

CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 321

Serena's POV

The sunlight streaming through my kitchen window caught the gold rim of my teacup as I absently stirred my peppermint tea. After being discharged from the hospital, I'd returned to Quinn Manor to recover, only to face Mom's lectures about my terrible sleep schedule and eating habits. Mom had insisted on making breakfast herself this morning – "You need proper nutrition, not those sad excuse for protein bars you call food," she'd declared while whisking eggs.

"How's my precious grandbaby doing?" Mom asked.

My heart swelled with love thinking about my fourteen-month-old daughter, her chubby cheeks and infectious giggles that somehow made even the hardest days worthwhile.

"Growing more stubborn by the day," I laughed. "Just yesterday, according to Margaret, she refused to wear anything but her purple onesie. I swear she's inherited Ryan's iron will."

Mom's laugh was like warm honey. "That child is the perfect blend of you both – your creativity and his tenacity. Heaven help us all when she's a teenager."

I nodded, but a sudden wave of nausea hit me mid-motion. The scrambled eggs Mom had lovingly prepared suddenly looked absolutely disgusting. I pushed the plate away, swallowing hard against the rising bile in my throat.

"Serena? Are you alright, sweetheart?" Mom's brow furrowed with concern as she reached across the marble countertop to touch my forehead.

"I'm fine," I managed, though my stomach lurched treacherously. "Just stressed about the company situation."

The plagiarism allegations against Dreamland Studio had come out of nowhere and hit us like a truck. Maya had called three times already this morning, each message more urgent than the last. The press was having a field day, and our biggest clients were getting cold feet.

"Has Ryan called about those awful accusations?" Mom asked gently.

I shook my head. "He's been in back-to-back meetings since that nightmare lunch with David Anderson yesterday. Simon texted that Ryan's ready to tear someone's head off."

Another wave of nausea hit, stronger this time. I bolted from my stool, barely making it to the powder room before losing everything. As I rinsed my mouth afterwards, a startling thought crystallized in my mind. The fatigue, the sensitivity to smells, the nausea...

When the hell was my last period?

Mom was waiting outside the bathroom, concern etched across her elegant features. “This isn’t just stress, is it?”

Our eyes met in silent understanding.

“I... I think I might be pregnant,” I whispered, the possibility both terrifying and exhilarating.

Mom’s face transformed instantly. “Oh my God. Are you sure?”

“I need to find out,” I said, already grabbing my purse. “There’s a pharmacy around the corner.”

Twenty minutes later, I sat on the edge of my bathtub, staring at the plastic stick in my trembling hands. Two pink lines. Unmistakable. Clear as day.

I was pregnant. Again. With Ryan’s baby.

My heart pounded like a drum as a thousand thoughts crashed together in my mind. Another child. A sibling for Vivian.

“Serena?” Mom’s gentle knock pulled me from my thoughts. “Are you okay in there?”

I opened the door, wordlessly holding up the pregnancy test. Mom’s eyes widened before filling with tears of joy, and she pulled me into a tight embrace that smelled of her signature Chanel perfume and home-baked cookies.

“Oh my darling girl,” she whispered into my hair. “Another grandbaby! Vivian will be such a wonderful big sister.”

My own tears came then, a complicated mixture of happiness and anxiety. “The timing couldn’t be worse, Mom. The company is falling apart, Ryan’s putting out fires on all fronts, and now this...”

She pulled back, framing my face with her soft hands. “Life rarely delivers its gifts in perfect packaging, sweetheart. But this baby?” She placed a gentle hand on my still-flat stomach. “This baby is a blessing, no matter what chaos is happening around us.”

I nodded, letting her optimism wash over me. “I need to tell Ryan.”

“Of course you do,” she agreed. “He’ll want to know right away.”

“But first I need to touch base with Maya and Ethan at the office,” I said, my protective business instincts kicking in. “This plagiarism scandal could destroy everything we’ve built if we don’t handle it properly.”

Mom’s expression shifted to concern again. “Serena, you’re pregnant. The company can take a backseat for one day.”

“I’ll just swing by quickly,” I promised. “Then I’ll call Ryan.”

