

# CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 291

Author's POV

The music swelled through the grand ballroom, conversations hushed as all eyes turned toward the dance floor. Ryan guided Serena with practiced ease, their movements fluid and synchronized as if they'd been dancing together their entire lives. The way his hand rested at the small of her back, the elegant arch of her neck, the perfect distance between their bodies, it was a masterclass in ballroom etiquette.

Though Elena Parker stood with her new husband in the traditional spot of honor, the guests' attention had clearly shifted. Whispers rippled through the crowd.

"Look at them move..."

"Did you see her dress? Beautiful..."

"He never takes his eyes off her, does he? The way Blackwood looks at her..."

Elena's painted smile grew increasingly brittle as she watched the couple commanding the floor. What should have been her moment—her big day—was being effortlessly usurped by the woman she'd hoped to humiliate. Her fingers tightened around Jasper's arm until he winced.

"They're doing this deliberately," she hissed through clenched teeth.

Jasper gave a tight smile to a passing guest. "Doing what? Dancing? It's a wedding reception, Elena. People dance."

"Not like that, they don't," she snapped. "They're making a spectacle. Everyone's watching them instead of us."

"Perhaps because you're standing here seething instead of enjoying your own reception," Jasper muttered.

When the music finally faded, Elena straightened her shoulders with renewed purpose. She'd had enough of the Quinn family's interference. She'd have security escort them out.

But as the applause died down and guests returned to their conversations, Elena realized with mounting fury that Ryan, Serena, and Ethan had already disappeared from the ballroom. No awkward confrontation, no embarrassed exit. They'd made their appearance, created their impact, and departed on their own terms.

Perfect timing. Perfect execution. Another victory for the Quinns.

Across the city in the back of a sleek black town car, Serena leaned back against the leather seat with a satisfied smile.

“That went even better than expected,” Ethan remarked, loosening his tie. “Half of London’s elite now doubts Edward’s claims.”

Ryan nodded, his fingers laced with Serena’s. “The Blackwood name carries weight, but it was your performance that sealed it, Serena. The way you handled Edward was…” He searched for the right word. “Masterful.”

“I learned from the best,” she replied, squeezing his hand. “Years of watching you maneuver through corporate sharks prepared me well.”

Back at the reception, Elena’s composed facade had completely crumbled. She stormed through the reception hall, her wedding gown billowing behind her as she searched for her father.

She found Silas Parker in a quiet corner, deep in hushed conversation with Edward Quinn.

“Daddy!” Her voice cut across whatever scheme they were discussing. “Why did you insist on inviting them? My wedding is ruined because of your business games!”

The guests nearby pretended not to listen, though their ears strained to catch every word.

“Do you realize what’s happened? Everyone is talking about Serena Quinn instead of me! At MY wedding! She wasn’t even supposed to be here—she was in New York last I heard, and suddenly she’s waltzing in with Ryan Blackwood like they own the place!”

Silas shot his daughter a withering look. This outburst was the last thing he needed.

“Lower your voice,” he commanded. “This is hardly the time or place.”

“When is the time?” Elena’s voice cracked with emotion. “My wedding day is being hijacked and you’re worried about business? The Quinns made fools of us today and you did nothing!”

Edward’s face darkened with barely controlled rage. “Your father and I are handling matters that are beyond your comprehension, girl. Go back to your husband and play your part.”

“My part?” Elena laughed bitterly. “You mean stand around smiling while everyone whispers about how Serena and Ryan upstaged the bride and groom? She wasn’t even trying and she still managed to outshine me!”

Silas gripped his daughter’s arm, pulling her away from prying ears. “That’s enough, Elena. Go change for the toast. We’ll discuss this later.”

“There’s nothing to discuss,” she spat, yanking her arm free. “You used my wedding as a battlefield and didn’t even have the decency to warn me. Now I look like a joke!”

She stomped away, leaving Silas pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration.

“Children,” Edward muttered disparagingly. “No vision beyond their own petty concerns.”

Silas shot him a cold glance. “That ‘child’ is my daughter, and this is her wedding day. The real problem is that your niece proved more formidable than you led me to believe.”

“She got lucky,” Edward dismissed. “Bringing Blackwood was a smart move, I’ll grant her that. But luck and powerful boyfriends won’t save Quinn Enterprises.”

“What’s your next play?” Silas demanded. “Liam’s still in hospital, but Ethan’s clearly capable of running things.”

Edward’s expression turned calculating. “Ethan is the current obstacle. Remove him, and the company falls into disarray. Without leadership, acquiring their assets becomes simple.”

“And how exactly do you plan to ‘remove’ him?” Silas asked skeptically.

Edward’s thin smile didn’t reach his eyes. “I have several options in mind. Some more... permanent than others.”

Meanwhile, Elena had retreated to her bridal suite, makeup artists frantically trying to repair her tear-streaked face before the toast. Jasper found her there, his patience clearly wearing thin.

“Elena, everyone is waiting,” he said, checking his watch. “The makeup looks fine—you look beautiful. Let’s go.”

“It’s not fine!” she snapped. “Nothing about today is fine!”

The makeup artist exchanged uncomfortable glances with the hairstylist as Elena continued ranting.

“I need to look perfect,” she insisted. “More perfect than her.”

“Than who?” Jasper asked, exasperated. “This obsession with the Quinns is ridiculous. It’s our wedding day!”

“Miss Parker,” the makeup artist ventured cautiously, “your makeup is complete. I’ve done all the touch-ups I can...”

Elena’s glare could have frozen fire. “‘Complete’? You call this complete? I’m the bride! I can’t face those people looking merely ‘complete’!”

Jasper’s patience finally snapped. He stepped forward, voice lowered to a dangerous whisper.

“Elena Parker, that’s enough! Come with me now.” He reached for her hand.

She recoiled dramatically. “You’re hurting me!”

The silence that fell over the room was deafening. The styling team stood frozen, not daring to breathe.

Jasper’s face hardened, a cold smile appearing. “Fine. Stay here and pout all night. I’m done catering to this tantrum.”

He yanked off his tie, tossing it onto the dressing table. “This whole wedding has been a disaster from start to finish.”

As he stormed out, Elena suddenly realized the consequences of her behavior. She scrambled after him, panic replacing anger.

“Jasper, wait! Where are you going?”

By evening’s end, the Parker-Ashwood wedding toast never happened. Guests waited in vain for the bride and groom to reappear, eventually drifting away with bellies full of expensive food and minds buzzing with even more expensive gossip.

The Quinn family drama had provided the evening’s entertainment, but Elena’s meltdown would fuel London’s social circuit for weeks to come.

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Serena’s POV

The satisfaction from Elena Parker’s wedding disaster still lingered as Ethan entertained us with his animated play-by-play of the event.

“And then,” Ethan said, leaning forward dramatically in his armchair, “Elena’s face turned this fascinating shade of purple when she realized everyone was watching you two dance instead of paying attention to her!”

Eleanor and Zoe couldn’t contain their laughter, and I joined in, feeling lighter than I had in weeks.

“Serves her right,” Eleanor said, reaching for her wine glass. “The Parkers have been trying to sabotage us for months. It’s about time we scored a point.”

Zoe nodded enthusiastically. “The look on Edward’s face when you walked in with Ryan must have been priceless. I wish I could have seen it!”

“Total shock,” I confirmed with a smirk. “Like he’d seen a ghost dressed in Valentino.”

“If Father hears about this victory,” Eleanor said, her expression softening, “I bet he’ll recover faster. Nothing motivates him like knowing his children are fighting back.”

“Speaking of fighting,” Zoe turned to Ethan with that stern older-sister look she’s perfected over the years, “you better keep the company ship-shape while Father’s recovering. No more surprises, got it?”

Ethan rolled his eyes dramatically. “Yes, Mother Hen. The shareholders are all back in line now that we’ve shown we’re not as vulnerable as they thought. Ryan’s presence has helped tremendously.”

“Don’t worry,” Ethan added, shooting me a wink. “Your little brother’s got this under control.”

I felt myself relaxing as I watched my siblings banter. Ryan sat beside me, his hand resting lightly on mine, a gesture so subtle yet so comforting.

“Any progress finding that project manager from back then?” I asked Ryan quietly while my siblings continued their good-natured ribbing.

He shook his head. “Still searching. Finding someone who’s likely trying not to be found isn’t easy, but I’m getting closer.”

