could stay under surveillance as long as necessary.

The doctor’s expression softened further. “Would you like to meet your sons?”

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 412

Jons

Jason POV

I stared at her. “Sons?”

Alice’s head snapped up from Grandmother’s arms. “Boys?”

The doctor nodded. “Two boys.”

Grandmother laughed through her tears, and I sat there trying to absorb the fact that Amber and I had two sons. The relief was almost painful, but even then my thoughts immediately returned to her.

“Can Amber see them?”

“Not yet.”

“When she wakes up, I want them brought to her as soon as it’s medically safe.”

“We’ll do our best.”

Part of me didn’t want to leave the hallway. Amber was somewhere behind those doors, unconscious with a machine forcing air into her lungs, and every instinct I had screamed at me to stay as close to her as possible.

The doctor seemed to understand. “She’s being monitored continuously. The neonatal unit isn’t far, and we’ll send someone for you immediately if anything changes.”

“Immediately.”

“Immediately.”

Only then did I nod. “Okay. I want to see them.”

“Me too.”

I looked down and found Alex standing closer to my wheelchair He hadn’t said much since arriving, and now that I really looked at him, I realized why. His face was pale, his shoulders were rigid, and his hands were clenched tightly at his sides. He kept looking toward the surgical doors and then back at me as though he expected someone to come through them with more bad news.

The girls were frightened, but they were coping. Alice asked questions whenever she didn’t understand something, Rose stayed close to the people who made her feel safe, and Iris had naturally fallen into watching over both of them..

Alex wasn’t coping.

He looked more anxious than I felt, and considering I’d just been told a machine was breathing for my wife,

that was saying something.

“Can I go with you?” he asked quietly.

I looked at the doctor.

She glanced toward one of the neonatal nurses. “If he follows the hygiene instructions and stays with you,

we can allow it.”

I held my hand out to him. “Come on.”

Alex grabbed it immediately.

“That’s not fair!” Alice protested from Grandmother’s arms. “If Alex gets to see the babies, I want to see them too!”

Rose nodded. “Me too.”

Before I could answer, Iris stepped between them with the patient expression of someone who had apparently decided she was responsible for solving this particular family crisis.

“It’s more than fair.”

Alice stared at her. “How?”

“Because Alex has been the only boy in this family forever, and now there are two more boys. He should get

to meet them.”

Alex frowned. “That doesn’t make sense.”

“It makes perfect sense.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Alice agreed.

Iris sighed before changing tactics. “Besides, we can wait for Mom to wake up. Then we can meet the babies with her.”

That stopped them.

Rose looked toward the surgical doors. “Mommy gets to go too?”

“Exactly.”

Alice considered it for several seconds before nodding. “Okay. But Alex can’t hold both of them before us.’

“I wasn’t going to.”

“You might.”

“I won’t.”

“Promise.”

“I promise.”

For a few seconds, they sounded like normal children again, and I hadn’t realized how badly I needed to hear

that.

Because I couldn’t walk safely, a nurse pushed my wheelchair while Alex stayed beside me. Before we entered the neonatal unit, I looked back toward the doctor.

“If anything changes with Amber, come get me. Don’t wait.”

“We won’t

Only then did I let the nurse take me away from the doors.

The neonatal unit was quiet, filled with the soft hum of machines and the regular beeping of monitors. Alex washed his hands with almost obsessive care after the nurse showed him how, scrubbing between every finger and nearly to his elbows before looking at her suspiciously.

“Again?”

“Once is enough.”

“Are you sure?”

I looked at him and realized anxiety apparently made both of us equally irritating.

Then the nurse led us toward two bassinets.

“There they are.

...I stared through the clear sides and forgot what I had been about to say.

They were tiny, but not frighteningly so. Amber had carried them almost nine months, and it showed. They were smaller because there were two of them, but they looked whole and perfect. One wore a knitted cap and had his face scrunched as though being born had personally offended him, while the other was calmer, one tiny fist tucked beside his cheek.

“Those are ours?” I asked.

The nurse laughed softly. “They are.”

“Both boys?” Alex asked.

“Both.”

Something in his expression finally loosened.

“Brothers,” he whispered.

“Your brothers.”

He stared at them before looking at me. “They’re really okay?”

“The doctor says they are.”

“But they’re staying here?”

“So the doctors can watch them.”

Alex nodded, apparently satisfied with that answer.

After sanitizing my hands, I reached toward the first baby and offered one finger. His tiny hand opened and curled around the tip, and the feeling that went through me had nothing to do with my injuries.

“Hey,” I whispered. “I’m your dad.”

Alex inove closer “He’s really small.”

“So were you once.”

“I wasn’t that small.”

“You absolutely were.”

“You didn’t know me when I was born.”

“Details.”

That earned me the smallest smile.

The second baby shifted, and both Alex and I immediately looked at the nurse.

“He’s okay,” she said before either of us could ask.

“Check him,” I said.

Alex nodded seriously. “Check him.”

The nurse looked between us as though reconsidering whether allowing both Sun men into the neonatal unit had been wise, but she checked anyway.

“Heart rate is good. Oxygen is good. He’s doing exactly what he’s supposed to do.”

“Healthy?” I asked.

“Right now, you have two healthy baby boys. We’re monitoring them because of the exposure, not because they’re showing signs of illness.”

Healthy baby boys.

I wished Amber could hear that.

Alex carefully offered his finger to his brother after the nurse gave him permission. The baby’s hand closed around it, and Alex froze.

“He touched me.”

“I saw.”

“He grabbed me.”

“I also saw that.”

A real smile finally appeared on his face. “Hi. I’m Alex. I’m your big brother.”

I looked away for a moment because apparently there was a limit to how much one person could take in a single day.

A second nurse approached with a tablet. “Mr. Sun, I need some information for their records. Names?”

I opened my mouth and stopped.

Amber and I had discussed names endlessly without ever actually settling on anything. We’d suggested them, rejected them and argued over them, while Alice had offered several names belonging mostly to animated princes and Iris had threatened to name one of the babies herself if we took too long. 1

“We haven’t named them.”.

“That’s fine. We can use temporary identifiers.”

“Do that.”

“Baby A Sun and Baby B Sun for now.”

“For now,” I agreed. “We’ll name them when Amber wakes up.

The nurse’s expression softened. “If that’s what you want.”

“It is.”

I wasn’t naming our sons while their mother lay unconscious with a machine breathing for her. Amber had carried them for almost nine months, argued with me about names, nursery designs, security systems, schools they wouldn’t attend for years and whether two unborn babies genuinely required that many blankets. Their names belonged to both of us.

Alex looked at the cards attached to the bassinets. “Baby A and Baby B are terrible names.”

“They are.”

“Mom won’t like them.”

“Definitely not.”

One of the babies yawned, and Alex immediately stared at him. “Did you see that?”

“I saw it.”

“Can we stay?”

“For a little while.”

So we did. For several minutes, I sat beside my sons while Alex stood between their bassinets, watching every tiny movement as though he’d been assigned the most important guard duty of his life.

Eventually my mind returned to Amber. I couldn’t stop thinking about the tube, the ventilator and the doctor’s explanation that she couldn’t sustain her own breathing. Every effortless breath I took suddenly felt wrong when somewhere nearby a machine had to take those breaths for her.

“I want to go back to your mom.”

Alex nodded immediately. “Me too.”