She sighed, recognizing my stubborn streak. “At least eat something first. Dry toast, maybe? And let me know when you’ve told him. I can hardly wait to see his face when he hears Vivian’s getting a little brother or sister.”

I managed a small breakfast under Mom’s watchful eye, my mind racing with how I’d break the news to Ryan.

After assuring Mom I’d be careful and promising to return for lunch, I grabbed my car keys and headed out. Our regular driver was off today, but I welcomed the chance to drive myself and sort through my thoughts.

As I navigated the quiet suburban streets, my phone buzzed on the passenger seat. Ryan’s name flashed on the screen. My heart leapt – had he somehow sensed something was up? I reached for the phone, momentarily taking my eyes off the road.

That split second of distraction was all it took.

A black SUV came flying through the stop sign to my right, going way too fast. Time seemed to slow as I registered the driver’s shadowed face, the vehicle’s trajectory aimed directly at my driver’s side door.

I yanked the steering wheel hard left, but it was way too late.

The impact was deafening – metal crushed against metal with a sickening crunch that seemed to go on forever. My car spun violently, the world blurring into streaks of color and light, and the airbag exploded against my chest and face, stealing every bit of air from my lungs.

The secondary impact came when my car slammed into a concrete barrier. My head snapped forward then back, pain exploding behind my eyes as something warm trickled down my face. Glass shattered around me like a deadly shower.

“No,” I gasped, instinctively bringing my hands to my stomach. “No, please, not my baby...”

The world began to fade at the edges, darkness encroaching on my vision like spilled ink. I thought of Vivian at home, her sweet face when I’d kissed her goodbye this morning. I thought of Ryan, of the baby he didn’t even know existed yet.

“Ryan,” I whispered, my voice barely audible. “Vivian...”

Through the shattered window, a familiar face appeared, twisted with panic and fear.

“Serena! Jesus Christ, Serena, hold on!” Cedric’s voice seemed to come from underwater, distant and distorted.

I tried to respond, but the darkness pulled me under like a violent tide, dragging me away from consciousness despite my desperate fight to stay awake.

My last thought before everything went black was of the tiny life inside me – a life I’d only just discovered, and now might be gone forever.

CEO’s Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 322

Ryan’s POV

I clutched my phone tighter, staring at Mr. Anderson across the polished conference table as he outlined his surprisingly generous proposal. The afternoon light streamed through the floor-to-ceiling windows of the Toronto high-rise, casting long shadows across the room.

“As I was saying, Mr. Blackwood,” Anderson Sr. continued smoothly, his silver hair catching the light, “not only will we increase our investment by thirty percent, but I’ll personally ensure this plagiarism nonsense against your wife’s company is exposed as the misunderstanding it truly is. The Blackwood and Anderson families have too much potential together to let this... unfortunate situation torpedo our relationship.”

Unlike his complete moron of a son David, the senior Anderson clearly understood the art of negotiation. I nodded, satisfaction rippling through me.

“I appreciate your—”

Something stopped me mid-sentence. A sharp, inexplicable pain shot through my chest, making my breath catch. Not physical pain, but something deeper, like someone had reached into my chest and squeezed. Something was wrong. Terribly wrong.

“Mr. Blackwood?” Anderson’s voice seemed distant suddenly. “Are you alright? You’ve gone white as a sheet.”

I pressed my hand against my chest, trying to steady my suddenly racing heartbeat. The feeling was overwhelming – a cold, creeping dread that made my skin crawl.

“Serena,” I whispered, the name escaping my lips without conscious thought.

“I beg your pardon?”

I took several deep breaths, trying to regain my composure. “Mr. Anderson, I apologize, but I need to cut our meeting short. Something urgent has come up.”

Confusion flickered across his face, but to his credit, he didn't press. "Of course, Mr. Blackwood. We're in no rush. Your health and family come first."

I barely registered his words as I stood, straightening my tie with trembling fingers. My body moved on autopilot while my mind raced, every instinct screaming that something was wrong with Serena. I knew it with a certainty that defied logic.

The moment I cleared the conference room, I pulled out my phone and dialed her number. One ring. Two. Three. Voicemail.

"Shit," I muttered, immediately calling again. Same result.