“If anyone can find them, it’s you,” I said, squeezing his hand. His determination to clear my father’s name touched me deeply.

“Serena,” Ryan said after a moment, his voice low enough that only I could hear, “I’m going to stay here in London with you for a while.”

I looked at him, surprised. “What about New York? The company?”

“I’ve arranged everything,” he said firmly. “If something else happens, I want to be here, not halfway across the Atlantic.”

“But—”

“No buts,” he cut me off gently. “You’re not facing this alone. I won’t let you.”

The warmth that spread through me had nothing to do with the fireplace crackling nearby.

“Father will need more time to recover,” I sighed, nestling closer to him. “And until then, we need to watch Edward and Silas Parker carefully. Those two won’t stop until they get what they want.”

“They’ll have to go through me first,” Ryan said, his arm tightening protectively around me.

Just as I was about to respond, Wilson, our butler, appeared at the doorway. “Miss Quinn, Mr. Lancaster is here to see you.”

My eyebrows shot up in surprise. “Cedric? At this hour?”

Ryan’s body tensed beside me instantly.

Cedric Lancaster strode in moments later, looking slightly windblown but impeccably dressed as always. His concerned gaze landed on me immediately, barely acknowledging anyone else in the room.

“Serena, I heard what happened with Quinn Enterprises,” he said, walking straight toward me. “Is there anything I can do to help?”

Eleanor and Zoe exchanged knowing glances while Ethan suddenly became very interested in his drink.

“Cedric, what brings you here so late?” I asked, standing to greet him. “I thought you were away on business.”

“Just got back,” he said, his eyes warm with genuine concern. “News about the Parkers’ attempt to take over Quinn Enterprises is all over the business circles. I came straight from the airport.”

I felt Ryan stand up behind me, his presence suddenly looming larger.

“That’s very thoughtful of you,” I said carefully, “but everything’s under control now.”

“Is it?” Cedric pressed. “Look, we’ve been friends forever, and our families have been allies for generations. The Lancasters stand with the Quinns, always have.”

He glanced briefly at my father’s portrait above the fireplace. “How is your father doing? I heard he was hospitalized.”

“He’s recovering well,” I answered, noticing how Ryan had shifted slightly closer to me, his hand now resting possessively at the small of my back.

“The Lancaster family’s concern is appreciated,” Ryan interjected smoothly, his voice carrying that unmistakable CEO authority. “I’ll be sure your well-wishes reach Liam.”

Cedric’s eyes flicked to Ryan, then back to me. “Our companies have significant influence in London. If the Parkers try anything else, the Lancasters can help push back. You know that, right?”

“That’s incredibly generous,” I said sincerely. I couldn’t deny that having another powerful ally would benefit us tremendously right now.

“Perhaps we could discuss a formal partnership between our companies,” Cedric suggested. “Something to strengthen both our positions.”

Ryan’s fingers pressed more firmly against my back.

“That’s a wonderful idea,” I said, carefully choosing my words. “But Ethan is handling company operations while Father recovers. You should discuss the details with him.”

Cedric smiled, but his eyes never left mine. “Of course. But I’d like your input as well, Serena. Perhaps I could schedule a private meeting with you? Your design expertise is legendary, after all.”

I felt Ryan stiffen beside me.

“I’ll reach out to coordinate something soon. I look forward to our families working more closely together.”

“That would be wonderful,” I replied. “Quinn Enterprises appreciates the Lancaster family’s support, especially now.”

“Anything for you—” Cedric caught himself, “—for the Quinns. Our history goes back too far to stand aside when you need allies.”

“It’s getting late,” he announced abruptly. “Serena needs her rest. She’s been through quite enough today.”

Cedric raised an eyebrow. “I’m surprised, Mr. Blackwood. Serena’s quite knowledgeable about jewelry design and business strategy. After all, she was a prodigy in the field before she was twenty. LUXE Jewelry wouldn’t be what it is today without her creative direction.”

I watched Ryan’s jaw tighten.

“I’m well aware of Serena’s capabilities,” Ryan replied coolly. “I also know she needs adequate rest.”

The tension in the room became unbearable. Eleanor and Zoe had suddenly discovered urgent reasons to check their phones, while Ethan looked like he was contemplating diving behind the sofa.

“It is getting late,” I intervened quickly. “Cedric, thank you so much for coming. Your support means everything to us right now.”

Cedric’s smile faltered for just a second before recovering. “Of course. I should be going.”

At the door, he turned back to me. “Take care of yourself, Serena. Remember, you have more allies than you think. They won’t win this fight.”

After seeing him out, I returned to find Ryan standing by the window, his profile rigid as stone. My siblings had tactfully disappeared, leaving us alone.

“Well,” I said lightly, “that was nice of Cedric to stop by.”

Ryan didn’t respond.

“Ryan?” I moved closer, reaching up to smooth the furrow between his brows. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” His voice was clipped.

I couldn’t help smiling.

“Are you... jealous?” I asked, trying not to sound amused and failing miserably.

“Should I be?” He turned to face me, his eyes intense. “He looked at you like you were a prize he’d lost and was planning to reclaim.”

“Cedric and I are old friends,” I explained, though I couldn’t deny I’d noticed the same thing. “Even if he once had feelings for me, that was years ago.”

“Once had?” Ryan’s eyebrow arched dangerously high. “The man practically marked his territory with every word he spoke. ‘Serena was a prodigy,’ ‘Serena’s design expertise is legendary,’ ‘I know Serena so well,’” he mimicked in a poor imitation of Cedric’s accent.

I bit my lip to keep from laughing. “Is the great Ryan Blackwood actually threatened by my college friend?”

“I’m not threatened,” he muttered, looking exactly like a man who felt threatened. “I just don’t appreciate another man trying to schedule ‘private meetings’ with my wife.”

“He’s trying to help our family,” I pointed out, though even I had to admit Cedric’s interest seemed to extend beyond business.

“He’s trying to help himself to my wife,” Ryan countered, pulling me closer possessively. “Did you see how he kept finding reasons to touch your arm? And that comment about ‘anything for you’ before he caught himself?”

“You’re being ridiculous,” I said, wrapping my arms around his neck. “Cedric knows we’re married. We have a child together. Besides, having the Lancaster family’s public support right now is exactly what Quinn Enterprises needs.”

Ryan’s expression remained stormy. “Business is one thing. The way he looks at you is something else entirely.”

“And how does he look at me?” I asked, genuinely curious now.



“Like I look at you,” Ryan admitted grudgingly. “Like you’re everything.”

My heart skipped a beat at his words. “Then you have nothing to worry about,” I whispered, “because you’re the only one I look back at that way.”

His arms tightened around me. “I don’t like sharing what’s mine,” he murmured against my hair.

“I’m not a possession, Mr. Blackwood,” I reminded him, but I couldn’t help smiling against his chest.

“You know what I mean,” he said, his voice growing husky. “I waited too long to have you. I’m not about to let some boarding school pretty boy with perfect hair steal you away.”

I laughed outright at that. “Perfect hair? Is that what bothers you about him?”

“Among other things,” Ryan grumbled.

“Ryan Blackwood,” I teased, reaching up to kiss his jaw, “when did you become so insecure? It doesn’t suit the man who terrorizes corporate boardrooms for fun.”

He didn’t smile, but his eyes softened slightly. “When it comes to you, all my usual rules don’t apply.”

“Well, get used to it,” I said firmly. “Cedric is helping our family in a crisis. Next time you see him, I expect you to be polite.”

Ryan made a noncommittal sound.

“Ryan...” I warned.

“Fine,” he finally conceded with a sigh. “But if he touches your arm one more time while reminiscing about your college days, I’m not responsible for my actions.”

I laughed, resting my head against his chest, listening to his steady heartbeat. This jealous, protective side of Ryan was new to me – and secretly, I found it rather endearing.

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Serena’s POV

I let the satisfaction of Elena Parker’s wedding disaster linger a bit longer as I settled into the familiar rhythm of Quinn family life. Things had improved considerably since that night. Ethan was suddenly buried in meetings with potential partners, while I worked alongside Zara to

cement our collaboration with LUXE Jewelry. Slowly but surely, Quinn Enterprises was regaining its footing in London's competitive business landscape.

Father's condition was improving too, not dramatically, but steadily. The doctors seemed more optimistic with each passing day. Maybe we were finally turning a corner.