The nurse had just begun turning my wheelchair toward the exit when the neonatal-unit doors opened hard enough to make everyone look up.

Emory came running through them with his lab coat open and gloves shoved into one pocket. He was breathing hard enough that I knew he’d run directly from the hospital laboratory.

“Jason!”

My hands tightened around the wheelchair. “What happened?”

Emory stopped in front of me, catching his breath. “I found the second compound.”

“What did they give her?”

“The food contained the strong sedative we already identified, but that wasn’t the only thing Amber was exposed to.” His expression turned grim before he finally gave me the answer, “Botulinum toxin.”

For a moment, I simply stared at him. Then the doctor’s words came rushing back the ventilator, the weakness of Amber’s respiratory effort, the machine doing the work her body couldn’t.

“The ventilator,” I said.

Emory nodded. “The sedative may be contributing to her unconsciousness, but the botulinum toxin explains the respiratory paralysis. We need to get back to her doctors now.”

My stomach dropped as I grabbed the wheel of my chair. Knowing the name of what had been done to Amber didn’t make the fear disappear, but it gave us something we hadn’t had before: a target.

“Then move,” I said. “If you know what’s stealing her breath, I need you to tell them how to give it back.”

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 413

Blood and family

Jason POV

The moment Emory said botulinum toxin, the neonatal unit stopped existing for me. I looked at Alex, who had clearly heard the words but, judging by his expression, didn’t understand what they meant. I was grateful for that. He had already carried enough fear for one day.

“Take him back to the family,” I told the nurse. “I need to go with Emory.”

“I can go with you,” Alex said immediately.

“No.” I reached for his hand. “You did something important already. You met your brothers, and now I need you to go tell your sisters they’re okay.”

His

eyes moved toward Emory. “Is Mom worse?”

I hated how quickly he noticed everything, but I wasn’t going to frighten him with information even I didn’t fully understand yet. “No. Emory found out what made her sick. That’s good because now the doctors know what they’re fighting.”

Alex studied me for another second before nodding. “I’ll tell Alice the babies are okay.”

“And tell her they’re ugly.”

Alex looked genuinely horrified. “They’re not ugly.”

“They’re newborns. They’re a little ugly.”

“They’re not.”

There it was. Annoyance. Normal, six–year–old annoyance instead of the frightened silence he’d carried since arriving at the hospital. I squeezed his hand and told him to go, watching until the nurse took him back toward the waiting area before another member of staff pushed my wheelchair after Emory.

By the time we reached critical care, Emory was already speaking with Amber’s doctors. There were more people around than before, including a toxicologist, members of the intensive–care team and one of the physicians who had treated Amber during the emergency delivery.

“Botulinum toxin,” Emory repeated. “The sample is positive. I ran it twice, then had the hospital laboratory repeat the assay independently.”

The critical–care physician looked toward the toxicologist beside him. “That explains the respiratory weakness.”

“And possibly why the fetal distress was more severe than the sedative alone could explain,” Emory added. “The sedative complicated the presentation. Everyone was looking at central

nervous system depression first.”

I hated listening to them discuss Amber as a collection of symptoms, concentrations and neurological effects, but I forced myself to stay quiet long enough to understand. For once, I needed every medical word they were saying because somewhere beyond the glass my wife was unconscious and a machine was breathing for her.

“What do we do?” I asked.

Several heads turned toward me, but Emory was the one who came closer. “We have a plan.”

“Then tell me.”

“The toxin interferes with the nerves that activate voluntary muscles. That’s why Amber isn’t breathing adequately on her own. The ventilator is doing the work her respiratory muscles currently can’t.”

I looked through the glass toward the room where Amber had been transferred. From where I sat, I could see part of her bed, the edge of the ventilator and far too many tubes and machines surrounding her.

“Can you reverse it?”

The toxicologist answered carefully. “We can administer antitoxin to neutralize toxin that hasn’t yet bound to nerve endings. What the antitoxin can’t do is instantly reverse paralysis that’s already developed. Those nerves have to recover, and that takes time.”

“How much time?”

“It varies.”

I looked at Emory because he knew exactly how much hated answers like that.

“Jason, this isn’t going to be like giving her something and watching her wake up five minutes later,” he said. “But now we know what we’re dealing with. That changes everything.”

“But she can recover?”

“Yes.”

“Fully?”

“That is absolutely possible. Right now, the most important thing is preventing further progression and supporting her body while her nerve function recovers.”

I looked through the glass again. “So the ventilator stays.”

“For as long as she needs it,” the critical-care doctor answered. “We won’t attempt to remove ventilatory support until we’re confident she can protect her airway and maintain adequate

breathing on her own.

“And the antitoxin?”

“We’re arranging administration immediately,” Emory said. “We’re also reviewing everything else in her system because of the sedative and the surgery. We need to account for the

complete picture rather than treating one problem in isolation.”

I nodded. “Do it. Whatever you need.”

Emory gave me a tired look. “You’re starting to sound like Amber.”

“Good.”

“That’s not always a compliment.”

“Today it is.”

That almost earned a smile from him, but neither of us could quite manage one. The plan sounded frighteningly simple when reduced to words: administer the antitoxin, support Amber’s breathing, manage the complications from surgery and poisoning, monitor her heart and neurological function, and give her body the time it needed to recover.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 414

Jason POV

I was beginning to hate the word wait. Still, an hour earlier we hadn’t known why Amber couldn’t breathe. Now we did. We had gone from an unknown poison to a specific toxin, from doctors trying to treat symptoms without knowing their source to an antitoxin being prepared and a medical team that finally knew exactly what they were fighting. That mattered, even if it didn’t make the fear disappear.

“Can I see her?”

The critical–care physician nodded. “Briefly. We’re administering treatment and monitoring her very closely, but you can sit with her as long as you don’t interfere with the team.”

“I won’t.”

Emory made a skeptical sound under his breath.

I looked at him. “What?”

“Nothing.”

“You don’t believe me?”

“I’ve met both you and your wife.”

Despite everything, I almost smiled. Then I looked through the glass again and couldn’t. “I need to see her.”

“You will,” Emory said.

Before they took me inside, I wanted to know the children were settled. I asked the nurse to return me to the waiting area for a few minutes while the doctors prepared Amber’s treatment.

The room was still crowded when I returned, and Alice immediately ran toward me. “Alex said they’re boys!”

Apparently that was the most urgent news in her world.

“They are.

“Two?”

“Still two.”

Rose appeared beside her. “Are they cute?”

“No.”

Alex looked personally offerided from across the room. “Dad!”

Alice gasped. “They are cute!”

“You haven’t seen them.”

“Alex said they are.”

“Alex is biased.”

“They’re our brothers!”

“Exactly. Biased.”

For a few minutes, I let them argue with me because listening to them debate whether newborn babies were cute was infinitely better than watching them stare at the critical-care doors waiting for someone to tell them whether their mother could breathe.

It was while Alice was explaining that all babies were automatically cute that I noticed someone was missing.

My eyes moved across the waiting area. Noah stood near Marcus, talking quietly with Mr. Stait. Pamela was with Grandmother, Daniel was nearby, and members of Amber’s unit were scattered throughout the room.

Jasmine wasn’t among them.

I looked again, thinking I had simply missed her in the crowd, but there was no mistaking the absence of someone like Jasmine once I started searching for her.

