

CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 261

Serena's POV

When the doorbell rang around noon, I knew it was Eleanor before the housekeeper announced her.

"You look terrible," was her greeting as she breezed past me into the living room, pulling a sleek laptop from her bag.

"Good to see you too," I replied dryly, following her.

Eleanor's expression softened momentarily. "Sorry. I've been up for thirty-six hours straight tracking this down, and what I found..." She shook her head. "You need to see this."

She placed the laptop on the coffee table and opened a video file. "I contacted everyone who was on that cruise three years ago. Called in favors, tracked down security footage. This is from the ship's monitoring system."

The screen showed the upper deck of the luxury yacht where I'd attended that fateful charity gala. I recognized my younger self, wearing that emerald green dress I'd loved so much. The footage quality wasn't perfect, but good enough to see that I was standing near the railing, champagne flute in hand.

"Look who keeps hovering around you," Eleanor pointed.

My stomach tightened as I recognized Olivia, circling me like a shark. She'd approach, say something, then retreat, only to return minutes later. The pattern continued for nearly twenty minutes of footage.

"The cameras don't cover the exact spot where you went overboard," Eleanor explained, fast-forwarding slightly. "It's a blind spot. But watch this."

The footage showed Olivia and me walking toward that blind spot. We disappeared from view. Then, remarkably, only Olivia returned – looking around furtively before quickly walking away from the scene.

"Eight minutes later, a crew member notices something in the water and raises the alarm," Eleanor continued, showing me additional footage of the resulting chaos. "But by then, Olivia's already mingling with other guests, acting shocked when someone mentions you're missing."

I felt sick. The woman I'd considered my best friend, whom I'd shared dreams and secrets with, had tried to kill me. The evidence was circumstantial but damning.

"I trusted her completely," I whispered, my voice barely audible. "I would have done anything for her."

Eleanor's hand found mine, squeezing tightly. "I know. That's why she targeted you – your loyalty made you vulnerable."

"And now she's back, trying to use me again to get to Ryan and Blackwood Enterprises." The realization made me angry – a cold, crystalline fury unlike anything I'd felt before.

Eleanor's eyes gleamed with righteous indignation. "Let me confront her. One conversation with me, and she'll be on the first flight out of the country."

"No," I said firmly, surprising even myself with my resolve. "If we confront her without concrete proof, she'll just deny everything. I want her to admit what she did."

"What are you suggesting?" Eleanor asked, eyebrow raised.

"I'm setting a trap," I replied, my mind already formulating a plan. "At Vivian's one-month celebration. Olivia will be there – she's been hinting for an invitation for weeks. After the party, I'll lead her somewhere private and make her confess."

"That's dangerous, Serena," Eleanor warned.

"I'll be careful. We'll have security nearby." My determination grew with every word. "I won't let her walk away from this. Not after what she did."

The days leading up to Vivian's celebration passed in a blur of preparations and planning. I didn't tell Ryan about the footage – not yet. I wanted absolute certainty before bringing him into this. He had enough on his plate with work, and I knew how protective he could be.

The day of the celebration arrived with perfect weather – sunshine streaming through the windows of our home as guests began to arrive. The house was transformed with delicate pink and gold decorations, fresh flowers in every room, and a magnificent cake centerpiece.

Ryan stayed close to my side, his hand resting possessively at the small of my back as we greeted our guests. I felt his eyes on me often, checking if I was getting tired, always ready to step in if I needed a break.

"You've outdone yourself," he murmured against my ear as we surveyed the elegant gathering. "This is beautiful."

"Only the best for our daughter," I smiled, glancing over to where Vivian was being cooed over by Ryan's grandmother.

My smile faltered slightly when I spotted Olivia entering, wearing a dress that cost more than most people's monthly salary, carrying an elaborately wrapped gift. The sight of her made my blood run cold, but I maintained my composure.

“Serena! Ryan!” she exclaimed, approaching us with practiced grace. “What a gorgeous celebration. And this must be for the precious angel.”