By the fifth unsuccessful attempt, my walk had become a full sprint through the corporate hallway. Employees dove out of the way as I barreled past, looking like I was about to commit murder. I couldn't explain my urgency even if I wanted to – this bone-deep certainty that Serena was in danger was primal, beyond rationalization.

I jabbed at Ethan's contact next, him answering on the second ring.

"Ryan, what's up?" His tone was casual, unsuspecting.

"Where's Serena?" I demanded, cutting straight to the chase.

Ethan's confusion was palpable through the phone. "At home, I think? She hasn't been feeling well lately. Mom's been hovering over her. Why? What's going on?"

"I can't reach her. She's not answering her phone." My voice sounded foreign to my own ears – strained, borderline frantic.

The brief silence on the other end only amplified my anxiety.

"Let me call Mom," Ethan finally said, his voice taking on a more serious edge. "I'll call you right back. Give me two minutes."

"I'll be waiting." The words came out more like a threat than a promise.

Those two minutes felt like two hours. I paced the hotel lobby like a caged animal, checking my watch every thirty seconds, ignoring the nervous glances from staff and guests alike.

When my phone finally rang, I snatched it up before the sound even registered.

"Well?" I barked.

"She's not at home," Ethan's voice was tight now, matching my concern. "Mom said Serena left about an hour ago. She was heading to the office to put out some fire about the plagiarism allegations. She was driving herself."

My blood turned to ice. “And she’s not picking up her phone?”

“No. Mom’s tried too. Ryan, I’m sure there’s some simple explanation—”

“I’m coming back,” I cut him off. “Right now. Have your security team start checking routes between your mother’s house and Dreamland’s offices. Traffic cameras, the whole nine yards.”

“Already on it,” Ethan assured me. “I’ve got people hitting the streets now. Ryan, don’t lose it yet—”

“Call me the second you hear anything. Anything at all.” I hung up before he could respond.

My mind spun with horrible possibilities as I strode toward the elevators. Serena had been feeling off for days. What if she’d fainted while driving? What if someone had targeted her because of these bullshit plagiarism claims? What if—

The elevator doors opened, revealing David Anderson’s smug face.

“Mr. Blackwood! Perfect timing. I’ve brought the contracts—”

“Get out of my way,” I growled, attempting to step around him.

He blocked my path, either oblivious to or ignoring my mood. “But sir, ARt has already issued a public statement completely clearing Mrs. Blackwood of all plagiarism allegations. Everything’s been handled exactly as my father promised. We just need your signature to—”

I snatched the papers from his hands, barely glancing at them. “I’ll have someone look these over later. Right now, I need to get back to New York. Family emergency.”

His face fell. “But the partnership—”

“Will continue as agreed,” I snapped, jabbing the elevator button like I was trying to break it. “Just not today. My team will be in touch.”

The elevator mercifully arrived, and I stepped inside, leaving a bewildered David Anderson standing there like an idiot.

As the doors closed, I leaned against the wall, closing my eyes briefly against the wave of dread threatening to drown me. The feeling that had started as a vague discomfort had exploded into full-blown terror.

“Please be okay,” I whispered, picturing Serena’s face. “Please, Serena. Just hang on.”

My phone buzzed in my hand – Ethan. I answered instantly.

“Tell me,” I demanded, bracing myself for whatever was coming.

His voice came through, tight with strain. “Ryan... there’s been an accident.”

The world stopped spinning. My heart suspended mid-beat. Everything around me seemed to fade into insignificance.

“Where is she?” I asked, my voice unnaturally calm despite the hurricane raging inside me.

“She’s missing, Ryan. There’s blood and wreckage at the scene. Serena was in a serious car crash. You need to get here now.”

I ended the call without another word, a singular thought consuming me entirely:

If I lost Serena, there’d be nothing left of me worth saving.

CEO’s Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 323

Ryan’s POV

The moment I arrived back in the States, all they showed me was a damaged surveillance video from the police.

In the grainy footage, Serena’s car gets violently rear-ended, slamming straight into a concrete wall. My chest tightened as I watched, my eyes burning with unshed tears. Blood roared in my ears as the video cut to black right after the impact—conveniently right when you’d be able to see who approached her car.