“Where’s Jasmine?”

Noah stopped speaking.

That reaction was enough to make my stomach tighten.

I looked directly at him. “Where is she?”

“I thought she was with Pamela.”

Pamela immediately shook her head. “Not for the last hour.”

Mr. Stait turned toward us. “What?”

“Jasmine is gone,” I said.

Mr. Stait immediately reached for his phone, but before he could issue an order, I noticed Iris. She had gone strangely still in her chair, and there was something folded in her hand.

“Iris.”

She looked at me. “What?”

“What is that?”

Her fingers tightened around the paper.

“Iris.”

She looked down before answering. “Jasmine gave it to me.”

The conversations around us stopped.

“When?”

“Before she left.”

Noah moved toward her immediately. “She left?”

Iris looked from him to me. “She told me not to give it to anyone unless somebody noticed she was gone.”

Noah muttered something under his breath that Grandmother would normally have corrected immediately, but even she seemed too concerned to care.

I held my hand out. “Give it to me.”

Iris hesitated. “She said-”

“I know what she said.”

Her eyes moved toward Mr. Stait. He didn’t raise his voice or look angry when he spoke.

“Iris, give Jason the letter.”

That was enough. She crossed the room and placed the folded paper in my hand.

It wasn’t long. Of course it wasn’t. Jasmine wasn’t exactly known for lengthy explanations once she had already decided to do something reckless.

I unfolded it and started reading.

Noah, don’t panic.

I stopped immediately and looked at Noah. “The first line says not to panic.”

Noah closed his eyes. “Of course it does.”

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I found something while everyone was dealing with Amber. I checked it twice because I didn't

The nurse didn't get to Amber by herself. Someone gave her information about hospital security, Amber's room, Jason's treatment schedule and when food would be delivered. I found part of the communication trail.

It leads back to the Asher family.

My hand tightened around the paper as I read that sentence again, then once more because I didn't want to understand it incorrectly.

Mr. Asher noticed my expression. "What does it say?"

I looked at him, and for the first time since I'd known him, I saw something close to fear cross his face.

"Jasmine thinks someone in the Asher family was involved."

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Mr. Asher stared at me. "That's impossible."

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Not Mr. Asher. I don't think it's him. Don't let him have a heart attack before I get back.

Despite myself, a breath that almost qualified as a laugh escaped me. Even while disappearing without telling anyone where she was going, Jasmine apparently couldn't resist being Jasmine.

I continued reading.

I don't know yet whether the person ordered the attack or only provided access, but the evidence connects an Asher family channel to the nurse I'm going to verify it before I bring

you a name.

Don't follow me.

That final sentence was underlined twice.

I lowered the letter and found Noah already reaching for his phone.

"I'm going to kill her."

“Get in line,” I muttered.

Mr. Stait took the letter from me and read it quickly. His expression hardened with every line until there was nothing left of the concern on his face except the controlled focus of the man who commanded Amber’s unit.

“When did she leave?” he asked Iris.

“I don’t know. Maybe forty minutes ago.”

“Did she say where she was going?”

Iris shook her head.

“Did anyone go with her?”

“No.”

Noah swore again.

Mr. Asher was still staring at the letter in Mr. Stait’s hands. “Someone from my family?”

Pamela moved closer to him. “We don’t know what Jasmine found yet.”

“She wouldn’t leave Amber’s hospital room for nothing.”

That was the problem.

Jasmine could be reckless. She could be impulsive, and she could decide that a gunshot wound was an inconvenience rather than a legitimate reason to stay in bed. But she loved Amber. If she had walked away from this hospital while Amber was unconscious, on a ventilator and being treated for botulinum toxin, then Jasmine believed whatever she’d found was important enough to leave.

Mr. Stait was already giving orders. “Find her vehicle and pull every hospital camera between this floor and the exits. I want her route from the moment she left this waiting area.”

Noah stepped forward. “I’m going.”

“No.”

“That wasn’t a request.”

“And mine wasn’t a suggestion,” Mr. Stait replied.

Noah looked ready to argue, but I didn't have the energy for another fight.

"Find Jasmine," I told Mr. Stait. "But don't pull security away from Amber or the children."

"I won't."

"And don't confront anyone in the Asher family until we know exactly what she found."

Mr. Asher looked at me.

"I'm not accusing you," I told him.

Bonus

"I know."

"But if Jasmine is right, someone with access to the Asher family helped a woman get close enough to poison Amber."

The expression on Mr. Asher's face changed. The shock remained, but something harder settled beneath it.

"If Jasmine is right," he said quietly, "then whoever did this used my family to try to murder my granddaughter."

Nobody answered because there was nothing to say that would make that sentence any less ugly.

A nurse appeared at the entrance to the waiting area a few moments later. "Mr. Sun?"

I turned immediately.

"Your wife is ready for you."

Everything else lost importance in an instant.

Jasmine was missing. Someone connected to the Asher family might have helped poison Amber. Mr. Stait was mobilizing people to find her while Noah looked one bad decision away from ignoring every order he'd just been given.

But Amber was behind those doors.

I handed the letter back to Mr. Stait. "Find Jasmine, and find out who she was following."

"We will."

The nurse took hold of my wheelchair and began pushing me toward critical care. I looked back once and saw Mr. Asher standing in the middle of the waiting area, surrounded by members of the family whose name Jasmine had just placed at the center of an attempted murder investigation.

Then the doors closed behind me.

For now, Mr. Stait could find Jasmine and follow the evidence she had uncovered. Emory and the doctors could fight the poison still affecting Amber's body.

I had one job left.

I was going to sit beside my wife, hold her hand while the ventilator breathed for her, and stay there until she could take those breaths back for herself.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 415

Blool and family 2

Jason POV

I was beginning to hate the word wait. Still, an hour earlier we hadn't known why Amber couldn't breathe. Now we did. We had gone from an unknown poison to a specific toxin, from doctors trying to treat symptoms without knowing their source to an antitoxin being prepared and a medical team that finally knew exactly what they were fighting. That mattered, even if it didn't make the fear disappear.

"Can I see her?"

The critical-care physician nodded. "Briefly. We're administering treatment and monitoring her very closely, but you can sit with her as long as you don't interfere with the team."

"I won't."

Emory made a skeptical sound under his breath.

I looked at him. "What?"

"Nothing."

“You don’t believe me?”

“I’ve met both you and your wife.” 1

Despite everything, I almost smiled. Then I looked through the glass again and couldn’t. “I need to see her.”

“You will,” Emory said.

Before they took me inside, I wanted to know the children were settled. I asked the nurse to return me to the waiting area for a few minutes while the doctors prepared Amber’s treatment.

The room was still crowded when I returned, and Alice immediately ran toward me. “Alex said they’re boys!”

Apparently that was the most urgent news in her world.

“They are.”

“Two?”

“Still two.”

Rose appeared beside her. “Are they cute?”

“No.”

Alex looked personally offetided from across the room. “Dad!”

Alice gasped. “They are cute!”

“You haven’t seen them.”

“Alex said they are.”

“Alex is biased.”

“They’re our brothers!”

“Exactly. Biased.”

For a few minutes, I let them argue with me because listening to them debate whether newborn babies were cute was infinitely better than watching them stare at the critical-care doors waiting for someone to tell them whether their mother could breathe.

It was while Alice was explaining that all babies were automatically cute that I noticed someone was missing.