She handed me the package – heavy and expensive-feeling. “Just a little something for sweet Vivian.”

“How thoughtful,” I replied, my voice warm while my eyes remained cool. “Thank you for coming, Olivia.”

Throughout the party, I noticed her eyes following Ryan whenever he moved through the room, her laughter too loud when he was nearby, her touches lingering too long when she greeted him. It was so obvious now that I was watching for it.

The celebration went off without a hitch. Vivian, dressed in a custom-made gown that Ryan had specially ordered from Paris, remained surprisingly content throughout, only fussing slightly when passed among too many adoring relatives.

As the evening wound down and guests began to leave, I found my opportunity. Olivia was lingering, clearly hoping for some private time with Ryan.

“Olivia,” I called, approaching her with a champagne flute. “Before you go, there’s something fascinating I wanted to show you.”

Her eyes brightened with interest. “Oh? What is it?”

“I’ve been going through some old recordings recently,” I said casually, keeping my voice light. “Found some interesting footage from that charity cruise three years ago. You remember – the night I fell overboard?”

The change in her expression was subtle but unmistakable – a flicker of alarm quickly masked by curiosity.

“That awful night,” she sighed dramatically. “I still have nightmares about it sometimes, thinking we’d lost you forever.”

“Yes, quite terrible,” I agreed. “The footage is upstairs in the attic study. I’ve been meaning to show someone who was there... get their perspective on what they see.”

Olivia hesitated, but her curiosity – or perhaps fear – won out. “I’d love to see it.”

As we headed toward the stairs, I caught Eleanor’s eye across the room. She gave me a barely perceptible nod, confirmation that everything was in place.

“After you,” I said, gesturing Olivia up the stairs, my heart pounding not with fear, but with determination. The woman who had once tried to end my life was about to face her reckoning.

And I would be the one to deliver it.

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Serena's POV

I led Olivia into the attic study, my heart thumping steadily against my ribs. The room was warm and intimate, with rich mahogany bookshelves lining the walls and a large desk positioned beneath the dormer window. Sunset light filtered through, casting long shadows across the floor.

"Make yourself comfortable," I gestured to the plush leather chair by the desk. "I'll pull up the footage in just a moment."

Olivia glanced around the room with practiced nonchalance, but I caught the slight tremor in her perfectly manicured hands as she set her clutch on the desk. "It's been so long since that night," she said, her voice lilting with false nostalgia. "I can hardly believe you found footage after all this time."

I smiled tightly, inserting the USB drive into my laptop. "Some things are meant to be discovered, no matter how long it takes."

As the computer began to load, I stepped back. "Would you like something to drink? I have a bottle of that Bordeaux you always loved."

Her eyes lit up momentarily. "That would be lovely. Thank you."

"I'll be right back. The files should finish loading by then." I moved toward the door, pausing to look back at her. "Don't start without me."

As I closed the door behind me, I counted silently in my head. One... two... three... By the time I reached twenty, I knew she would make her move.

Instead of heading downstairs, I slipped into the adjacent room where Eleanor waited, eyes fixed on a tablet displaying the live feed from the hidden camera we'd installed in the study.

"She's going for it," Eleanor whispered, passing me the tablet.

On screen, Olivia had leapt from her seat the moment I'd left. She was frantically searching her purse, pulling out an identical USB drive. With quick, practiced movements, she ejected mine from the computer and replaced it with her own.

"Look at her," I murmured, watching as Olivia rapidly typed on my laptop, formatting the drive I'd left behind. "She came prepared."

“Clearly this isn’t her first time destroying evidence,” Eleanor’s voice was tight with anger.

We watched in silence as Olivia completed her task, carefully returning my now-empty USB to exactly where I’d left it. Then she smoothed her dress, fixed her hair, and resumed her seat, the picture of innocence.

“Ready?” I asked Eleanor, who nodded grimly.

“Let her hang herself with her own rope.”

I grabbed a tray with two empty wine glasses and returned to the study, pushing open the door with my hip. “Sorry for the delay. The staff had moved the wine to a different—” I stopped mid-sentence, as if just noticing something was wrong.

