

255: Caitlin and Her Brother Face to Face

The soil was too dry. James pulled out his tactical knife and started digging, working his way around the tree's roots.

Kneeling on the ground, he had no idea how long he had been at it, how many holes he had dug, until finally—the tip of his knife hit something metal.

The sound was different.

Excitement surged through him as he dug faster, revealing a rusted metal box.

The surface was corroded, the patterns almost unrecognizable. With effort, he pried it open with his knife.

Years of exposure to water and soil had left its contents in ruins. The wooden objects inside had rotted, and plastic materials had become brittle, crumbling at the slightest touch.

James carefully sifted through the decay.

Then, finally, he found something intact.

A small metal tube, about the length of a finger and as thick as a pen.

Brushing off the dirt, he rinsed it thoroughly with bottled water until the tarnish faded away, revealing its true form—

A brass whistle.

His fingers trembled.

Yes. A whistle.

James cleaned it thoroughly, then raised it to his lips and blew.

"Wheee— Wheee—"

The sound rang clear and familiar.

It was the same whistle from his fragmented memories.

With each sharp, echoing note, emotions flooded him.

Tears welled in his eyes, blurring his vision.

He missed them so much.

His mother. His sister.

Where were they now?

—

James returned to the city just before 5:30 PM and sent Caitlin a location pin, heading straight to the private restaurant to wait for her.

When Caitlin received the message, she got ready to leave.

She casually informed Sebastian, "Sebastian, I'll leave the kids with you. I'll be back later to pick up Patricia."

Sebastian, sitting with the children and playing a game, pretended not to hear her.

Caitlin smirked.

Still sulking over the pants incident?

Fine. Let him sulk.

She wasn't going to comfort him.

As the sound of an engine revving outside reached his ears, Sebastian immediately sat up, watching through the window.

All he saw was the tail end of her car disappearing down the driveway.

That woman... She really went on a date with that guy?!

Unbelievable.

"Xavi, Tyler," he ordered, standing up. "Watch the kids."

Xavi barely held back a chuckle.

Mr. Vanderbilt was doomed.

Caitlin had never promised to remarry him. She was back for the kids, but she was still single and independent.

Sebastian had a long road ahead.

And this James guy? Probably just the first of many rivals to come.

Sebastian rushed out the door, already dialing.

"Molly. Get to Vanderbilt Manor."

"What? Are you kidding me? I have a date tonight!"

"I need you to watch Patricia. Emergency. Forget your date, Smith isn't even into you. Stop throwing yourself at him." 

"EXCUSE ME?!"

Molly was offended.

Was he serious right now?

But then Sebastian sweetened the deal.

"Help me this once, and I'll help you get Simon. Guaranteed."

"...Fine."

With that kind of promise, Molly immediately rerouted to Vanderbilt Manor.

She sighed as she pulled into the driveway.

She was born a rich heiress, but lived the life of a babysitter.

—

Caitlin arrived at the private restaurant.

After mentioning James's name, a staff member led her to a private dining room.

Inside, James was already waiting.

Seeing her, he immediately stood up and pulled out a chair for her.

"Ms. Lewis, you're here."

"Just call me Caitlin," she said as she took her seat.

James smiled. "Alright, Caitlin."

He sat down across from her, picking up the menu. "What would you like to eat?"

"That should be my question. Order whatever you want—it's on me."

"Well then, I won't hold back!"

James waved for a waiter and placed their order.

Caitlin studied him. His sharp features, his confident demeanor.

"Your accent... You're not from New York, are you?"

James smirked. "I am."

Then he turned to the waiter. "Bring a fresh juice for the lovely lady."

"Of course, sir. Right away."

Once the waiter left, James asked, "What about you, Caitlin? What do you do?"

"Me? I do whatever I want." 

"Must be nice," James chuckled. "As for me, I'm between jobs."

She raised an eyebrow. "Oh? Looking for something specific?"

"Yeah. Maybe you can hire me," he teased. "I could be your driver."

Caitlin laughed. "That'd be a waste of talent. I doubt I could afford you."

"Other people might not afford me, but you definitely could," James said casually. "After all, you're the CEO behind CL Group—a billionaire."

Her smile faded.

He had investigated her.

Her guard went up immediately.

"You looked me up?"

James met her gaze, completely unfazed.

"Only because I was curious. I only investigate people I'm interested in."

His tone was relaxed, his smile friendly—but his words carried weight.

Something about James felt off.

He was too smooth, too deliberate.

There was more to him than he was letting on.

Caitlin already made her decision—this dinner would be their last meeting.

They were not the same kind of people.

—

Outside, Sebastian parked his car, spotting Caitlin's vehicle immediately.

Sitting behind the wheel, he stared at the restaurant sign, fingers tapping the steering wheel.

Now what?

He needed a reason to go in.

An excuse.

Sebastian scowled.

Just imagining Caitlin and that pretty boy having dinner together pissed him off.

Commented [Ma1]:

Inside, the waiter brought their food.

James had ordered a full table of dishes, the variety overwhelming.

He grinned. "Everything looks amazing. I want to try it all."

"Then go ahead," Caitlin smiled.

Just as they were about to start eating,

the door suddenly swung open.

Caitlin and James both turned—

Sebastian stood at the doorway.

His tall frame filled the entrance, his eyes dark and unreadable.

The air instantly grew tense.

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