My eyes moved across the waiting area. Noah stood near Marcus, talking quietly with Mr. Stait. Pamela was with Grandmother, Daniel was nearby, and members of Amber's unit were scattered throughout the room.

Jasmine wasn't among them.

I looked again, thinking I had simply missed her in the crowd, but there was no mistaking the absence of someone like Jasmine once I started searching for her.

"Where's Jasmine?"

Noah stopped speaking.

That reaction was enough to make my stomach tighten.

I looked directly at him. "Where is she?"

"I thought she was with Pamela."

Pamela immediately shook her head. "Not for the last hour."

Mr. Stait turned toward us. "What?"

"Jasmine is gone," I said.

Mr. Stait immediately reached for his phone, but before he could issue an order, I noticed Iris. She had gone strangely still in her chair, and there was something folded in her hand.

"Iris."

May 2

She looked at me. "What?"

"What is that?"

Her fingers tightened around the paper,

"Iris."

She looked down before answering. "Jasmine gave it to me."

The conversations around us stopped.

“When?”

“Before she left.”

Noah moved toward her immediately. “She left?”

Iris looked from him to me. “She told me not to give it to anyone unless somebody noticed she was gone.”

Noah muttered something under his breath that Grandmother would normally have corrected immediately, but even she seemed too concerned to care.

I held my hand out. “Give it to me.”

Iris hesitated. “She said-”

“I know what she said.”

Her eyes moved toward Mr. Stait. He didn’t raise his voice or look angry when he spoke.

“Iris, give Jason the letter.”

That was enough. She crossed the room and placed the folded paper in my hand

It wasn’t long. Of course it wasn’t. Jasmine wasn’t exactly known for lengthy explanations once she had already decided to do something reckless.

I unfolded it and started reading.

Noah, don’t panic.

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want to accuse someone based on a coincidence. It isn’t a coincidence.

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A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 416

Jasming Bo

Jasmine POV 1

Jasmine POV

Hospitals were designed to keep people alive, which was admirable, but they were also designed to keep people in bed, which became considerably less admirable when the person in that bed happened to be me.

I had been shot in the arm. Not the chest, not the head and nowhere particularly essential to my continued existence. The bullet had gone through, the doctors had cleaned everything, stitched what needed stitching and spent an unreasonable amount of time explaining that blood loss, physical exertion and fresh bullet wounds were apparently reasons to rest.

I had listened carefully.

Listening and obeying were entirely different skills.

Besides, Amber was unconscious because someone had poisoned her, Jason could barely walk, two babies had been delivered by emergency C-section, and a nurse who had spent two weeks inside Jason's hospital room had somehow gotten close enough to try to kill both of them. Under those circumstances, staying in bed'seemed almost irresponsible.

I pulled my jacket on carefully because, despite my commitment to pretending otherwise, my arm hurt like hell. The pain wasn't disabling, though. There was an important distinction between something hurting and something preventing me from functioning, and I had always been very good at recognizing it.

Before leaving, I found Iris sitting in the waiting area with Alice, Alex and Rose. She was slightly apart from the younger children, watching everything with those enormous observant eyes of hers.

Iris bothered me.

Not in a bad way.

She just looked so fragile.

I knew better than to assume that meant she actually was fragile. Iris had survived things that would have destroyed plenty of adults, but surviving and defending yoursel were two different skills. Someone needed to teach that girl what to do when there wasn't a convenient soldier nearby. 1

Actually, I could do that.

Assuming Jason didn't murder me after today.

I slipped the folded letter into her hand.

"What's this?" she whispered.

"Insurance."

Her eyebrows drew together. "Against what?"

"Me making a bad decision."

Iris stared at me.

I reconsidered. "Fine. A worse decision than usual."

"Jasmine."

"Don't open it. It's not for you,"

"Then why are you giving it to me?"

That was a fair question, and I disliked fair questions because they usually required actual explanations.

"Because people underestimate you.

Her expression immediately changed.

I understood that look.

People underestimated me too, although usually only once.

“Who do I give it to?”

“Jason. If Jason isn’t available, Mr. Stait.”

“When?”

“If somebody notices I’m gone.

Her eyes narrowed. “You’re leaving?”

“Technically.”

“You’re in the hospital.”

“Currently.”

“You were shot.”

“People keep bringing that up.

“Because you were shot.”

I sighed and leaned closer. “Iris, I need you to do something for me. Stay with Alice, Alex and Rose. Don’t let any of them leave with someone you don’t personally know. I don’t care if that person says Amber sent

them, Jason sent them, Mr. Asher sent them, or Mr. and Mrs. Sun sent them. You verify it first. Understand?

“1

She nodded slowly.

“Good.”

I looked at her again and decided I was definitely teaching her how to fight. Maybe not today. Possibly tomorrow. Amber would complain if I started with knives, so I’d begin with something reasonable.

Like elbows.

“I also need to teach you how to break someone’s nose.” $

Iris blinked. “What?”

“Later.”

“Jasmine-

~~H~~

I walked away before she could ask anything else.

I wasn’t good with family.

That was something I knew about myself.

I could learn the layout of an unfamiliar building after walking through it once. I could remember faces, exits, weapons, accents and tiny inconsistencies in someone’s story without needing to write anything down. I could sit across from someone who wanted to hurt me and calculate exactly how much danger they represented before they finished their first sentence.

People were easy when there was a mission attached to them.

Family wasn’t.

Family expected things I didn’t understand instinctively. There were invisible rules about affection, reassurance, forgiveness and knowing when someone wanted a hug instead of a solution. Sometimes Alice climbed into my lap and I spent the first thirty seconds wondering what I was supposed to do with my arms. Rose would take my hand without warning. Alex asked questions as though I had all the answers. Iris watched me like she was trying to decide what kind of person she wanted to become.

I didn’t know how to be anyone’s example.

Amber never seemed to care.

She had somehow figured out that the easiest way to make me part of a family was not to ask me whether I wanted to be part of one. She simply included me. There was always a chair for me. Food appeared in front of me. If I disappeared too long, she asked where I’d been. If I was injured, she became irritating. If I did something reckless, she yelled first and worried second, although occasionally she did both simultaneously,

Amber had never demanded that I become softer before I was allowed to belong.

That was probably why I had become so attached to her.

Which was also why whoever poisoned her had made an extremely poor decision

Getting out of the hospital wasn't difficult. That wasn't arrogance; it was an objective assessment. People tended to think security was about locked doors and armed guards when it was mostly about patterns, assumptions and making everyone around you believe you belonged exactly where you were.

Hospitals were particularly easy because nobody wanted to interrupt someone who looked busy.

I changed my posture, tied my hair differently, borrowed a jacket that had been carelessly left where jackets should not be left around me, picked up a folder from an empty counter and used the service corridor.

Nobody stopped me.

Once I was outside, I checked my phone.

There was only one message I cared about.

Jasmine PO

It had arrived from Leo Vargas.

Leo was nineteen, irritating, competent and one of the soldiers who had participated in the island operation. Calling him my friend was technically accurate, although I preferred not to encourage him by saying it aloud.

His message contained seven words.

Asher cousins. Party. Nurse. This is Clue.

I stared at the screen before smiling.

Clue.

Of course.