“Mr. Blackwood, the investigation is still ongoing,” the detective said, his voice carefully neutral.

My body trembled slightly. I couldn’t process this. Serena, missing. The very thought made my stomach drop to my feet. The police station’s fluorescent lights suddenly seemed too bright, the air too thin.

“There must be other leads,” I said, my voice rough. “Traffic cameras? Witnesses? Anything?”

“I’m very sorry, sir.” The detective’s face showed nothing but professional regret. No real answers, just empty sympathies.

When I stepped outside the station, the Quinns were waiting, their faces tense with hope that I’d have news they didn’t. Maya rushed forward, grabbing my arm with desperate fingers.

“What did they say? Do they know where Serena is?” Her eyes searched mine frantically.

I couldn't even form words. My face must have told her everything because Maya's eyes suddenly rolled back, her body going limp as she fainted. Ethan barely caught her before she hit the ground.

"I'm taking her to the hospital," he muttered, lifting his wife. The worry in his eyes mirrored my own.

I took a deep breath, forcing steel into my spine. No matter who had taken Serena, I would find them. No matter where on this goddamn planet they'd hidden her, I would bring my wife home. This wasn't over. It was just beginning.

Author's POV

Beep. Beep. Beep.

Serena slowly regained consciousness in a private medical facility in Inverness, one owned by the Lancaster family. The location was deliberately chosen – hundreds of miles from London and completely off Ryan's radar. Information was locked down tight, ensuring no word would reach the Blackwood empire.

The steady beeping of monitors welcomed her back to consciousness. Her eyes fluttered open to see stark white ceiling tiles above her, the sharp scent of antiseptic filling her nostrils through the oxygen mask covering her face. Every inch of her body pulsed with pain.

Cedric Lancaster had been pacing the hallway anxiously. When he glimpsed Serena stirring through the doorway, he hurried to summon the doctor. After a thorough examination, the physician delivered his assessment to Cedric in low, measured tones.

"She's stable now, but has suffered significant trauma. She'll need complete rest – no movement if possible," the doctor explained. "However, there's blood pooling in her brain from the impact. Left untreated, it could cause complications."

He paused before adding, "The good news is we managed to save the pregnancy."

Cedric's smile tightened almost imperceptibly. During the rescue, he'd seriously considered whether to terminate the pregnancy without Serena's knowledge. It would have been simple enough to arrange, given her unconscious state. But the medical risks were too great – a miscarriage would likely cause hemorrhaging, potentially fatal in her weakened condition.

After considerable internal debate, he'd chosen to preserve the child's life.

With a nod of acknowledgment, he entered the hospital room, eager to speak with Serena. As he approached, she looked up at him with clear confusion in her eyes.

“Who are you? Where am I?” Her voice was weak but insistent. “Everything hurts... what happened to me?”

The barrage of questions caught Cedric off guard. “You... don’t remember anything?”

Pain flashed across Serena’s face as she tried to access memories that simply weren’t there. No matter how hard she tried to recall her past, she encountered nothing but frightening emptiness.

Alarmed by her obvious distress, Cedric immediately summoned the doctor back.

“What’s happening to her?” he demanded.

The doctor’s expression grew somber. “Mr. Lancaster, it appears the patient has amnesia. The blood accumulation in her brain is affecting her memory centers.”

“Amnesia? Serena has lost her memory?” Cedric couldn’t hide his shock as his gaze returned to the bed where Serena lay, her eyes filled with confusion and fear.

“Yes. We’ll explore treatment options, but her body is too weak for cranial surgery right now. Unfortunately, we’ve missed the optimal window for addressing the memory loss directly.”

Cedric’s eyes lit up with sudden interest. “So you’re saying that without immediate intervention, she might never recover her memories?”

“That’s essentially correct,” the doctor confirmed with a small nod. “Recovery is still possible, but the probability decreases significantly with time.”

Cedric fell silent, processing this unexpected development. “I understand,” he finally said.

After the doctor departed, he returned to Serena’s bedside. Her gaze followed him with an inexplicable trust that surprised even her – some deep instinct telling her this man meant her no harm.

“Serena, how are you feeling?” he asked gently.