Olivia smiled brightly—too brightly. “No problem at all! I’m feeling much better now. My blood sugar was dropping earlier, but I had a candy from my purse.”

I set down the tray and went straight to my computer, plugging in the USB drive. When the “Empty Drive” notification appeared, I looked up slowly, fixing Olivia with a steady gaze.

“You switched the drives.”

Her expression of shock was almost convincing. “What? Serena, what are you talking about?”

“The USB drive. You replaced it with a blank one while I was gone.”

Olivia’s laugh was brittle. “That’s ridiculous! Why would I do such a thing? Maybe the file corrupted, or you grabbed the wrong drive?”

“No, Olivia. I checked it three times before you arrived.” I leaned forward, palms flat on the desk. “What were you so afraid I’d show you? What didn’t you want me to see?”

She stood abruptly, clutching her purse to her chest. “I don’t know what game you’re playing, Serena, but I don’t appreciate being accused of... whatever this is. I think I should leave.”

“Running away again?” Eleanor’s voice cut through the tension as she stepped out from behind the bookshelf where she’d been waiting. She held up her phone, screen facing Olivia. “We recorded everything. Every move you made the moment Serena left the room.”

The color drained from Olivia’s face, but she recovered quickly. “This is absurd. You’re both paranoid.” She turned to me, eyes suddenly wide and vulnerable. “Serena, after everything we’ve been through together? I was devastated when you fell overboard that night. I searched for you for hours!”

Eleanor stepped closer, her voice dangerously soft. “Let’s talk about that night, shall we? How you circled Serena like a vulture for twenty minutes. How you led her to that blind spot on the deck. How only you returned.”

“That’s... that’s not what happened,” Olivia stammered, her composure cracking.

“We have the security footage, Olivia,” I said quietly. “From the ship.”

Eleanor wasn’t finished. “You know what I find interesting? How your career suddenly took off after Serena disappeared. How you used her contacts, her ideas, even wore her designs to events—claiming them as ‘inspirations from your dear lost friend.’”

“That’s not true!” Olivia’s voice rose sharply.

“Everything you have,” Eleanor continued mercilessly, “your career, your connections, your resources—they all came from Serena. She lifted you up, introduced you to everyone who mattered, shared her talents with you.”

Olivia’s carefully constructed facade finally shattered. “Lifted me up?” she spat. “She kept me as her pet project! Her little sidekick who was never allowed to outshine the great Serena Quinn!”

The raw hatred in her voice made me flinch, but I held my ground. “If that’s true, then you have nothing to hide. Give me back the USB drive, Olivia. Let’s watch it together.”

Her hand tightened around her purse. “No. I’m leaving.”

She made a move toward the door, but Eleanor blocked her path. “This is the Blackwood residence. You don’t get to take things that aren’t yours and simply walk away.”

“Your refusal is all the confirmation I need,” I said quietly, pulling out my phone. “I’m calling the police.”

“You wouldn’t dare!” Panic flashed across her face.

“Watch me.” I dialed the number, maintaining eye contact with her. “Hello? Yes, I need to report an attempted destruction of evidence relating to an attempted murder case.”

Olivia lunged forward suddenly, grabbing the USB from her purse and throwing it to the hardwood floor. With a vicious stomp of her heel, she ground it into pieces, a triumphant gleam in her eyes.

“Good luck proving anything now,” she hissed.

I ended my call and smiled calmly. “That was just a decoy, Olivia. Do you really think I’d give you the chance to touch the real evidence?”

Her smile faltered. “What?”

“The original footage is safely backed up in multiple locations,” I explained, watching realization dawn on her face. “I never intended for you to see it today. I wanted to see what you’d do when given the opportunity to destroy evidence.”

Within twenty minutes, two police officers arrived at our home. They reviewed our recording of Olivia’s actions in the study, as well as copies of the ship’s security footage.

As they placed handcuffs around Olivia’s wrists, reading her rights, she finally broke down completely.