Leo knew me well enough not to put anything genuinely dangerous into a text message. Instead, he'd given me exactly enough information to tell me he'd found something and exactly enough to guarantee I would come looking for the rest.

The bastard.

I deleted the message and went to dinner.

Leo had chosen a restaurant almost forty minutes from the hospital, which told me two things before I even arrived. First, he didn't want the meeting anywhere near Amber. Second, he thought whatever he'd overheard was serious enough to warrant distance.

I entered through the front because sometimes the least suspicious way into a building was simply the door.

P

Jasmine. Bov

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 417

Jasmine POV 2

Jasmine POV

Leo was already seated in a booth near the back, positioned so he could see the entrance, the main dining room and most of the hallway leading toward the restrooms. At least his field instincts survived social

events.

Unfortunately, so did his face.

Leo had jet-black hair that fell around his forehead with the kind of deliberate carelessness people probably paid ridiculous amounts of money to achieve. With his smooth features, dark eyes and annoyingly perfect proportions, he looked less like someone who had participated in a military operation on an island full of traffickers and more like he'd escaped from a K-pop group between performances.

Then there was the smile.

That smile was his greatest weapon.

Warm, easy and just shy enough to make strangers assume he was harmless, it had probably been responsible for half the information he'd collected without anyone realizing they were being questioned. Women trusted it. Older people wanted to feed him. Security guards tended to relax around him. Even people who should have known better looked at that face and apparently concluded that Leo Vargas couldn't

possibly be dangerous.

It was a complete joke.

I'd watched him fight.

There was absolutely nothing harmless about him.

He could drop a man twice his size before the idiot realized the pretty boy was the threat in the room, then turn around five seconds later and produce that ridiculous smile as though he'd spent the afternoon posing for an album cover instead of breaking someone's wrist.

Leo noticed me looking at him and smiled.

There it was.

That stupid, professionally harmless smile.

I nearly rolled my eyes.

His harmless smile disappeared when he saw my bandaged arm.

"You left the hospital "

"You texted me."

"I expected a phone call."

"Then you should know me better."

"I know you perfectly. That's why I expected this."

We ordered before discussing anything important. Once the waiter left, Leo told me what had happened.

He'd attended a private party where several distant Asher relatives had been present. Three people-two men and a woman-had separated themselves from the main group, and Leo had overheard enough of their conversation to realize it wasn't ordinary family gossip.

One of them had asked what they were going to do if the nurse failed.

"They actually said nurse?" I asked.

"Yes."

“And Amber?”

“By name. Someone else said they had other options if Amber survived.”

My appetite disappeared.

It wasn’t enough to prove who had arranged the attack, and it definitely wasn’t enough to start accusing every distant Asher relative with a bad personality. But it was enough to prove I hadn’t left the hospital chasing a coincidence.

Someone at that party knew about the nurse.

Someone had expected her to succeed.

And someone had already been discussing what came next if Amber survived.

“What else?” I asked.

“They talked about Adrian. Said they needed to keep him and his family under control.”

“How?”

“They didn’t say. But Rose came up.

That made me pay closer attention.

Rose being Adrian’s half sister was widely known. Adrian had been the one determined to save her when he learned what was happening to her, and Amber had insisted on going for him. Later, when Adrian’s grandmother and Rose’s own father refused to take responsibility for her and renounced their parental rights, Rose remained with Amber because it was genuinely the best place for her.

Adrian had never abandoned his little sister. He visited, spent time with her and treated her like family even when the older members of his own family hadn’t wanted the responsibility.

“They said Adrian was the only one in his family who actively spent time with Rose,” Leo continued. “One of them laughed about it, like caring about her made him weak.” a

“Did they threaten Rose?”

“No.”

“Say they intended to use her?”

Janina POV

“No.

“Then we don’t assume they do.”

Leo nodded.

That was one reason I trusted him. He understood the difference between evidence and suspicion.

Then he made his mistake.

“I have a possible location.”

I stopped eating. “Give it to me.”

“No.”

“Lea.”

“I’ll give it to you if you take backup.”

“Fine.”

“Noah.”

I stared at him. “I said backup, not a babysitter.”

“Good, because Noah isn’t a babysitter. He’s one of the few people I’d trust to keep up with you.’

“I can choose my own backup.”

“Then you can find your own address.”

I narrowed my eyes.

Leo didn’t flinch. For someone who had decided I was his little sister, he had become alarmingly comfortable irritating me.

“Why Noah?”

“Because you’re injured, he’s good, and he cares enough about you to make sure you don’t do something suicidal just to prove you can.”

“He doesn’t-”

“He does. I’m not blind.”

I glared at him.

Leo shrugged. “Besides, Noah is kind of my idol.”

That almost made me laugh.

Unlike Leo, who merely looked like he belonged onstage, Noah actually did. When he wasn’t serving, he was a genuine idol and pop star. When he worked with the military, he stayed disguised enough that most people never connected the soldier with the celebrity.

Apparently Leo had.

Before I could tease him about it, my phone vibrated.

Noah.

I silenced it.

Leo looked at me. “Answer him.”.

“No.”

“He knows you’re missing.”

“That’s unfortunate.”

The phone rang again.

I ignored it again.

A few minutes later, someone cleared his throat behind me.

I froze.

Noah stood there in the same military disguise he’d been wearing at the hospital. His expression told me immediately what had happened.

They had noticed I was gone.

He had tracked me.

“You left a letter with Iris,” he said.

“An informative letter.”

“You told us not to follow you.”

“That part was very clear.”

“It was.”

“And yet here you are.”

Noah pulled out the chair beside me. “Here I am.”

Leo looked far too pleased to have his preferred backup appear without even needing to call him.

“I have a location connected to the Asher cousins,” Leo told him. “I wasn’t giving it to Jasmine unless she took you.”

Noah glanced at my injured arm before looking back at Leo. “Good decision.”

I sighed. “I hate both of you.”

Leo finally showed us the address.

I memorized it immediately.

Private residence. Multiple approach routes. Enough neighboring structures for surveillance without getting too close.

“We observe first,” Noah said.

“Obviously,”

“If your arm gets worse, we leave,”

“Fine.”

“And then you go back to the hospital.”

“Don’t ruin the moment.”

Leo smiled.

Lignored him.

Connections had never come easily to me. Amber had somehow become family before I fully understood what that meant. Leo had appointed himself my older brother without

permission, and Noah had apparently tracked me across the city because leaving him a letter saying not to follow me hadn't been persuasive enough.

It was exhausting.

It was also strangely comforting.

I looked at the address one more time.

Someone had tried to kill Amber.

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 418

Now we had somewhere to start looking. 1

P

Jasmine POV Room 355

Jasmine POV

Leo's location turned out to be a hotel, and not just aty tone at baterie I stared at the name above the entrance before looking at Noah "Of course is "When he asked if I mer they sweet this one. I mosk my head. Amber owned enough property fear I had mopped trying to keep track of every building attachitet to her family name.

We crossed the lobby without drawing attention. Wat was will wearing the disguise he used while serving, looking nothing like the famous idol people would recognize stage ception, he handed the check-in while I stood beside him, pretending to be interested in my phone

"We d like a room," he said.

The receptionist smiled as she entered the information. One bed?"

"Yes."

I slowly turned my head toward him, but Noah didn't even look at me. He continued checking us in as though registering us as a couple and requesting one bed was the most natural thing in the world. Fine. I

could kill him later.