She frowned slightly. “Is that my name? Serena? Are you my friend?”

Cedric smiled, shaking his head. “I’m your husband. Your name is Serena Lancaster.”

The name felt vaguely familiar to her, and she didn’t question it. Yet something about his claim to be her husband stirred uncertainty within her.

“I’m married?” she asked hesitantly.

Cedric’s smile turned tender. “Not only married, but you’re carrying our child.”

Serena's eyes widened in shock. Her hand moved instinctively to her still-flat abdomen. Though there was no visible evidence yet, the idea that a life was growing inside her was overwhelming.

"What happened to me? Why am I hurt like this?" The question had been burning in her mind since waking. Her entire body ached, and she could see bandages and bruises marking her arms.

"I'm so sorry, Serena. I failed to protect you," Cedric said, his voice thick with apparent remorse. "Someone was after your design work. They sent people to harm you. I arrived too late, but thank God you and the baby are safe."

Serena frowned again, trying to recall any designs or work that might have made her a target. Nothing came to mind. But this man was currently her only lifeline, her only connection to a past she couldn't remember. What choice did she have but to believe him?

"What about my family?" she asked suddenly. "They must be worried sick about me."

Cedric's lips thinned. He knew keeping Serena in the country was impossible – the Quinns and Ryan would eventually track her down. Their only escape was to leave the country entirely.

"Serena, I'm so sorry," he said, his expression grave. "I couldn't protect your parents. They... they were killed in the attack."

The color drained from Serena's face as emotion overwhelmed her.

"What? That can't be true! Who did this?" Her voice rose with each word. "I need to find whoever's responsible!"

Cedric pulled the distraught Serena into his arms, hesitating briefly before deciding against mentioning Ryan's name. Introducing that connection might eventually lead her back to her husband.

"That's all in the past now," he soothed. "Serena, we're in danger here. We need to leave the country immediately. Otherwise, both of us could be at risk."

Serena studied his face, uncertainty warring with her limited options. After a moment's hesitation, she nodded her agreement.

The following morning, Serena was carefully transported onto a private plane, whisked away from everything and everyone she'd ever known – including the husband desperately searching for her.

CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 324

Author's POV

A shadow loomed over New York as Ryan paced his office, trapped between desperation and determination. Every hour without Serena felt like a lifetime. While his private investigators chased down leads across the city, he scrutinized the footage for the hundredth time, searching for any detail he might have missed.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the design world erupted in chaos. The Design Association had finally rendered their verdict on the plagiarism accusations against Serena—guilty as charged.

The announcement spread like wildfire across social media platforms.

“The official statement confirms it—Serena really is a plagiarist,” one comment read.

“Wait, didn’t she provide evidence clearing her name? And didn’t ART company back her up? Is this just about money talking?” questioned another user.

“The officials have spoken! You Lazuli fans still expecting some miracle turnaround? This is solid proof, don’t you understand?”

“Lance Draven was actually merciful. If it were me, I’d have sued her immediately. Finally seeing her blacklisted from the industry! Celebrating!”

For anyone who knew the design world, this was earth-shattering news. Serena had been a trendsetter whose work had won countless international awards. She’d even judged major design competitions. For someone of her caliber to be exposed as a plagiarist sent shockwaves through the entire community.

The name “Lazuli” would inevitably be blacklisted from the design world. Former fans flooded Serena’s accounts with accusations, the scandal spiraling beyond LUXE’s control.

Inside LUXE headquarters, an emergency board meeting was called to address the crisis. Despite Liam Quinn’s impassioned defense, the board voted to remove Serena from her position as CEO, installing Ethan in her place.

As the shareholders dispersed with visible relief, only the Quinns remained, devastated by the turn of events.

Maya bit her lip so hard she nearly drew blood, fighting back tears.

“Maya, please don’t be upset,” Ethan said softly, taking her hand. “Finding Serena is all that matters right now.”

“As long as she’s safe, none of this—the fame, the position—matters,” he continued, though his own heart was breaking.

Liam Quinn sighed heavily. “Maya, you know New York better than any of us. Ryan’s returned there today. I need you to go check on him, and if possible, bring Vivian back with you.”