Then everything shattered.

The call came at 2 AM. Ethan's car had veered off the road after leaving a business dinner. The police called it an accident, but I knew better. The timing was too perfect, the circumstances too convenient.

I spent three days barely leaving the hospital, watching Ethan's unmoving form, willing him to open his eyes. He didn't. The doctors couldn't tell us when he would wake up.

"Serena," Zoe's voice pulled me from my thoughts as I stared out the window of our family home. I turned to find her watching me with an uncharacteristically solemn expression. She glanced briefly at Ryan, who stood nearby checking messages on his phone.

"I need to speak with you," she continued. "Alone."

My heart immediately clenched with dread. "Is it about Ethan? Or Father? Has something happened?"

"Or is it the company..." I trailed off, already imagining worst-case scenarios.

"Serena, please sit down first," Zoe said firmly. "Mr. Blackwood, would you mind giving us a moment?"

Ryan hesitated, his eyes meeting mine briefly before he nodded and walked out of the room. That hesitation, that protective instinct – it warmed me even through my anxiety.

I sank into the nearest chair, my knees suddenly weak. "Whatever it is, Zoe, just say it."

Zoe sat across from me, leaning forward. "You've seen the state of the Quinn family now. The company needs someone who can step up immediately, and honestly, you're the only one who can help."

I nodded slowly. I'd suspected this was coming. Eleanor and Zoe had their own careers in completely different fields. They couldn't just drop everything to run a jewelry empire they knew little about.

"Serena, you need to take over as Quinn Enterprises' CEO."

I drew in a deep breath. CEO. The weight of that title felt crushing in that moment.

Zoe continued, her voice dropping slightly. “I know Mr. Blackwood will support you behind the scenes, but Serena, this is Quinn family business. I need you to think carefully. You can’t always rely on a man, even one like Ryan.”

Ah. So that’s why she’d sent Ryan away.

“I understand, Zoe. I know what I’m doing.”

She sighed, the concern evident in her expression. “I’m just being cautious, Serena. Yes, everyone in the Quinn family can see Mr. Blackwood’s feelings for you. But when a family business is teetering on the edge, romantic feelings aren’t always enough to keep someone around.”

She reached for my hand, squeezing it gently. “A woman needs to stand on her own two feet. And honestly, you don’t want the Blackwoods thinking you’re incapable either.”

The comment stung, though I knew she meant well. I squeezed her hand back.

“Zoe, I appreciate your concern, truly. But Ryan isn’t like that. You don’t need to worry.” I straightened my shoulders, determination flooding through me. “I’ll take over the company tomorrow. I won’t let anything else happen to what Father built.”

Zoe nodded, apparently satisfied. “I’ll head upstairs then.”

After she left, I found Ryan waiting in the garden, his tall figure silhouetted against the moonlight. He didn’t ask what we’d discussed, didn’t push for information.

“Ready to get some rest?” he asked simply.

The moonlight caught in his eyes, making them gleam with an intensity that gave my exhausted spirit a moment of peace. I leaned against his shoulder, allowing myself a rare moment of vulnerability.

“Ryan, I’m so tired,” I murmured, letting a hint of neediness creep into my voice. “Would you carry me inside?”

Without a word, he swept me up into his arms. I pressed my ear against his chest, listening to the steady rhythm of his heartbeat, feeling my own anxiety begin to subside as his warmth enveloped me.

The next morning came too quickly. Ryan headed out early to investigate Ethan’s accident while I prepared to step into my brother’s shoes at Quinn Enterprises. Before I even walked through those doors, I’d already spoken with Ethan’s assistant to understand the current situation.

The most troubling issue was clearly Jax Holloway, one of our major shareholders. If he decided to cause problems during this vulnerable period, he'd likely succeed. I needed to move first, to gain control before he could act against us.

I spent my first hour reviewing the current Quinn family projects, then directed the assistant to call an emergency meeting of all department heads. At minimum, I needed to stabilize our ongoing projects before addressing the larger issues.

Twenty minutes later, I walked into the conference room last, my high heels clicking purposefully against the marble floor. The murmuring voices fell silent immediately as all eyes turned to assess me.

Dreamland Studio had enough recognition that most people knew who I was, especially since we'd collaborated with Quinn Enterprises before. Still, their scrutiny felt heavy as I took my place at the head of the table.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I began, keeping my voice steady and authoritative, "as you know, both Ethan Quinn and Liam Quinn have suffered unfortunate accidents and are currently hospitalized. Effective immediately, I will be taking temporary control of Quinn family operations."

I met their gazes directly. "I've already reviewed our current projects. Each one needs careful oversight to ensure completion. The company's present situation should be clear to everyone in this room – I won't insult your intelligence by pretending otherwise."

Pausing, I let my eyes sweep around the table. "Those of you who choose to remain loyal to the Quinn family during this difficult period will find your dedication well-rewarded. However, if anyone feels unable to commit fully to our recovery, I encourage you to submit your resignation promptly. I assure you, there are plenty of talented professionals eager to fill your positions."

I hadn't called a shareholders' meeting first because I needed these mid-level and senior managers stabilized. If the company could maintain normal operations, Jax Holloway's ability to influence shareholders would be significantly diminished.

"Rest assured," I concluded with quiet confidence, "this crisis facing the Quinn family will not last long."

After the meeting, I returned to find Cedric Lancaster already waiting in my office, looking perfectly at ease in one of the visitor chairs.

"Serena," he smiled, rising to his feet as I entered.

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Serena's POV

“Cedric,” I greeted him, setting down my portfolio. “I didn’t expect to see you here today.”

His smile was warm, familiar. “I thought you might need reinforcements on your first day taking charge.”

I walked around my desk, keeping it strategically between us. “How did you even know I’d be here today?”

“Eleanor called me,” he admitted, standing up. “She thought having the Lancaster family visibly supporting you might help discourage any... internal resistance.”

Smart move by Eleanor, though I wasn’t sure Ryan would appreciate it.

“Have you considered Jax Holloway?” Cedric asked, moving to stand beside me. His cologne – subtle but expensive – reminded me of our university days.

“The major shareholder?” I frowned. “Eleanor mentioned him. Apparently, he’s been making noise since Father was hospitalized.”

“He’s been circling like a vulture,” Cedric confirmed. “Lancaster Industries has had some dealings with him in the past. He’s ruthless, opportunistic... and very well connected to the Parkers.”

That caught my attention. “How well connected?”

“His daughter is engaged to Edward Parker’s son.”

Well, shit.

“That complicates things,” I muttered, making a note. “If he’s rallying the other shareholders...”

“You need to call a shareholders’ meeting,” Cedric suggested. “Get ahead of whatever he’s planning.”

I nodded, already typing an email to the board secretary. “I was hoping to stabilize operations first, but you’re right. Better to confront this head-on.”

Cedric smiled, moving a step closer. “That’s the Serena I remember. Never running from a fight.”

“I should call Ryan,” I said, reaching for my phone. “He’s investigating Ethan’s accident, and he should know about Lin’s connection to the Parkers.”

I noticed Cedric’s smile tighten just slightly at the mention of Ryan’s name.

“Of course,” he said smoothly. “Though I imagine Mr. Blackwood is quite busy with his own company. I wouldn’t want to distract him if there’s anything I can help with instead.”

“Ryan’s made Quinn Enterprises a priority right now,” I replied firmly. “He’s as invested in finding answers as I am.”

Cedric raised his hands in surrender. “Just offering. The Lancasters stand with the Quinns, that’s all I wanted to make clear.”

Before I could respond, my office door opened, and Ryan walked in, his expression darkening momentarily when he spotted Cedric.

Ryan crossed the room in a few purposeful strides, coming to stand beside me. His hand rested possessively on the back of my chair.

“Lancaster,” he acknowledged with a curt nod. “I didn’t expect to see you here.”

“Just offering my support to Serena,” Cedric replied easily. “These first days in charge can be challenging, especially under such circumstances.”

Ryan’s jaw tightened almost imperceptibly. “How thoughtful.”

I cleared my throat. “Cedric was just telling me about Jax Holloway’s connection to the Parker family. His daughter is engaged to Edward’s son.”

That caught Ryan’s attention. “Interesting timing for a family merger.”

“Indeed,” I agreed. “I’m calling a shareholders’ meeting to get ahead of whatever they’re planning.”