While we waited for our key cards, the receptionist beside ours answered the phone. I barely paid attention until she straightened in her chair and said, “Yes, Mr. Asher.”

That got my attention immediately, and judging by the slight change in Noah’s expression, he’d heard it too. There were plenty of distant relatives connected to the Asher family, but only Amber and her grandfather carried the Asher name in the main family. Amber was unconscious in the hospital, and Mr. Asher was there with her, which meant whoever was on that phone wasn’t Mr. Asher.

The receptionist continued typing as she spoke. “Yes, sir. Your reservation is confirmed. Suite 355 is ready.”

I stared at her. She had just announced a guest’s room number loudly enough for anyone standing nearby to hear it. Noah accepted our key cards, and we headed toward the elevators before I leaned closer to him

“Remind me to tell Amber and Mr. Asher their front desk needs retraining.”

“Because someone is impersonating Mr. Asher?”

“That too, but she just announced a guest’s room number in an open lobby. That’s a major privacy violation. Nobody standing nearby should be able to overhear enough of a phone call to know exactly where someone is staying.”

Noah gave me an amused look. “You’re auditing the hotel while investigating attempted murder?”

“It’s Amber’s hotel.”

“And if I’m able to hear that someone is in room 355, so can a stalker, journalist, abusive ex, kidnapper or anyone else standing in the lobby.”

His annusement disappeared.

“Remind me.”

“I will.”

We took the elevator to the third floor and walked casually down the hallway. Room 355 wasn’t difficult to find, but the open door wasn’t what I expected. A man sat on the floor just inside the entrance, leaning drunkenly against the frame with a bottle hanging loosely from one hand. His clothes were disheveled, his eyes barely focused, and judging by his condition, standing without assistance was probably beyond his current abilities.

I recognized him almost immediately. Adrian's younger brother. I'd seen enough family photographs online

to be certain.

Noah looked at me, and I gave the smallest shake of my head. We didn't know why Adrian's brother was there, whether he'd been invited or even whether he had anything to do with the conversation Leo overheard. Being completely drunk in a suspicious hotel suite wasn't proof of anything, so there was no reason to engage him.

Instead, I slipped my hand through Noah's arm as we approached the open doorway. "Wrong floor," I said casually.

"Told you," Noah replied, playing along without hesitation.

We passed the room without stopping. As we did, Noah's hand dropped briefly to his side, and something tiny slipped between his fingers. The microphone landed silently on the carpet and disappeared through the open doorway before either of us looked back.

We continued to the end of the corridor and turned the corner. Only when Room 355 was completely out of sight did I glance at him.

"Show-off."

"You noticed."

"I notice everything."

"You didn't notice me following you to the restaurant."

I glared at him, and Noah smiled as he pulled out his phone. I already knew I was never going to hear the end

of that.

A few seconds later, the microphone connected. We kept walking while the audio played quietly through Noah's phone. At first there was nothing except the television and Adrian's younger brother mumbling drunkenly near the entrance, but then we heard movement deeper inside the suite.

Noah and I looked at each other.

Adrian's brother wasn't alone.

We had come looking for people who might know something about Amber's poisoning. Instead, we'd found someone impersonating Mr. Asher, Adrian's younger brother drunk

inside the supposed Mr. Asher's suite, and at least one other person somewhere deeper inside Room 355.

For once, I was glad Leo had made me bring backup.

A week

A week

Jason POV

I was sitting beside Amber when Noah called.

The ventilator continued its steady rhythm beside me, pushing air into her lungs while the monitors tracked every heartbeat as if numbers could somehow reassure me that my wife was still here. I had been holding her hand for so long that my fingers had gone stiff around hers, but I couldn't make myself let go.

My phone vibrated against the arm of the wheelchair.

Noah.

I answered immediately. "Tell me you found Jasmine."

"I found her."

Some of the tension left my shoulders. "Is she all right?"

"She's Jasmine."

That wasn't an answer, but somehow it was.

"She's with me," Noah continued. "Leo gave her a location connected to the conversation he overheard. It

led us to an Asher hotel."

My attention sharpened. "What did you find?"

"Someone is using Mr. Asher's identity to reserve a suite. Room 355. We found Adrian's younger brother there, completely drunk. He wasn't alone."

I looked toward Amber.

"Adrian?"

“Not Adrian. His younger brother. We didn’t approach him. We planted a microphone and kept moving.

“What did you hear?”

There was a short silence.

“Enough that I think Adrian’s family is involved somehow. I can’t tell you yet whether they’re responsible for ordering the poisoning, helping the people who did it, or being used by someone else, but the connection is getting harder to dismiss.”

That distinction mattered.

After everything we’d uncovered over the last few months, I had learned not to confuse suspicion with proof.

“Don’t confront anyone,” I said. “And don’t let Jasmine do it either.”

Noah actually laughed.

“That’s considerably harder.”

A week

“I know.”

“I’ll keep you updated.”

“And Noah?”

“Yeah?”

“Bring her back in one piece.”

His answer came without hesitation. “I intend to.”

I ended the call and looked at Amber again.

Her face hadn’t changed.

For one irrational second, I wanted her to open her eyes simply because I had new information. Amber always knew what to do with information. She would have taken Noah’s report apart piece by piece, separated evidence from assumption and somehow noticed the detail everyone else had missed.

Instead, the ventilator breathed for her.

I sent one message asking Mr. Asher, Mr. Stait and Emory to come to Amber's room.

They arrived within minutes.

I repeated everything Noah had told me: the hotel, the person impersonating Mr. Asher, Room 355, Adrian's younger brother and the possibility that Adrian's family was connected to the people behind the poisoning.

Mr. Asher's expression hardened immediately.

"Someone used my name in one of my family's hotels?"

"Apparently."

"And the staff accepted it?"

"That's another problem."

Mr. Stait was already making notes. "No confrontation until Noah sends us the recording. We identify every voice first. I want the reservation records, payment method, security footage and access logs preserved before anyone realizes we're interested."

"Agreed," Mr. Asher said. "I'll authorize whatever you need without alerting hotel management beyond whoever is absolutely necessary."

Emory had remained near Amber's monitors, listening while checking something on her chart.

I looked at him. "How long?"

He glanced up.

I didn't need to explain.

"How long until she wakes up?"

Emory's expression softened slightly. "Jason, I don't expect Amber to regain consciousness quiridy Between the sedative exposure, the botulinum toxin, the surgery and everything her body is recovering from, we're probably looking at at least a week."

A week.

The words felt absurd.

"At least?"

“At least,” he repeated. “And I don’t want you treating seven days like a deadline. It could be longer. Her body needs time. The antitoxin prevents more circulating toxin from binding, but it doesn’t reverse the nerve effects that already happened. Right now, the ventilator and supportive care are doing what they’re supposed to do while her body recovers.”

I tightened my grip on Amber’s hand.

“But you still expect her to wake up?”

“We have every reason to keep working toward that. She’s stable, we’re treating the known toxin, and we’re monitoring her closely. But recovery from this isn’t something I can force onto a schedule”

I nodded.

A week.

I could survive a week. If Amber needed longer, I would survive that too.

Mr. Stait’s phone vibrated. He glanced at it, and the irritation that crossed his face was immediate.

“Jasmine?” I asked.

“She’s still with Noah.”

