

### 258: Reclaiming Her Daughter's Custody

Patricia glanced up at Caitlin, her big eyes filled with curiosity.

"Mommy, when are they coming?"

"They should be here soon," Caitlin replied, though she wasn't entirely confident.

Ximena might find a last-minute excuse to back out of the agreement.

As time stretched on and impatience grew among the attendees, a stir at the entrance caught everyone's attention.

All heads turned toward the commotion—

Ximena had arrived.

She walked in with her usual graceful arrogance, leading a small entourage that included Zora.

The moment they entered, the media exploded into action, cameras flashing as they captured the dramatic scene.

Ximena lifted her chin high, exuding confidence—she wanted to make it very clear that she was not conceding defeat.

Caitlin met her gaze.

Neither woman spoke, but their silent battle of wills was evident.

Ximena wasn't willing to admit she lost.

But Caitlin had no intention of backing down either.

From the fire in Ximena's eyes, Caitlin could see her reluctance, her

lingering ambitions.

Beside her, Zora clenched her fists as she saw Sebastian and Caitlin standing together, looking perfectly matched.

The sight filled her with a mix of resentment and bitterness.

They had tricked her—

Pretended to befriend her, only to steal Patricia away.

And she had actually believed Sebastian's kindness.

"Grandma! Aunt!"

Patricia beamed with excitement and ran forward the moment she saw them.

In her young mind, no matter what happened, Ximena and Zora were still her family.

They had raised her. She loved them.

"Patricia..."

Ximena knelt, arms open, watching the little girl run into her embrace.

For the first time, her heart ached.

She had raised Patricia for her own gain—for the secret codex.

But five years was a long time.

In the end, she had grown attached.

Giving Patricia away felt like cutting off a piece of her own heart.

"Grandma..."

Patricia hugged her tightly before turning to Zora.

"Aunt...!"

But this time, Zora didn't return the hug.

She only reached out and gently patted Patricia's head, her expression unreadable.

Patricia hesitated, sensing something different.

Why was her aunt acting so distant?

Was it because she had left with Daddy?

Had she hurt Aunt's feelings?

"Patricia, come back here," Caitlin called softly.

Patricia hesitated but then hurried back to her mother's side.

—

Ximena stepped forward, addressing the assembled journalists, police officers, and legal representatives.

"My apologies for the delay," she said smoothly.

Then she turned to Caitlin and Sebastian, putting on a diplomatic smile.

"Mr. Vanderbilt, Caitlin—I hope I haven't kept you waiting too long."

Caitlin smirked slightly.

"Not at all. Today is about Patricia. No matter how long it takes, we're willing to wait. And we appreciate you taking the time to be here."

Their hands met in a formal handshake, but their eyes clashed like swords.

Ximena had no intention of coming.

But Sebastian had backed her into a corner—she had no choice.

"Once again," Sebastian said, stepping in, "we sincerely thank you for raising Patricia for these past five years and for selflessly returning her to us. We're deeply grateful."

Ximena's jaw tightened.

She had to smile and nod.

Damn him.

Sebastian wasn't just thanking her—he was publicly framing her as a selfless hero.

Now, if she backtracked, she would be condemned for trying to keep the child.

And to make things worse—

Sebastian added fuel to the fire.

"As a token of our gratitude," he continued, "please—tell us what you'd like as compensation. Whatever it is, we'll provide it without hesitation."

A stiff silence fell over the room.

Ximena nearly choked on her own rage.

He was cornering her again.

If she demanded compensation, the public would see her as someone who used a child to make money.

She had no choice but to refuse.

"That won't be necessary, Mr. Vanderbilt," Ximena said smoothly.

"I didn't raise Patricia for personal gain. She is priceless."

Beautifully said.

It made her look like the bigger person, gaining her public favor.

But Sebastian had won again.

Because even though her words earned her praise, she was still walking away empty-handed.

Sebastian turned to Zora.

"And Miss Harris," he said, "we also appreciate the kindness and care you've given Patricia."

Caitlin added, "Thank you, Zora."

Zora's expression hardened.

She said nothing and looked away coldly.

Caitlin didn't mind.

She simply turned to the officials.

"Now that we're all here, let's begin the official custody transfer

ceremony."

—

The police officer stepped forward.

"Miss Ximena, do you have the adoption documents?"

Ximena signaled her assistant, who promptly handed over the files.

The officers verified the documents before moving to the next step—

The legal transfer of Patricia's custody.

Caitlin and Sebastian sat on one side, while Ximena and Zora sat opposite them.

A formal negotiation, as if this were a business deal.

Both sides carefully reviewed the custody transfer agreement.

Once satisfied, they signed their names.

Sebastian and Caitlin, as Patricia's biological parents, signed together.

The final step—the name change document.

The papers were handed to the legal representatives, who stamped and sealed them.

With that, the officer officially declared,

"As of today, Patricia's name has been legally changed to Zhan Wuying. Custody is now fully transferred to her biological parents.

The transfer is complete."

A round of applause filled the room.

Sebastian and Caitlin stood on stage, holding Patricia's hands as cameras flashed around them.

The Vanderbilt Family had officially reclaimed their daughter.

The story would soon hit the news, but per the family's strict request, Patricia's face would not be shown.

Any breach of privacy would be pursued legally.

—

As the event concluded, journalists and officials gradually left the venue.

Sebastian picked Patricia up, smiling.

"Let's go, princess. Daddy's taking you home."

Zora silently followed after them.

Meanwhile, Caitlin turned back to face Ximena.

"Still want to talk?" Ximena smirked.

Caitlin's expression didn't change.

"Yes. There's one thing I need to know."

Ximena arched a brow. "Go on."

Caitlin took a step closer, her voice calm but firm.

"You somehow knew where I gave birth. You somehow knew my daughter was declared stillborn—and yet, you were conveniently there to

take her in."

Her eyes narrowed.

"Tell me, Ximena—how did you know?"