Ryan nodded. “Good call. I’ve been looking into Ethan’s accident. The brake lines were definitely tampered with.”

My blood ran cold. “So it was deliberate.”

“Without question,” Ryan confirmed grimly. “The question is who had access to his car.”

“Could be anyone,” Cedric interjected. “Corporate sabotage is hardly a specialized skill these days.”

“Cedric, thank you for coming by. I’ll let you know when the shareholders’ meeting is scheduled. Your public support would mean a lot to Quinn Enterprises right now.”

Cedric took the hint gracefully. “Of course. I’ll make myself available whenever you need me, Serena. Day or night.”

Ryan's hand tightened on my chair.

After Cedric left, Ryan closed the office door and turned to me, his expression unreadable.

"He's certainly eager to help," he said carefully.

I sighed. "Ryan, please don't start. Cedric and the Lancasters are powerful allies. We need them right now."

"I know," Ryan admitted, his shoulders relaxing slightly. "Just keep your guard up around him."

"My guard is always up these days," I replied tiredly, rubbing my temples. "Except with you."

That softened his expression. He came around the desk and turned my chair to face him, kneeling down so we were eye-level.

"How are you holding up?" he asked, his voice gentle now. "Taking over as CEO isn't easy even under normal circumstances."

"I'm okay," I said, trying to sound more confident than I felt. "Just worried about Ethan. And Father. And the company. And whether someone's going to try to kill me next."

"That's not going to happen," Ryan said fiercely. "I've already doubled security for everyone in your family. And you're not going anywhere without bodyguards."

I wanted to argue, but the determined look in his eyes stopped me. "Fine. But they better be discreet. I can't walk into a shareholders' meeting looking like I need an army to protect me."

"They'll be invisible," he promised. "Speaking of which, when is this meeting?"

"I'm scheduling it for tomorrow morning," I said, turning back to my laptop. "No point giving Lin time to organize opposition."

Ryan smiled, that dangerous smile that reminded me he was a predator in the business world. "Striking first. I like it."

"I learned from the best," I replied with a small smile of my own.

"Listen," Ryan said, suddenly serious again. "Zoe said something to you last night that made you uncomfortable. Want to tell me what it was?"

I hesitated. "It wasn't important."

"Serena." His tone made it clear he wasn't buying it.

I sighed. “She’s worried I might rely on you too much. That I need to stand on my own as a Quinn.”

Understanding dawned in his eyes. “She’s afraid I’ll take advantage of the situation?”

“More like she’s afraid I won’t be able to handle things without you,” I clarified. “The Quinns have always been proudly independent.”

Ryan considered this for a moment. “She has a point.”

That surprised me. “She does?”

He nodded. “This is your family’s company. You need to establish yourself as a leader in your own right, not as an extension of me or Blackwood Enterprises.”

“So... you’re okay with me handling this on my own?” I asked cautiously.

“I didn’t say that,” he replied with a half-smile. “I’ll still be here, supporting you, protecting you. But in that boardroom tomorrow? That’s all you, Serena. Show them why the Quinns have survived for generations.”

His confidence in me was overwhelming. “What if I mess up?”

“You won’t,” he said simply. “But even if you did, your family would still stand behind you. And so would I.”

I leaned forward, pressing my forehead against his. “How did I get so lucky?”

“I ask myself the same question every day,” he murmured, his hands coming up to cup my face.

Our moment was interrupted by my phone buzzing. I checked it reluctantly.

“It’s the board secretary,” I sighed. “The shareholders’ meeting is confirmed for 9 AM tomorrow.”

Ryan stood, pulling me up with him. “Then we have work to do tonight. We need to identify every potential ally and enemy in that room.”

I nodded, suddenly feeling the weight of responsibility settling heavily on my shoulders. “Holloway won’t go down without a fight.”

“Neither will you,” Ryan said confidently. “You’re Serena Quinn. It’s about time London remembered that.”

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Serena's POV

The tension in Ryan's shoulders was visible as he paced our living room, his suit jacket discarded, sleeves rolled up to his elbows. Night had fallen over London, casting long shadows across our penthouse apartment.

"I'm almost certain it was Parker," Ryan said, his voice low and dangerous. "Everything points to him."

I kicked off my heels, curling my legs beneath me on the sofa. "Do we have actual evidence?"

"Not enough." Ryan's frustration was palpable as he ran a hand through his hair. "The driver won't talk. Whoever's paying him is either very generous or very threatening."

"Or both," I added grimly.

Ryan nodded, pouring two glasses of scotch and handing one to me. "My security team is working on it. The driver has a sister in Manchester with two kids. If money's his motivation, we might be able to offer more."

"And if it's fear?"

"Then we need to find out what he's afraid of," Ryan replied, sitting beside me. "Everyone has a breaking point."

I took a long sip, welcoming the burn. "So we're facing a major shareholder with Parker family connections who likely tried to kill my brother, plus we have no concrete proof, and I have to face the entire board tomorrow morning."

"When you put it like that..." Ryan gave a half-smile.

I groaned, leaning my head back against the sofa. "This is insane. A week ago, my biggest concern was whether Dreamland's spring collection would be ready for the showcase."

Ryan set his glass down and moved behind me, his strong fingers finding the knots in my shoulders. "And you'll get back to that. But right now, you're exactly where you need to be."

I closed my eyes as his thumbs worked magic on my tense muscles. "I'm not sure I'm cut out for corporate warfare, Ryan."

"That's where you're wrong," he murmured, his breath warm against my ear. "I've seen you negotiate with suppliers who tried to cheat you. I've watched you handle critics who dismissed your work. You're a Quinn, Serena. Fighting for what's yours is in your blood."

His faith in me was overwhelming. I leaned into his touch, allowing myself this moment of vulnerability. "I just wish Ethan were here. This is his world, not mine."

“You don’t have to be Ethan,” Ryan said firmly. “You just have to be you. That’s more than enough.”

When his hands moved up to massage my scalp, I nearly purred with pleasure. “That feels amazing.”

“You carry all your stress right here,” he said, his fingertips applying perfect pressure. “Always have.”

“You know what might help me relax even more?” I asked, opening one eye.

Ryan’s lips quirked. “A hot bath? Another drink? Name it.”

“I want to see Vivian,” I admitted softly. “I miss her face.”

Something tender flashed in Ryan’s eyes. Without a word, he pulled out his phone and tapped the screen a few times.

“I asked Lucy to send me some videos earlier today,” he explained, settling beside me again. “I thought you might need this.”

The screen lit up with our daughter’s face. Six-month-old Vivian was sitting in her high chair, giggling uncontrollably as Lucy made silly faces at her. Her chubby cheeks dimpled with each laugh, her eyes—so much like Ryan’s—sparkling with joy.

“Look at those little teeth coming in,” I whispered, touching the screen gently. “She’s changed so much in just three days.”

Ryan’s arm wrapped around my shoulders as we watched Vivian attempt to grab her own feet, tumbling sideways in the process. Instead of crying, she looked surprised for a moment before dissolving into giggles again.

“She’s fearless,” Ryan noted with obvious pride. “Just like her mother.”

The video changed to Vivian in her crib, babbling nonsense while clutching the stuffed elephant I’d given her before leaving. My heart constricted when I heard her say something that sounded suspiciously like “Mama.”

“Did she just—”

“She’s been doing that all day, according to the nanny,” Ryan confirmed, his voice soft. “Lucy says she keeps looking around for you when she says it.”

Tears stung my eyes. “I hate being away from her.”

“We’ll fly her out as soon as it’s safe,” Ryan promised, kissing my temple. “In the meantime, she’s surrounded by people who adore her, and she’ll be on video call with us every day.”

I turned to face him, struck by the thoughtfulness of his gesture. “Thank you for this. For knowing exactly what I needed.”

His eyes darkened as he tucked a strand of hair behind my ear. “I’m learning to pay attention to the things that matter.”

I leaned forward, pressing my lips to his in a kiss that started gentle but quickly blazed into something more urgent. Ryan responded immediately, his hands tangling in my hair as he pulled me closer.

“You matter,” he whispered against my lips. “You and Vivian are everything.”

Something broke loose inside me—all the fear, stress, and uncertainty of the day transforming into desperate need. I climbed onto his lap, my skirt riding up my thighs as I straddled him.