“You think you’ve won?” she screamed, mascara streaking down her cheeks. “You always get everything, don’t you? The perfect life, the perfect husband, the perfect baby! I should have pushed you harder that night!”

The officers tightened their grip, escorting her toward the door. Even as they led her away, she continued hurling insults and threats over her shoulder.

“I hope you drown for real next time, Serena! You’re nothing without me! Nothing!”

I watched silently as they guided her into the police car, her once-beautiful face contorted with rage and desperation.

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Serena’s POV

The air in the house felt different after Olivia’s arrest—lighter somehow, as if a long-held tension had finally broken. I sank deeper into the living room sofa, my body drained from the emotional confrontation. Eleanor sat beside me, her protective presence a comfort I’d come to cherish these past months.

“I still can’t believe she hated me enough to...” I couldn’t finish the sentence, the reality of Olivia’s betrayal still too raw.

Eleanor squeezed my hand. “Some people build their entire identity around another person’s shadow. When that person shines too brightly...” She shrugged, her expression grim.

The sudden commotion at the front door startled us both. Heavy footsteps approached—too urgent to be staff.

Ryan burst into the room, his normally composed features tight with concern. His eyes found mine instantly, scanning every inch of me as if searching for injuries. Only when he confirmed I was physically unharmed did his shoulders relax slightly.

"Serena," he breathed, crossing the room in three long strides and kneeling before me. "Why didn't you tell me about this investigation? About Olivia?" His fingers wrapped around mine, his touch almost desperate.

I met his intense gaze, surprised by the raw emotion I found there. "It started as just a suspicion. I needed to confirm it myself before involving anyone else."

"You just gave birth," he said, his voice rougher than usual. "You shouldn't be dealing with attempted murderers while recovering."

A small smile touched my lips. "I wasn't exactly planning a confrontation with my would-be killer when I woke up this morning."

Ryan didn't return my smile. "This isn't a joke, Serena. If something had happened to you..." He left the sentence hanging, but his tightened grip spoke volumes.

Eleanor shifted beside me. "In fairness, she had backup." She gestured to herself with a slight smirk. "And we recorded everything. Olivia never stood a chance."

Ryan ran a hand through his perfectly styled hair, a rare display of agitation. "From now on, anyone who approaches you gets thoroughly vetted first. I don't care if they claim to be your childhood imaginary friend—we check them out."

"That might be a slight overreaction," I began, but Eleanor cut me in.

"Actually, I agree with Ryan on this one," she said firmly. "Today proved you can't be too careful. The woman who tried to kill you once almost walked right back into your life."

I nodded, acknowledging their concern. "It's over now. You should go back to work, Ryan. I know you had important meetings today."

He hesitated, clearly torn between his responsibilities and his desire to stay. Before he could respond, a commotion erupted outside—shouting, thudding sounds, and what sounded like multiple voices arguing.

Ryan was immediately on alert. "Stay here," he commanded, straightening to his full imposing height. "Both of you."

"What's happening?" I started to rise, but Ryan's firm hand on my shoulder kept me seated.

"I'll handle it," he said, his voice shifting into the cold, authoritative tone I recognized from his business dealings. "Stay inside."

I watched as he strode out, every inch the powerful CEO—shoulders squared, jaw set, eyes focused with lethal intensity. Despite everything, I couldn't help but admire the shift in his demeanor, the absolute confidence in his ability to handle whatever threat had appeared at our door.

Eleanor and I exchanged worried glances as we waited. Through the large windows, I caught glimpses of movement in the courtyard—unfamiliar figures being forcibly restrained by our security team.

"Should we call the police?" Eleanor whispered.

I shook my head. "Let's wait. Ryan's security team is better trained than most police forces."

The minutes stretched uncomfortably until Ryan returned, his expression even darker than when he'd left. He loosened his tie with a sharp tug.

"What happened?" I asked, rising despite his earlier instruction to stay seated.

"Tiffany Vergara," he spat the name like poison. "She brought a small army, demanding to know where Kane is."

