

### 257: His Presence Disrupted Her Heartbeat

James didn't back down. He downed one drink after another, glass after glass.

Living as a lone wolf all these years, this was the first time he'd sat down for a proper meal and drinks with someone. He was actually enjoying himself.

The two men kept drinking, neither willing to back down.

But after finishing two whole bottles, James could no longer maintain his composure. His vision blurred, his head spun, and his body felt heavier by the second.

He shook his head, struggling to stay conscious.

"I can't drink anymore... I'm done..."

Sebastian slammed his hand on the table.

"Admit it. You lost. You can't outdrink me."

James let out a ragged breath, barely managing to string together his words.

"I lost... Can't keep up..."

The moment he finished his sentence, he collapsed onto the table, completely knocked out.

"James!"

Caitlin called his name a few times, but he didn't respond.

"He's really drunk."

Sebastian, also extremely intoxicated, reached for Caitlin's hand, gripping it tightly.

"Caitlin... he's drunk... but I'm not... I won..."

And with that, he, too, passed out.

Caitlin sighed, shaking her head.

There was no helping it — she had to call Xavi and Quincy to come pick them up.

—

Thirty minutes later.

Xavi arrived first.

Stepping into the private room, he took one look at the two passed-out men and blinked in surprise.

"Caitlin, what happened to Mr. Vanderbilt?"

"He drank too much. Take him home."

"Right... Got it."

Xavi had never seen Sebastian this drunk before.

Even in his worst moods, their boss never got blackout drunk.

And considering Sebastian's high alcohol tolerance, just how much had he been drinking tonight?

With some effort, Xavi helped carry him out.

A few minutes later, Quincy arrived.

"Caitlin!"

"James is completely out of it. Take him to a hotel, book him a room, and let him rest," Caitlin instructed.

"Understood."

With James now out of her hands, Caitlin left the restaurant, heading straight to The Vanderbilt Family estate to pick up Patricia.

—

Back at The Vanderbilt Family home, Xavi had already carried Sebastian to his room upstairs.

As Caitlin passed by, she heard the sounds of retching inside.

She peeked in and saw Sebastian bent over, struggling with nausea, while Xavi was clearly overwhelmed trying to assist him.

With a sigh, Caitlin stepped inside.

"I'll handle it."

"Oh—okay, Caitlin."

Xavi quickly moved aside, letting her take over.

Caitlin sat beside Sebastian, gently patting his back.

Sebastian was miserable—his stomach churned, but he couldn't throw up.

"I told you not to drink so much," she murmured. "Now look at you—suffering for it."

Hearing her voice, Sebastian groggily muttered,

"Caitlin..."

His hand flailed in the air.

Caitlin instinctively caught it—and he pulled it to his chest, pressing it against his heart.

"Caitlin... is mine... mine..."

Xavi, witnessing this scene, quietly slipped out of the room.

Ah.

So this was his boss's plan all along.

Pretend to be drunk → Get Caitlin to take care of him → Gain sympathy.

Classic.

—

Caitlin sighed, trying to pull her hand back, but Sebastian wouldn't let go.

"How are you feeling now? Still nauseous?" she asked. "I'll go make you some hangover soup—"

But as soon as she moved, he pulled her back.

Completely off guard, Caitlin stumbled forward—straight into his chest.

His strong arms wrapped tightly around her, locking her in place.

"Don't go, Caitlin..."

She froze.

Through his thin shirt, she could hear his heartbeat.

Feel his warmth.

Sebastian's voice was deep and husky.

"Caitlin... why are you so... beautiful..."

Even drunk, he kept murmuring nonsense.

Caitlin sat there, her heart skipping a beat.

This wasn't good.

She needed to leave right now.

Taking a deep breath, she pushed herself up.

"Alright. Get some sleep. I'll go check on the kids."

But before she could escape, Sebastian dragged her back down.

This time, he didn't hesitate—

He kissed her.

—

Molly had just finished putting the kids to bed.

She stepped out, stretching her arms after a long night.

Taking care of four kids alone was like fighting an entire war.

As she passed the master bedroom, she noticed the lights were still on.

"Oh? My brother's back?"

She pushed the door open—

And immediately froze.

Inside, she saw Sebastian and Caitlin entangled in a heated kiss.

Molly instantly turned bright red.

Oh my God.

With both hands covering her face, she silently backed out of the room.

She did not see that.

Nope.

She was never here.

Luckily, she hadn't shouted—otherwise, Sebastian would've killed her for interrupting.

As she left the estate, she smirked to herself.

"Looks like my brother is finally making progress. Good for him!"

Then she frowned.

Now if only she could figure out how to win over Simon.

—

The next morning.

Caitlin woke up with Patricia in her arms.

At some point last night, after making sure Sebastian was asleep, she had gone to check on the kids —

Only to pick up Patricia and bring her to the guest room with her.

When Patricia woke up, she found herself snuggled against Caitlin's chest.

She stared at her mother for a long time, eyes filled with happiness.

When Caitlin finally stirred, Patricia whispered excitedly,

"Mommy, you're awake!"

Caitlin smiled sleepily. "Morning, sweetheart."

"Mommy's so warm!"

The little girl nuzzled closer, her tiny hands clinging to her mother.

Caitlin chuckled, pressing a kiss to her daughter's forehead.

"Alright, time to get up."

After helping Patricia get dressed, Caitlin led her out of the room —

Right as Sebastian stepped out of the master bedroom.

He was freshly showered, dressed sharply, but still rubbing his temple from the hangover.

When he spotted Caitlin and Patricia, his lips curled into a satisfied smirk.

"You didn't go home last night?" he asked.

Caitlin hesitated. "...No."

Sebastian's mood immediately lifted.

Good. She stayed.

And last night...

A certain memory of kissing her resurfaced in his mind.

Sebastian suddenly felt very pleased with himself.

"Come here, Patricia," he said, scooping up his daughter.

"Let's go eat breakfast."

His three sons soon ran out of their room, joining them.

And so, the six of them walked hand in hand to the dining hall—

A full family.

The staff couldn't help but stare.

This... looked like a happy family.

—

After breakfast, Caitlin sent the boys to DanCa Estate with Quincy and Faith.

Then, she and Sebastian took Patricia to Royal International Hotel—

For today's official custody transfer ceremony.

Everything had been prepared.

Journalists, law enforcement, and legal representatives were already in place.

But as the scheduled time arrived—

There was still no sign of Ximena.

Caitlin glanced at the clock, brows knitting together.

"She's late... Is she planning not to show up?"

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