“I need you,” I breathed, already working on his shirt buttons. “Make me forget everything else for a while.”

Ryan’s hands gripped my hips, his eyes nearly black with desire. “With pleasure.”

In one fluid motion, he stood, lifting me with him. My legs wrapped around his waist as he carried me toward our bedroom, his mouth never leaving mine. Each kiss was hotter than the last, erasing thoughts of shareholders and corporate enemies from my mind.

He laid me on the bed with surprising gentleness, his body covering mine as his lips traced a burning path down my neck. My fingers fumbled with his belt, eager to feel his skin against mine.

“Slow down,” he murmured, capturing my wrists and pinning them above my head. “We have all night.”

His free hand slid beneath my blouse, caressing my stomach, my ribs, the underside of my breast. I arched against him, silently begging for more.

“Do you know how beautiful you are?” he asked, his voice rough with need as he slowly unbuttoned my blouse.

I gasped as his mouth replaced his hand, his teeth grazing sensitive skin. “Ryan...”

“That’s it,” he encouraged, releasing my wrists to remove my blouse completely. “Let go. Just feel.”

And I did. With each article of clothing that fell to the floor, I shed another layer of worry. With each touch of his hands, each kiss of his lips, the world beyond our bedroom faded away until there was nothing but Ryan and me, moving together, breathing together.

When he finally pushed inside me, I cried out, my nails digging into his shoulders. He paused, his forehead pressed to mine, his breath ragged.

“I love you,” he whispered, the words falling from his lips like a confession. “God help me, Serena, I love you so much it terrifies me.”

Something fragile and precious bloomed in my chest. “Show me,” I whispered back. “Show me how much.”

His answer was in the way he moved, in the reverence of his touch, in the fierce possession of his kiss. As pleasure built between us, I held nothing back, allowing myself to be completely vulnerable in his arms.

When release finally claimed me, it was his name I cried out. And when he followed moments later, his face buried in my neck, I knew without doubt that whatever challenges awaited us tomorrow, we would face them together.

## CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 296

Author's POV

The morning light filtered through the curtains as Serena reviewed the final details for her board meeting presentation. She'd been up since dawn, determined to leave nothing to chance. A soft knock at the door interrupted her concentration.

“Ms. Quinn? There's someone here to see you,” the hotel suite's security guard announced through the intercom.

Serena glanced at Ryan, who was on a call in the adjoining room. They weren't expecting visitors. With a cautious frown, she moved to the security monitor.

Jax Holloway stood in the hallway, his expensive suit impeccable, his silver hair perfectly coiffed. The predatory smile on his face sent a chill down her spine.

“Let him in,” she instructed, squaring her shoulders. “But stay close.”

As Jax Holloway entered, Serena remained seated on the sofa, deliberately making him come to her. Her posture was regal, controlled—the complete opposite of the nervous bride who had once cowered at fancy dinner parties.

“Mr. Holloway, what an unexpected surprise,” she said coolly, not bothering to rise.

Holloway's smile didn't reach his eyes as he took in the suite, no doubt calculating its cost. "I heard Serena has taken over the company. I came personally to offer my... congratulations."

"Oh?" Serena arched an eyebrow, her expression neutral despite the anger bubbling beneath her surface. She'd been waiting for this confrontation.

"With Ethan and Liam both hospitalized, I'm concerned about Quinn Enterprises' future." Holloway settled uninvited into the armchair across from her. "A woman with your... limited experience might find the burden overwhelming."

His condescension hung in the air between them. Serena studied him, noting the calculating gleam in his eyes.

"Whether I'm capable or not isn't for you to determine," Serena replied, her voice sharp as steel. "Or are you just unable to contain your excitement now that my father and brother are conveniently hospitalized?"

Holloway's expression flickered momentarily before smoothing over. "I'm not sure what you're implying. I merely came to express concern for the company we all value."

"You certainly moved quickly for someone who's merely concerned," Serena noted. "Almost as if you were... waiting for an opportunity."

She reached for the folder on the coffee table, deliberately letting him glimpse the Lancaster Enterprises logo on the documents inside. "Fortunately, I've already secured the partnership with the Lancaster family. The board will be pleased to hear the news at today's meeting."

The momentary widening of Holloway's eyes confirmed what she suspected—he'd been planning to use his connections to snatch that deal himself, presenting her failure to the board as evidence of her incompetence.

"Serena," he dropped all pretense of formality, "you might want to reconsider your position. That chair you're so eager to sit in comes with targets on your back that you can't possibly be prepared for."

She leaned forward, eyes blazing. "Mr. Holloway, let's be clear. I know exactly who arranged my brother's accident."

"Those are serious accusations," he recovered quickly. "Especially from someone who has no evidence to support them. Ethan's accident was unfortunate, but I had nothing to do with it. Yes, I was supposed to meet him that day, but whether he chose to attend that meeting was entirely his decision."

He was too smooth, too rehearsed. Serena could tell he'd practiced this denial many times.

"Besides," he continued with a dismissive wave, "what would I possibly gain from such an act?"

“A clear path to the CEO position you’ve coveted for years?” Serena suggested, her voice deceptively light. “Mr. Holloway, innocent people don’t typically offer unprompted alibis.”

Holloway’s jaw tightened. He hadn’t expected her to be so direct, so unafraid. He’d come to intimidate a grieving daughter temporarily playing businesswoman, not a formidable opponent who’d already outmaneuvered him.

“If we’re done here,” Serena said, rising to her feet, “I have a company to run. Unlike some people in this room, my agenda doesn’t include wasting time with thinly veiled threats.”

The dismissal was unmistakable. Holloway stood slowly, his expression darkening. “You’re making a mistake, Serena. That chair isn’t as secure as you think. It’s not just about ability—it’s about knowing which battles to fight and which enemies to avoid.”

“Is that a threat, Mr. Holloway?” Ryan’s voice cut through the tension as he emerged from the adjacent room, his call apparently concluded.

Holloway stiffened, clearly not having realized Ryan was present. The power dynamic in the room shifted instantly.

“Not at all,” Holloway replied, his smile brittle. “Just friendly advice between colleagues.”

Ryan moved to stand beside Serena, his hand resting possessively at the small of her back. “Then allow me to offer some friendly advice in return. Threatening the CEO of Quinn Enterprises who happens to be my wife, is not a path I’d recommend pursuing.”

The unspoken message was clear: Serena wasn’t standing alone.

“Serena will do what’s best for Quinn Enterprises,” Holloway said, retreating toward the door. “But this position isn’t for the faint of heart. Remember that.”

After he left, Serena exhaled slowly, the tension draining from her shoulders. “Old bastard couldn’t wait to make his move.”

“He’s testing you,” Ryan said, his thumb drawing soothing circles on her lower back. “And he just discovered you’re not the easy target he expected.”

Serena nodded grimly. “He truly believes the Quinn legacy died with my father and brother’s hospitalization. As if this family has no one left capable of fighting.”

She turned to her laptop, refocusing on her presentation. Quinn Enterprises had multiple fires that needed extinguishing—from declining stock prices to damaged client relationships resulting from the rumors about Liam. Most urgent was clearing Liam’s name and discovering who was behind Edward’s machinations.

While Serena battled Holloway at Quinn Enterprises, Silas Parker was orchestrating his own moves across town. The news from his assistant was not what he had expected.

“Mr. Parker, Blackwood Group was prepared. They’ve been protecting Quinn’s international interests,” his assistant reported nervously. “Our team couldn’t penetrate their defenses. Blackwood has formed alliances with several other companies to block our advances in the international market.”

Silas slammed his fist on the desk. “That damned Ryan again! Going to such lengths to protect a woman.”

His phone rang—Edward, demanding updates. Silas grimaced before answering.

“Mr. Parker, have you forgotten our arrangement?” Edward’s voice was tight with barely controlled rage. “Why are you merely watching instead of acting? I’m offering you a third of the company once this is done!”

Silas suppressed his irritation. Were it not for the substantial compensation, he’d never tolerate being addressed this way by someone of Edward’s standing. But business was business.

“The situation has changed,” Silas explained coldly. “Serena has Ryan’s full support. We can’t touch her right now.”

“Can’t touch her?” Edward hissed. “Then eliminate her! Create another ‘accident’!”

Silas’s patience thinned. He’d already risked enough with Ethan’s incident. “Forget it. Ryan is already close to connecting Ethan’s accident to me. I won’t help you with Serena.”