My blood ran cold. Tiffany—Kane's wife and the daughter of the powerful Vergara family—was as calculating as she was beautiful. I'd met her only twice at social functions, but both times she'd regarded me with barely disguised contempt.

"What did she want?" I asked, though I already suspected the answer.

Ryan's jaw tightened. "She was trying to get to you. Apparently, she thought kidnapping my wife would be sufficient leverage to make me release her husband."

Eleanor cursed under her breath. "First Olivia, now this? What is it with people trying to harm you today?"

"She's desperate," Ryan said. "She knows Kane was involved in something unforgivable. She's trying to protect him—or more likely, the Vergara family name."

I moved closer to Ryan, noticing the tension radiating from his body. "Do you think she knows? About Kane's involvement in my kidnapping?"

"I don't know," he admitted, running a hand over his face. "But I made it clear that Kane isn't going anywhere."

A chill ran through me. "Ryan, what exactly did you do with Kane?"

His eyes met mine, and for a moment, I glimpsed something cold and ruthless in their depths. "He's somewhere secure, facing the consequences of his actions. That's all you need to know for now."

The finality in his tone silenced further questions. Whatever Ryan had done with his treacherous uncle, I sensed it was better not to know the details.

I reached for his hand, surprised by how cold his fingers felt. "You're freezing."

He looked down at our joined hands as if surprised by the contact. "Adrenaline," he murmured. Then, unexpectedly, he pulled me closer, wrapping his arms around me in a fierce embrace.

"Two threats in one day," he whispered against my hair. "I can't lose you again, Serena. Not now. Not when we're finally..."

He didn't finish the thought, but I understood. We were finally finding our way back to each other, rebuilding what had been broken. I leaned into his embrace, allowing myself to draw strength from his solid presence.

"I'm not going anywhere," I promised, my voice muffled against his chest.

Eleanor cleared her throat discreetly. "I should probably check on Vivian," she said, tactfully giving us privacy. "She should be waking from her nap soon."

As she left the room, Ryan pulled back slightly, his hands framing my face. "Promise me you'll be more careful. No more confronting potential murderers without backup."

I smiled despite the seriousness of his request. "I promise. Though in my defense, I did have Eleanor."

"Next time, have me." His voice deepened, his thumbs tracing gentle circles on my cheeks. "Whatever comes at us—Olivia, Tiffany, Kane, or anyone else—we face it together."

The intensity in his eyes made my breath catch. This was a different Ryan than the cold, distant man I'd married. This man was fiercely protective, openly vulnerable in his concern for me.

"Together," I agreed softly.

His lips brushed mine, a gentle kiss that contrasted sharply with the tension of the day. When he pulled away, his expression had softened.

"I should go back to the office," he said reluctantly. "There's a situation with the Singapore merger that needs my attention."

I nodded, stepping back. "Go. We'll be fine here." I gestured around at the fortified mansion with its enhanced security. "I think we've established this place is practically a fortress."

Ryan smiled—a rare, genuine smile that transformed his entire face. "I'll be home for dinner. And Serena?" He paused at the doorway. "I'm proud of you. For facing Olivia, for protecting our family. You're stronger than anyone gives you credit for—including me."

With those words hanging in the air between us, he left, leaving me with a warmth that had nothing to do with the temperature of the room.

I walked to the window, watching as the last of Tiffany's henchmen were escorted off our property. Beyond our gates, I could see her stomping furiously toward her car, her perfect posture rigid with rage.

In the space of one day, I had confronted my would-be murderer and witnessed another threat neutralized before my eyes. Yet instead of feeling frightened, I felt strangely empowered. The old Serena—the woman who had woken up with no memories, no identity—would have crumbled under such pressure.

But I wasn't that woman anymore. I was Serena Blackwood—mother, designer, survivor. And with Ryan by my side, I was beginning to believe we could face whatever storms were still gathering on our horizon.

I turned away from the window and headed upstairs to check on our daughter, each step more determined than the last.