“Don’t let Ryan do anything reckless in his state,” he added, concerned for his son-in-law.

Maya wiped away her tears with determination. “I was planning to go anyway. Vivian needs someone to look after her while Ryan’s searching for Serena.”

“Ethan, I’ll pack and leave immediately,” she said, squeezing her husband’s hand. “You need to hold things together at LUXE.”

Ethan nodded resolutely, though his eyes glistened with unshed tears. “I will protect LUXE at all costs. Don’t worry too much, Maya. I believe we’ll find Serena eventually.”

Hours later, Maya landed in New York and immediately called Ryan. His voice sounded hollow as he updated her: the driver who had rear-ended Serena had been caught and claimed he’d seen someone take Serena from the car before fleeing the scene. He’d assumed she was being rescued and left the scene in panic.

“That bastard!” Maya’s knuckles went white around her phone. “Who would have taken her, Ryan? Who knew she would be there?”

“I don’t know,” Ryan admitted, his voice tight with controlled rage. “I’m having my people look into everyone with access to her schedule. Maya, can you keep an eye out for anything suspicious? Any enemies, rivals, anyone who might have wanted to harm her?”

“Of course,” Maya promised. “I’ll do anything to find her.”

—

Meanwhile, thousands of miles away in Thailand, Cedric Lancaster was settling Serena into his secluded beachfront property. He had already arranged for private medical care, ensuring she received top-tier treatment while remaining hidden from the world.

After ensuring Serena was comfortable, Cedric drove to his company’s Thai branch office. His phone rang—his father, demanding an explanation for his sudden relocation.

“You’re throwing away your responsibilities in Thailand for what? A beach vacation?” his father’s voice boomed through the speaker.

“It’s a business expansion,” Cedric countered, his tone firm. “The Southeast Asian market is untapped potential for us.”

The argument continued until Cedric finally convinced his father that this was a strategic move. While this excuse would serve him well, Cedric knew expanding the business would eventually become necessary—he needed a sustainable cover for keeping Serena hidden here indefinitely.

As night fell, Cedric returned to the house where medical staff were not only treating Serena but also serving as her guardians.

“Serena, I’m home,” he announced with a practiced smile as he entered her room.

She responded with a faint acknowledgment, her expression distant and troubled. The confusion of her situation weighed heavily on her.

“How are you feeling today?” he asked, though he’d already received a full report from the doctors. Her recovery was progressing well; within a month, she’d be almost completely healed.

“Fine,” Serena replied with a forced smile.

Cedric moved closer, reaching out to stroke her cheek. To his dismay, she instinctively flinched away, avoiding his eyes.

His hand froze in mid-air, his smile faltering.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered. “I’ve lost my memory. Even if you are my husband, I’m just not...comfortable yet.”

“I need some time,” she added quietly.

Cedric lowered his hand and nodded, masking his disappointment. “Of course. Take all the time you need. We have our whole future ahead of us.”

With that, he left the room, leaving Serena alone with her thoughts.

From her window, Serena gazed out at the unfamiliar landscape, sighing softly. Time would eventually heal her wounds and perhaps fade the strange emptiness inside her.

CEO’s Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 325

Author’s POV

The golden sunset painted the Bangkok skyline in hues of amber and crimson as Serena stood at her floor-to-ceiling window, staring out at the view that had become so familiar yet somehow never felt like home. Three years had passed since she’d awakened in Thailand with no memory, three years of rebuilding a life from scratch while living with constant questions about her past.

“Mrs. Lancaster,” her assistant’s voice snapped her out of her thoughts, “regarding the international project, we’ve narrowed it down to the top European partners. LUXE and ART studio are both strong contenders.”

“Both companies have sent representatives hoping to score cooperation with Elegant Realm. What’s your gut feeling on direction?”

Serena nodded absently, her fingers tracing invisible patterns on the glass. “Dig deep on both companies. I want complete backgrounds before making my decision.”

“Yes, Mrs. Lancaster.”

As her assistant departed, Serena’s gaze drifted to the framed photo on her desk—her two-year-old daughter smiling back at her with dimpled cheeks. These past three years had been a whirlwind of healing, childbirth, and establishing herself as a force to be reckoned with in the design world. Elegant Realm Studio had risen from the ashes to become Thailand’s design sensation, with Serena at its helm.