He hung up without waiting for Edward’s response. The risk had become too great, especially with Ryan Blackwood personally involved in the investigation. The man had resources that even Silas found intimidating.

“What about the driver, sir?” his assistant asked carefully. “Ryan’s team has been asking questions. The man hasn’t implicated us yet, but the account may be traced eventually.”

Silas frowned. “We used anonymous accounts. Ryan shouldn’t be able to connect them to us yet.” He paused, considering. “But we can’t let this drag on. Take care of it.”

The assistant understood immediately. “Right away, sir.”

## CEO’s Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 297

Serena’s POV

The news hit me like a freight train. The driver who'd nearly killed my brother had suddenly "confessed" in prison and then committed suicide. His family in Manchester had vanished without a trace. The police delivered this information with clinical detachment, but Ryan and I knew immediately what had happened.

"They're tying up loose ends," Ryan muttered as we exited the police station, his jaw tight with barely controlled anger.

I felt numb, disgusted by the callousness of it all. Yes, the driver bore responsibility for his actions, but he'd been a pawn, expendable in Parker and Edward's eyes. Another life sacrificed on the altar of their ambition.

The afternoon sun felt inappropriately bright against my mood as I stepped onto the sidewalk. Detective Reynolds followed us out, her expression sympathetic.

"Serena," she said softly, touching my arm. "I know what you're thinking. That driver wasn't innocent."

I nodded mechanically, though it offered little comfort. The driver had a family—people who were now missing, likely terrified if they were still alive at all.

"Parker and Edward will face justice too," Detective Reynolds continued, her voice hardening with conviction. "People like that always overreach eventually. Their time will come."

"I know," I replied, forcing strength into my voice even as exhaustion threatened to overwhelm me. "Thank you, Detective Reynolds"

She squeezed my shoulder. "I need to get back to work. Call me if you need anything or think of any new information."

As I watched her walk away, the weight of everything crashed down on me anew. The Quinn family businesses were under constant threat, our reputation under scrutiny. Between managing the company crisis, visiting my father and brother in the hospital, and trying to unmask our enemies, I couldn't remember the last time I'd truly rested.

"Do you want me to drive you home?" Ryan asked, his hand warm against the small of my back.

I shook my head. "I need to see Ethan."

The antiseptic smell of the hospital hit me as soon as I stepped off the elevator. I'd grown to hate these sterile corridors, the rhythmic beeping of monitors, the hushed voices of medical staff. Each visit was a reminder of how fragile life could be, how quickly everything could change.

Through the half-open door of Ethan's room, I could see Maya slumped in a chair beside his bed. My heart ached at the sight of her—usually so vibrant and strong—now looking like she might



shatter at the slightest touch. Dark circles shadowed her eyes, and her normally immaculate appearance had given way to rumpled clothes and untidy hair.

Ethan lay motionless, connected to machines that monitored his vital signs. His condition had been fluctuating—moments of consciousness followed by concerning periods of unconsciousness. The doctors remained cautiously optimistic, but I could see the worry behind their professional demeanor.

“Serena, you came,” Maya looked up as I entered, attempting a smile that didn’t reach her eyes.

“How are you holding up?” I asked, pulling a chair beside her. “And don’t put on a brave face for me. We’re way past that.”

She let out a bitter laugh that threatened to dissolve into tears. “I’m not pretending for you. I’m trying to stay strong for when he wakes up. He shouldn’t see me falling apart.”

I nodded, understanding completely. Maya had always been the pillar of strength in our friendship circle, but even pillars had breaking points.

“His condition hasn’t improved much,” she continued, looking toward Ethan’s still form. “Serena, I’ve been thinking—maybe we should transfer him to New York? They have specialists there who might be able to help more than the doctors here.”

I’d considered this too, had researched the top orthopedic surgeons in the country. But the risks of moving him, of taking him away from the security we’d established here in London...

“You’re hesitating,” Maya noted, her eyes narrowing. “Why? What aren’t you telling me?”

I sighed, rubbing my temples where a headache was forming. “If we move Ethan out of London, away from our security network, it creates vulnerability. Parker and his people could see it as an opportunity.”

“So we just keep him here where nothing’s changing?” Maya’s voice cracked. “You don’t understand what it’s like, Serena. When he’s awake, he’s in so much pain, but he never complains. I can see the fear in his eyes when the doctors examine his legs. He’s terrified of being permanently disabled, but he won’t say it out loud.”

Tears spilled down her cheeks now, and she made no attempt to wipe them away. “You should have seen him before all this. He was so alive, so confident. Now he just stares at the ceiling for hours.”

Her words stabbed through my heart. Ethan had always been vibrant, unstoppable—the golden boy of the Quinn family. Seeing him reduced to this state because of someone’s greed was almost unbearable. I blinked back my own tears, determined to stay strong for both Maya and my brother.

“We’ll make this right,” I promised, squeezing her hand. “I’ll find the best specialists in the world. His legs will heal, Maya. I swear to you.”

She wiped her face, trying to compose herself. “I’m sorry, Serena. I know you’re under enormous pressure with everything else. I shouldn’t be dumping this on you too—”

“Mrs. Serena, Miss Carter, it’s been a while. Why the tears?”

The familiar voice cut through our conversation, deep and confident. Both of us turned in surprise.

Lucian West stood in the doorway, impeccably dressed in a charcoal suit that emphasized his broad shoulders. His expression held concern as he took in our tear-streaked faces.

“Lucian?” I whispered, genuinely shocked.

“Mr. West,” Maya echoed, equally surprised. “What are you doing here?”

My mind raced with questions. Lucian West, CEO of Celestial Gems and one of the most influential figures in the luxury jewelry market, had no obvious reason to be visiting my brother’s hospital room. We’d crossed paths at industry events over the years, maintained a cordial professional relationship, but we weren’t close friends by any means.

As he stepped into the room, I noticed he carried an elegant gift basket in one hand and what appeared to be a file folder in the other. Whatever had brought him here, I sensed it wasn’t a simple courtesy call.

## CEO’s Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 298

Serena’s POV

“No wonder you both look surprised,” Lucian said with a slight smile, stepping fully into the room..”

I exchanged a quick glance with Maya. After the whole Kane debacle had concluded, Lucian had returned to his overseas headquarters, leaving the New York operations in other hands. His sudden appearance in London was nothing short of bewildering.

“I’ve heard about what happened to the Quinn family,” he said, placing the elegant gift basket on the side table. “Ethan and I have done business together in the past. When I learned about his accident, I wanted to see him personally.”

I let out a soft sigh. “I had no idea you and my brother were acquainted, Mr. West.”

Lucian's lips curved into an easy smile, his tone becoming lighter. "My relationship with Ethan isn't nearly as extensive as the one between us, Mrs. Blackwood."

His eyes held mine for a moment before he chuckled. "That was just a joke. Actually, I've brought someone along who might be of genuine help to you."

He gave two sharp claps, and a distinguished middle-aged man appeared in the doorway, his posture radiating quiet confidence.

"This is Dr. Thompson, a renowned orthopedic surgeon. I believe he could be instrumental in Ethan's recovery."

I felt a spark of hope ignite within me, my eyes brightening as I extended my hand to the doctor. "Dr. Thompson, it's a pleasure to meet you. Would it be possible for you to—"

"Examine Mr. Quinn?" he finished with a reassuring nod. "Of course. That's precisely why I'm here, at Mr. West's invitation."

For the next hour, Dr. Thompson conducted a thorough examination of Ethan's condition, occasionally murmuring to himself as he studied the charts and X-rays. Maya and I watched silently, exchanging hopeful glances as the doctor's expression remained focused rather than concerned.

When he finally stepped back, he outlined several treatment options that neither the hospital's staff nor our specialists had mentioned. Though much of his explanation consisted of complex medical terminology that went over our heads, one thing was abundantly clear—Dr. Thompson possessed expertise that could potentially change Ethan's prognosis.

After the doctor stepped out to consult with the hospital's medical team, I pulled Lucian aside near the window, where afternoon sunlight streamed through the blinds.

"Mr. West," I said softly, genuine gratitude warming my voice, "I don't know how to thank you properly for this. If my brother can recover because of your intervention..." I paused, emotion threatening to overwhelm me. "The Quinn family won't forget your kindness."