P

gett

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 419

The ones who raised her

The ones who raised her

Jason POV

when Mr. Stait checked his phone again, I finally understood the expression on his face.

I'd seen it before.

Not on him.

On myself.

It was the same sick mixture of anger and fear I'd felt when Amber collapsed. The same helpless fury I'd felt when the doctors took her through doors I couldn't follow her through. It wasn't irritation because Jasmine had ignored orders. It wasn't even the anger of a commander whose injured soldier had disappeared during an active investigation.

It was personal.

I thought back to the waiting room when Iris had handed me Jasmine's letter. Mr. Stait hadn't reacted like a superior discovering that one of his people had gone off mission. He'd immediately started pulling cameras, tracing routes and issuing orders with a kind of controlled urgency I recognized now because I'd spent the last several hours feeling it myself.

He'd been scared.

Noah had just told me Jasmine was safe, yet Mr. Stait was still checking his phone as though he needed constant proof of it.

I looked at him. "She's more than one of your soldiers, isn't she?"

Mr. Stait's eyes lifted from the screen.

Mr. Asher glanced between us.

I continued quietly, "When we realized she was gone, you looked ready to tear the hospital apart looking for her. I thought you were furious because she'd disobeyed you."

"I was furious."

"I know." I looked down at Amber's hand inside mine. "That's not what I'm asking."

For a moment, Mr. Stait said nothing.

Then he put his phone away.

"Jasmine was eight when I adopted her."

I stared at him.

"What?"

“Not formally in the traditional sense,” he explained. “There wasn’t one house, one mother and one father waiting for her. Her situation was complicated. So we did it differently.”

Trac

“We?”

“Me and several members of command”

I had heard Jasmine speak about people from different divisions before, but I’d always assumed they were mentors, instructors or officers who had taken an interest in a gifted child.

Apparently I’d misunderstood completely

“Different areas of command took responsibility for different parts of her life,” Mr. Stait continued. “She stayed with some of us at different times. We made sure she went to school, ate, trained properly and had somewhere safe to sleep. Someone attended meetings when the school called. Someone showed up wisen she was sick. Someone made sure she had birthdays even when she claimed she didn’t care about them.”

Mr. Asher’s expression softened.

“She grew up surrounded by soldiers, intelligence officers, medical personnel and commanders,” Mr. Stait said. “Probably explains half of what’s wrong with her.”

Empry snorted.

Mr. Stait ignored him.

“She wasn’t passed around because nobody wanted her, Jason. She had several homes because all of us did.”

That landed differently.

I thought about Jasmine slipping out of the hospital, leaving Iris a letter because apparently that counted as responsible behavior in her mind. I thought about Mr. Stait’s face when he’d read it and realized she was

gone.

I’d mistaken a father’s fear for a commander’s anger.

“So when you said find Jasmine…”

“I wasn’t looking for one of my soldiers.”

His voice was quieter now.

“I was looking for my kid,”

For several seconds, nobody said anything.

Then Emory looked down at his phone. “For the record, if she comes back with another bullet hole, I’m sedating her.”

Mr. Stait nodded. “I’ll authorize it,”

Despite everything, I almost smiled.

My gaze returned to Amber.

Families were strange things.

Mine had been built out of grandparents who tound me after I’d forgotten who I was, children I chose before

The YRS And raised her

they ever called me Dad, a woman who married me and somehow became the center of everything, and two newborn sons waiting for their mother to wake up.

Jasmine’s had apparently been built out of an entire command structure that looked at one eight-year-old girl and collectively decided she would never be alone again.

Maybe that explained why she had followed Amber into danger so many times.

Jasmine understood family better than she thought she did.

She had simply learned a different definition of it.

“Jason.”

Something in Mr. Stait’s voice made me look back at him.

“What I just told you doesn’t leave this room.”

I frowned.

“Jasmine’s identity is sealed,” he continued. “Her history, the circumstances under which she came into our care, even most of the records from her childhood. None of it can be

shared. Not publicly, not with the rest of the family, not even with people you trust unless Jasmine herself decides otherwise."

Mr. Asher nodded immediately. Emory didn't react at all, which made me suspect none of this was new information to him.

"You have my word," I said.

Mr. Stait studied me for another moment before continuing.

"And there's something else you need to understand. Jasmine isn't her real name."

I stared at him.

"What is?"

"We don't know."

That answer was worse.

Mr. Stait folded his arms. "We found her when she was eight years old during an operation on an abandoned island. She was alone, injured, terrified and surviving however she could. She either couldn't or wouldn't give us a name we could verify."

"So you called her Jasmine?"

"We needed something to put on medical records while we figured out who she was. Several of us were involved in finding her and taking responsibility for her afterward, so we built the name from our initials."

I looked toward the door Jasmine had walked through countless times as though I might somehow see her differently now.

ld been born with.

It was the name given to her by the people who found her.

"Did you ever discover where she came from?"

Mr. Stait's expression changed.

"Not conclusively. But we found evidence on that island, and after everything we've uncovered about the Vincents recently, some of those old pieces make considerably more sense."

A cold feeling settled in my stomach.

“What kind of evidence?”

“Enough to give us reason to believe Jasmine wasn’t abandoned there.” His jaw tightened. “We believe she escaped.”

“Escaped what?”

Mr. Stait looked directly at me.

“One of the Vincent families’ hunts.”

The room seemed to become quieter around us.

I looked at Amber, remembering the two hundred and seventeen sets of remains recovered from her island. Men, women and children released and hunted for entertainment over decades.

Jasmine had been eight.

“You’re saying they hunted her?”

“I’m saying we have reason to believe she was intended to be one of the victims,” Mr. Stait corrected. “We don’t know exactly what happened before we found her, and I won’t turn suspicion into fact just because the pattern fits. Jasmine remembers pieces, not enough to establish the whole story.”

“But she survived.”

Mr. Stait’s expression softened in a way I rarely saw.

“Yes,”

Of course she had.

At eight years old, on an abandoned island, with no one coming that she knew of, Jasmine had survived long enough for a military unit to find her.

Suddenly, an eighteen year-old girl slipping out of a hospital with a bullet wound because someone she loved was in danger seemed less surprising.

Mr. Stait stepped closer to me.

“That’s why her identity stays sealed. If there is anyone still alive who knows who that little girl was before we found her, I don’t want them learning that she survived. Not until we know exactly what we’re dealing with ”

I nodded. “I won’t tell anyone

“Good”

He boked toward Amber.

mine can decide someday whether she wants people to knone winere she came from Umal then, site’s mine because that’s the name her family gave her.”

family.

fot the people who found her.

Not the officers assigned to her case.

Her family.

And somewhere along the way, Amber had become part of that family too.

L

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

Chapter 420

Sapona Ibrettgh my fingers

Slipping through my fingers

Jason POV

Mr. Asher lasted less than five minutes after Mr. Stait finished speaking about Jasmine before deciding he was done waiting.

“If members of my family are involved, I want to know which ones.”

Mr. Stait looked up from his phone. “My people are already investigating.”

“And they’ll continue investigating,” Mr. Asher replied. “But they’re investigating à criminal conspiracy. I’m investigating my family.”

There was enough difference between those two things that Mr. Start didn’t argue.

Mr. Asher stepped into the hallway with his phone already in his hand. I stayed beside Amber, listening to his voice through the partially open door as he started making calls. He didn't begin with accusations. He asked questions about family gatherings, recent conversations, Adrian's relatives and anyone who had suddenly changed plans after Amber was hospitalized.