Yet something was always missing. Her relationship with Cedric Lancaster remained complicated—a tangled mess of gratitude, friendship, and unspoken tension. Despite his claims they were married before her accident, something deep inside her recoiled from the possibility of resuming that intimacy. Every time he touched her, her body went rigid.

Cedric had respected her boundaries, never pushing himself on her. He’d been patient, supportive even, as she built her own company alongside his expanding Lancaster empire in Thailand. But whenever she mentioned returning to Europe, his patience went out the window.

A nagging voice in her head kept insisting that the answers to her past lay across the ocean. Who was she before? What had really happened in that accident? Why did certain names or places sometimes trigger flashes of emotion she couldn’t place?

The door to her office exploded open without warning. Cedric stood in the doorway, his normally composed face twisted with barely contained rage.

“You’re seriously planning to go to Europe?” he demanded, storming toward her desk like a man possessed.

Serena steeled her spine. “It’s a potential international project. Why?”

Cedric’s eyes zeroed in on the documents scattered across her desk, his jaw tightening as he spotted LUXE’s proposal on top. His hand came down like a sledgehammer beside it, making her jump.

“Why are you so hell-bent on going back there?” he demanded, voice rising. “What’s wrong with Bangkok? With what we’ve built here?” His eyes burned with intensity. “I’ve given you everything—a home, support for your company, three years of my life waiting for you to remember us!”

Serena felt her temper hit the boiling point. “Given me everything except the truth!” she snapped back. “You expect me to just wipe my slate clean? The accident that nearly killed me?”

She snatched up LUXE's proposal, waving it in his face. "Every time I mention going back, you lose your shit. What are you so terrified I'll find out?"

"I'm trying to protect you!" Cedric shouted, his composure completely shot. "You nearly died there! Why can't you get that through your head?"

"Protect me from what?" Serena demanded, her voice bouncing off the walls. "You keep throwing that line at me, but you never explain the danger! If someone tried to kill me, shouldn't I know who my enemies are?"

She stepped around her desk, getting right in his face. "Or is it that you're hiding something from me? Something about who I really was?"

Cedric went white as a sheet before his features hardened. "Your memories are gone for a reason, Serena. Some things are better left buried."

"That's not your call to make!" The words ripped from her throat. "I built this company from nothing so I could stand on my own two feet again—so I could have the resources to go back and uncover the truth about myself. And now I'm finally in a position to do exactly that."

She gestured to the city beyond her window. "Elegant Realm is Thailand's top dog in design now. We're in demand internationally. This isn't just about my past—this is a golden opportunity for our business."

"Cedric," she softened her voice slightly, trying a different angle. "I'm going to Europe for this project. It's a done deal. Please don't make this harder than it needs to be."

His expression turned absolutely lethal. "Then I'm coming with you."

"Absolutely not," Serena said firmly. "I'm taking Rancy and going alone."

"You're taking our daughter?" His eyes widened in disbelief. "She's barely two years old! The travel alone could wreck her. How will you manage business meetings with a toddler?"

Serena threw up her hands in exasperation. "I've got it handled."

Though Cedric claimed paternity, she'd never bought it completely. Something about it felt wrong, like so many other pieces of his story.

That's why she'd refused to give the child his last name, settling instead on "Jane Doe" until she discovered her own true identity. That decision had sparked World War III between them, but even then, Serena hadn't backed down.

"I'm done, Cedric," she sighed, rubbing her throbbing temples. "Please just go."

His face went stone-cold. “Is this really what you want? To tear open old wounds that have finally stopped bleeding?”

“Yes,” she said without hesitation. “My mind is made up.”

When he still didn’t move, she deliberately turned away, focusing intently on her paperwork as though he’d ceased to exist. After several tense seconds, she heard his footsteps retreating, followed by the door slamming hard enough to rattle every piece of glass in her office.

Alone again, Serena let out a shaky breath. She knew she was pushing him away, but couldn’t shake the growing suspicion that Cedric’s possessiveness went beyond concern for her wellbeing. What was he so desperate to keep her from finding out?