"Please, Serena, there's no need for such formality between us. I'd like to think we're friends," he replied, his eyes sincere.

The statement hung between us, loaded with unspoken history. Lucian had once misjudged Ryan and, by extension, had caused me significant pain through his actions. This gesture felt like an olive branch, a chance to rebuild bridges that had been burned.

"Of course we're friends," I affirmed with a gentle smile, feeling the tension in the room dissipate.

Over the next several days, Ethan's condition showed marked improvement under Dr. Thompson's care. The perpetual furrow of pain between his brows began to ease, and moments of lucidity became more frequent, stretching into hours of alertness.

One afternoon, I arrived to find Maya reading aloud from a business magazine, her voice animated as she described the latest market trends. Ethan was awake, his head turned toward her, a small smile playing at his lips despite the pain I knew he must still be feeling.

"And then the CEO had the audacity to claim they'd planned the merger all along," Maya was saying with theatrical indignation, "as if everyone hadn't watched them scramble for six months!"

"Sounds like... someone's been paying attention... to my boring market talks," Ethan rasped, his voice weak but his eyes bright with affection.

Maya's hand flew to her mouth, the magazine forgotten. "You're calling your passionate economic dissertations 'boring' now? Who are you and what have you done with Ethan Quinn?"

They shared a look so intimate that I almost felt like an intruder. Maya reached out and tenderly brushed a strand of hair from Ethan's forehead, her fingertips lingering against his skin.

"I thought I'd lost you," she whispered, her voice breaking.

Ethan's hand trembled as he reached for hers. "Never. You're... stuck with me, Maya."

I quietly stepped back toward the door, giving them their moment. The raw emotion between them touched something deep within me—a reminder of what love should be: steadfast, unflinching in the face of adversity. Maya hadn't left Ethan's side since the accident, her devotion unwavering even when the prognosis had been at its bleakest.

That evening, as Ryan and I settled into the quietness of our London townhouse, I recounted the day's events, ending with what I'd witnessed between Maya and Ethan.

"We need to find a way to properly thank Lucian," I said, curling my legs beneath me on the sofa. "Dr. Thompson believes Ethan may walk again with intensive therapy. Six weeks ago, that possibility wasn't even on the table."

Ryan's expression softened as he handed me a glass of wine. "I've already arranged for Thompson's services to be fully compensated, but you're right about West. Despite our... complicated history, I'm grateful for what he's done."

"It's more than just bringing in Thompson," I mused, taking a sip of the rich burgundy liquid. "He didn't have to get involved at all. Especially after everything that happened with Kane."

Ryan sat beside me, his arm sliding around my shoulders in a gesture that had become comfortingly familiar. "People surprise you sometimes. Maybe West is trying to make amends."

I leaned into his warmth, remembering the genuine concern in Lucian's eyes when he'd visited Ethan. "You know what affected me most today? Watching Maya with Ethan. She loves him so completely, Ryan. Through everything—the pain, the uncertainty—she's been his constant."

Ryan's fingers traced gentle patterns on my shoulder. "That kind of devotion is rare," he murmured, his voice low and thoughtful. "When you find it, you should hold onto it with everything you have."

I turned to look at him, struck by the intensity in his gaze.

"Yes," I whispered. "You absolutely should."

## CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 299

Serena's POV

As the morning sun filtered through the heavy curtains of our London townhouse, I found myself staring at my laptop screen, a chill running down my spine despite the warmth of the room.

"Ryan," I called out, my voice barely above a whisper. "You need to see this."

Ryan appeared in the doorway of our bedroom, his hair still damp from the shower, a towel draped around his shoulders. The moment he saw my expression, his casual demeanor shifted, instantly alert.

"What is it?" he asked, crossing the room in three long strides.

I turned the screen toward him, revealing a series of emails I'd received from an anonymous sender who identified themselves only as "Triton." The subject line read: "The Truth About Ethan's Accident."

"These are financial transactions between the Parker family and a known criminal organization," I explained, my finger tracing across the screen. "Look at the dates—three payments. One before Ethan's accident, one immediately after, and a final installment just last week."

Ryan's jaw tightened as he leaned closer, his eyes narrowing as he analyzed the documents. "How did you get these?"

"I have... connections from before we met," I admitted, thinking of Triton. "After the accident seemed too convenient, I asked for help tracing anything unusual connected to the Parkers."

"These are encrypted banking transactions," Ryan muttered, scrolling through the detailed records. "Offshore accounts, shell companies—this is professional-grade money laundering."

I nodded grimly. “And look at this.” I clicked on another file, revealing a series of text messages recovered from a burner phone. “They explicitly discussed ’taking care of the Quinn problem’ and making it ’look like an accident.’”

Ryan straightened, pulling out his phone. “We need to call Detective Inspector Harris immediately. This is attempted murder.”

Within hours, we were seated in a sterile conference room at Scotland Yard, the evidence spread before Detective Inspector Harris, whose weathered face remained impassive as he examined each document.

“This is certainly compelling,” he finally said, looking up at us. “But I must ask—how exactly did you obtain these records? Banking information of this nature requires proper warrants, and these text messages...”

“The source wishes to remain anonymous,” I replied firmly, meeting his gaze without flinching. “But I can assure you, everything was obtained legally.”

Ryan’s hand found mine under the table, a silent show of support.

“Inspector,” Ryan added, “we understand the procedural concerns. However, these documents provide you with enough probable cause to obtain official warrants. The lives of the Quinn family remain at risk while the Parkers walk free.”

The inspector leaned back in his chair, fingers steepled before him. After what felt like an eternity, he nodded once.

“I’ll have my team verify what they can through official channels. In the meantime, we’ll place additional security around Mr. Quinn’s hospital room.”

As we left Scotland Yard, the weight of what we’d discovered pressed heavily on my shoulders. “Do you think it’s enough?” I asked Ryan as we slipped into the back of our town car.

“It has to be,” he replied, his fingers intertwining with mine. “The Parkers have been ruthless in their pursuit of the Quinn assets, but they’ve made a critical error. “

That evening, as I sat beside Ethan’s hospital bed, I couldn’t help but notice how much stronger he looked. Maya had stepped out to get coffee, giving me a rare moment alone with my brother.

“You seem worried,” Ethan observed, his voice stronger than it had been just days before.

I attempted a smile. “Just thinking about business matters.”

“Serena,” he said, reaching for my hand with surprising strength, “we’ve lost too many years to secrets. Tell me what’s happening.”

“We’ve found evidence that the Parkers arranged your accident,” I said quietly. “It wasn’t random, Ethan. They tried to kill you to gain control of LUXE while the company was vulnerable.”

I expected shock, perhaps fear, but instead, a grim satisfaction crossed his features.

“I suspected as much,” he admitted. “The timing was too perfect—right after I refused their final buyout offer.” He squeezed my hand. “Have you taken this to the authorities?”

“This morning. Detective Inspector Harris is investigating.”

A commotion in the hallway interrupted us. Maya burst into the room, her face flushed with excitement, followed by a tall man in a police uniform.

“They’ve arrested them!” Maya exclaimed, rushing to Ethan’s bedside. “Silas Parker and his son were just taken into custody!”

The officer stepped forward, introducing himself as Sergeant Williams. “Detective Inspector Harris sent me to inform you that we’ve executed search warrants on Parker Industries and their personal residences. We’ve recovered additional evidence confirming their involvement in the attack on Mr. Quinn.”

Relief washed over me like a physical force. I sank into the nearby chair, my hand still clutching Ethan’s.

“What happens now?” I asked.

Sergeant Williams gathered his files, his expression grim but satisfied. “Silas Parker will remain in custody pending trial. Given the severity of the charges—attempted murder, corporate espionage, financial fraud—he’s facing significant prison time. The prosecution is confident.”

As the police officer left, I sank into the leather chair in Ethan’s hospital room. My brother was sleeping peacefully, his condition improving daily under Dr. Thompson’s care.

“We got them,” I whispered to his sleeping form. “They can’t hurt you anymore.”

My phone buzzed with a message from Ryan: \*Flight delayed. Meeting with Henderson Group pushed to tomorrow. How’s Ethan?\*

I quickly typed back: \*Sleeping. Police just left. It’s over.\*

Ryan’s response came seconds later: \*Not quite. Damage control begins now.\*

He was right, of course. The Parker scandal had sent shockwaves through London’s business community. As one of the oldest trading partners of Blackwood Industries in Europe, their

spectacular downfall threatened to destabilize several of Ryan’s key business relationships in England.