It didn't take long before the answers became strange.

Mr. Asher returned almost half an hour later, looking older than he had when he left.

"My sister has been contacting members of the family."

I knew immediately who he meant. "Adrian's grandmother?"

He nodded.

Mr. Stait straightened. "What did she tell them?"

"That her branch is leaving the Asher family."

I frowned. "Leaving?"

"Her words, apparently. She told several relatives that she and her descendants no longer want to be considered part of the Asher family. She said they were cutting ties completely."

The timing was impossible to ignore.

Amber had been poisoned. Someone was impersonating Mr. Asher at an Asher hotel. Adrian's younger brother had been found drunk inside that suite, and now Adrian's grandmother had apparently announced that her entire branch wanted nothing more to do with the family.

Mr. Asher looked furious, but beneath the anger there was something else.

Confusion.

"Did she say why?" I asked.

"No. That's the problem. My sister and I have disagreed plenty of times, but you don't erase generations of family through a few phone calls without an explanation."

Stipping thred in my fingers

"Can you reach her?"

“She’s not answering me

Mr. Stait was already typing. “We’ll locate her.”

Mr. Asher nodded before looking down at his phone again. “There’s more.”

Of course there was.

“Adrian is missing.”

I stared at him.

“What do you mean, missing?”

“I mean nobody seems to know where he is.”

That was different.

Adrian wasn’t some distant cousin whose name I barely recognized. He was Amber’s vice president. He had remained involved in Rose’s life even after his father and grandmother refused responsibility for her. He worked with Amber constantly. If he disappeared while members of his family were discussing Amber’s poisoning, that mattered.

“When was anyone last in contact with him?” Mr. Stait asked.

“I’m still establishing that. His phone isn’t connecting. He hasn’t responded to company communications, and according to the people I’ve spoken to, no one in his immediate family will give me a straight answer.”

“Was he supposed to be working today?”

“Yes.”

Mr. Stait stood. “Then we treat his disappearance separately from the poisoning until evidence connects them. I want his last confirmed location, vehicle records, phone activity and security footage.”

Mr. Asher’s jaw tightened. “Find him.”

“We will.”

I looked at Amber.

Everything was branching again.

Every answer opened another door, and behind every door seemed to be another person missing, another lie, another family secret. I wanted to help. I wanted to take Noah's information, Mr. Asher's calls and Adrian's disappearance and force them into a pattern that made sense.

Then Amber's monitor alarmed.

Every thought vanished.

Emory turned before I did.

One second he had been standing near the end of Amber's bed reading something on his tablet. The next,

the tablet was abandoned on the counter and he was beside her.

"Jason, move back."

"What happened?"

A nurse rushed into the room, followed almost immediately by another. Emory's attention moved between Amber, the ventilator and the monitors as the numbers changed too quickly for me to understand.

"Her oxygenation is dropping."

My hands tightened around the wheelchair.

"But she's on the ventilator."

"I know."

That answer terrified me more than anything else could have.

Emory began issuing instructions, and the room filled with people. Respiratory therapy arrived. A critical- care physician followed. Someone adjusted the ventilator while another nurse drew blood. Emory was talking about airway pressures, oxygen levels and the possibility of worsening neuromuscular weakness, but I caught only pieces.

Amber's numbers continued falling.

"Emory."

He didn't look at me.

"Emory!"

“I’m working, Jason.”

The sharpness in his voice stopped me.

Not because I was offended.

Because Emory was scared.

1 had watched that man discuss poison, paralysis and emergency surgery without losing his composure. I’d seen him walk into situations that made everyone else panic and immediately start solving the problem.

Now his movements were still controlled, but his voice had changed.

Mr. Stait put a hand on the back of my wheelchair.

“We need to give them room.”

“No.”

“Jason.”

“I’m not leaving her.”

kinery finally looked at me. “Then stay against the wall and let us work.”

I pushed myself backward.

Mr. Asher moved besides, Whatever he’d just learned about his sister and Adrian disappeared from his face as he watched his granddaughter surrounded by doctors

The alarms kept sounding

“Blood pressure is falling,” someone said.

My stomach dropped.

SAR

Emory moved closer to the head of the bed. “Increase support. I want repeat gases now. Check the tube position again. Get toxicology back on the line and notify ICU attending that she’s deteriorating*

A nurse rushed out.

I stared at Amber’s face,

She looked exactly the same.

That was the worst part.

Her eyes remained closed. Her hand lay motionless against the sheet. There was no visible sign that anything had changed, yet the machines around her were suddenly telling us that her body was losing ground.

I wanted her awake.

I wanted her angry.

I wanted her complaining that everyone was being dramatic while trying to get out of bed against medical

advice.

Instead, the ventilator pushed another breath into her lungs.

Emory and the hospital team worked around her with frightening speed. Medication entered her IV. The ventilator settings changed again. More blood was drawn. A portable imaging machine was brought into the room while the critical-care physician and Emory argued through possibilities faster than I could follow them.

Then Emory said the word I had been trying not to think.

“Critical.”

1 looked at him.

“You said she was stable.”

“She was.”

“Then fix it.”

The words came out harsher than I intended, but Emory didn’t react.

“We’re trying”

Stoppan they fingers

“No. You told me she could recover. You told me she could wake up.”

“And she still can.” He stepped toward me just long enough to force me to look at him. “But right now her condition has changed, and I need you to understand what that means.

Amber is critically ill. The toxin affected the nerves controlling her breathing, she's recovering from major surgery, and her body has been through an enormous physiological stress. We're supporting every system that needs support while we determine exactly why she's deteriorating."

"Is she dying?"

Silence lasted half a second too long.

"Not if we can stop this."

Mr. Asher made a broken sound beside me.

I couldn't.

I couldn't look at him.

I reached through the people surrounding the bed and managed to touch Amber's fingertips.

"You're not doing this," I whispered. "Do you hear me? We have two babies downstairs without names because you haven't approved them yet. Alice is waiting for you. Alex is waiting for you. Iris and Rose are waiting for you."

My throat tightened.

"And I'm still here."

Amber didn't move.

Behind me, Mr. Stait's phone vibrated repeatedly. Somewhere outside that room, people were searching for Adrian. Noah and Jasmine were listening to a microphone inside Room 355. Mr. Asher's sister had cut her branch away from the family, and someone had used Mr. Asher's name while Amber lay poisoned in a hospital bed.

None of it mattered to me in that moment.

There was only Amber.

Emory returned to the bedside when another set of results appeared. He studied them with the critical-care physician, then immediately ordered another change in treatment.

I watched him work.

"Emory."

This time he glanced at me.

“Save her.”

His expression didn’t soften, but something fierce settled into it.

“That’s the plan.”

The hospital team closed around Amber again, and I sat helplessly against the wall while machines breathed for my wife and medications fought to keep her body stable.

For months, Amber had been the person who found everyone else.

She found Rose. She found Iris. She found me beneath the Sum when everyone thought I was gone. She kept reaching into places nobody else wanted to enter and dragging people back into the light.

Now Adrian was missing.

Mr. Asher’s family was fracturing.

And Amber was slipping deeper into danger before she’d even had the chance to hold our sons.

This time, she couldn’t save anyone.

This time, we had to save her.

P