Over the next few days, Ryan was barely present at the townhouse, working tirelessly to reassure partners and stabilize relationships that had been built over generations. Each night he returned looking more exhausted than the last, his eyes shadowed with fatigue.

“Thompson says Ethan might be discharged next week,” I told him one evening as he loosened his tie, collapsing onto the sofa beside me. “Limited mobility, of course, but he can continue his recovery at home.”

Ryan nodded, his fingers absently tracing patterns on my knee. “That’s good news. How are the Quinn holdings?”

“In better shape than we expected,” I replied, leaning into his warmth. “With Silas behind bars, their stock took a nosedive. I’ve been working with my mother to buy back the shares they acquired during Ethan’s hospitalization.”

Ryan’s eyebrows rose slightly. “Your mother? I thought she was—”

“Uninvolved in business matters?” I finished with a small smile. “Apparently not. Hazel Quinn might present herself as a society matron, but she’s every bit as shrewd as my father was. She had contingency funds I knew nothing about.”

The truth was, watching my mother negotiate with Parker’s stunned board members had been a revelation. We’d reclaimed nearly all of Quinn’s compromised assets in less than a week.

“Maya and I have been discussing Dreamland’s future too,” I said, reaching for my tablet to show Ryan the plans we’d drafted. “We’re going to integrate the London studio into LUXE’s structure as their high-end custom design line. It gives us institutional backing while maintaining creative independence.”

## CEO’s Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 300

Serena’s POV

Ryan studied the proposal, his expression thoughtful. “Smart move. LUXE has the distribution network Dreamland needs, and your designs will elevate their portfolio.”

I nodded, feeling a surge of pride at what we’d accomplished. “Maya’s staying in London to oversee the transition while Ethan recovers. She’ll be dividing her time between the studio and his rehabilitation.”



Ryan pulled me closer, pressing a kiss to my temple. “Good. They deserve some happiness after all this.”

The following afternoon, I visited my mother at her London apartment.

“Silas Parker was formally charged this morning,” she informed me as she poured tea into delicate porcelain cups. “His assets have been frozen pending investigation.”

I accepted the tea, noting how steady her hands remained despite everything. “And Edward? Has there been any sign of him?”

Hazel Quinn’s lips tightened into a thin line. “Gone. Disappeared the moment his father was taken into custody. His passport was used at Heathrow, but after that...” She made a dismissive gesture. “He always was a coward.”

“I’ve been thinking,” I said carefully, setting down my cup. “About the future of LUXE now that Ethan will need time to recover. The design division has always been the heart of the company, and with Dreamland joining forces...”

“You want to take a more active role,” Eleanor finished, her perceptive gaze meeting mine. “Beyond just your designs.”

I nodded, surprised by how easily she’d read my intention.

“It’s about time,” she said simply. “Serena. Your father may have been its face, but I shaped its vision for thirty years.” She reached across the table to cover my hand with hers. “LUXE is as much your birthright as it is Ethan’s.”

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As the weeks passed, Ethan’s recovery progressed remarkably well. Between the best medical care money could buy and Maya’s unwavering support, my brother was regaining his strength faster than even Dr. Thompson had predicted.

“I need your help with something,” Ethan told me one afternoon as we sat in the garden of the Quinn family estate, the London sun making a rare appearance.

“Anything,” I replied, setting aside my sketchbook.

Ethan glanced around to ensure Maya wasn’t within earshot. “I’m going to ask her to marry me. When I’m discharged next week.”

Joy bloomed in my chest. “Ethan! That’s wonderful!”

“I want it to be perfect,” he continued, a nervous energy animating his movements. “After everything she’s done, everything we’ve been through... she deserves something extraordinary.”

I squeezed his hand. “Leave it to me. I have just the thing.”

The next morning, I called Zara Percy.

“A bespoke engagement ring?” she repeated, excitement evident in her voice. “For your brother and Maya? Oh, Serena, I’d be honored!”

For the next five days, Zara and I worked tirelessly in her London studio, bringing to life the design I’d been secretly sketching for months.

“It’s perfect,” Zara whispered as we gazed at the finished piece nestled in black velvet – a cushion-cut emerald surrounded by a halo of diamonds, set in platinum with delicate filigree work reminiscent of Maya’s favorite art nouveau designs.

“She’ll absolutely love it,” I agreed, carefully placing it in a custom box. “Thank you for making this happen so quickly.”

The day of Ethan’s discharge arrived with bright sunshine streaming through London’s typically overcast sky. My mother and I had transformed the conservatory of the Quinn estate into an intimate paradise – white roses and greenery cascaded from the ceiling, fairy lights twinkled among the foliage, and a small string quartet waited in the corner.

“Everything’s ready,” I whispered to Ethan as the nurse helped him from the wheelchair to stand on his own feet for the first time in weeks. “Are you nervous?”

His eyes shone with certainty. “Not even a little.”

Maya entered the conservatory, her eyes widening as she took in the transformed space. “What’s all this?” she asked, confusion giving way to understanding as Ethan walked slowly toward her – steps he’d been practicing in physical therapy without her knowledge.

“Ethan! You’re walking!” she gasped, tears springing to her eyes.

He reached her, taking both her hands in his. “With you by my side, I feel like I could fly.”

I stood beside my mother, both of us discreetly wiping away tears as Ethan lowered himself carefully to one knee.

“Maya Carter,” he said, his voice strong and clear, “you’ve been my strength when I had none. My light in darkness. My partner in every sense of the word.” He reached into his pocket and produced the box I’d given him earlier. “Will you do me the extraordinary honor of becoming my wife?”

Maya’s hand flew to her mouth as he opened the box, revealing the ring Zara and I had created. “Oh my God,” she whispered, tears flowing freely now. “Ethan...”

“Say yes, darling,” my mother called out, causing everyone to laugh through their tears.

“Yes!” Maya exclaimed, pulling Ethan to his feet and into her arms. “Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!”

As they embraced, the quartet began to play, and champagne was brought in. I watched as Ethan slipped the ring onto Maya’s finger, her face illuminated with joy as she examined the intricate design.

“This is breathtaking,” she said, finding me in the small crowd. “You designed this, didn’t you?”

I nodded, accepting her tight hug. “I’ve had the design waiting for the right moment. Seems like I didn’t have to wait long.”

The evening passed in a blur of celebration, laughter, and plans for the future. By the time I returned to my London apartment, emotional exhaustion had set in alongside the physical. Kicking off my heels, I collapsed onto the sofa, too tired to even make it to the bedroom.

My thoughts drifted to Ryan, back in New York with Vivian. I missed them both terribly – my husband with his quiet strength, and our beautiful daughter with her infectious giggle. Video calls weren’t enough anymore; I needed to hold them, to breathe in Vivian’s baby-sweet scent and feel Ryan’s arms around me.

As if summoned by my thoughts, my phone rang. Ryan’s name flashed on the screen.

“Hey,” I answered, not bothering to hide the weariness in my voice. “You wouldn’t believe the day I’ve had.”

“Tell me in person,” came his deep voice, oddly close and clear.

I sat up straight. “What do you mean?”

A knock sounded at my door, sending my heart racing. Cautiously, I approached the peephole, then flung the door open.

There stood Ryan, phone still at his ear, travel-rumpled and gorgeous. His eyes – those piercing gray-blue eyes I’d missed so desperately – crinkled at the corners as he smiled.

“Surprise,” he said simply.

I launched myself into his arms, breathing in his familiar scent of sandalwood. His strong arms wrapped around me, lifting me slightly as he stepped into the apartment and kicked the door closed behind him.

“How?” I managed to ask between kisses. “You were in meetings all week. “

“As for the meetings,” he assured me, setting me down but not letting go. “Some things are more important.” His fingers traced my cheekbone, eyes drinking me in as though memorizing every detail. “I missed you too damn much, Serena.”

The raw honesty in his voice undid me. I pulled his face down to mine, pouring weeks of longing into a kiss that quickly ignited into something more urgent, more primal. His hands slid down my back, lifting me easily as I wrapped my legs around his waist.

“Bedroom?” he murmured against my neck.

“Too far,” I gasped as his lips found that sensitive spot below my ear.

For once, exhaustion was the furthest thing from my mind.